

Aldermen's expenses and resources policy

PURPOSE:

To ensure that Aldermen are reimbursed on a consistent basis for actual costs incurred, subject to any agreed limits, so that:

- a) They are not financially 'out of pocket' by their representative duties; and
- b) The parameters for the reimbursement of expenditure is known and understood.

To distinguish between those resources and expenses that are provided and the payment of the Aldermen's allowance paid under Section 340(2A) of the Local Government Act 1993.

Schedule 5 of the Local Government Act 1993 requires Council to adopt a policy in respect of payment of expenses incurred by councillors in carrying out the duties of office and make a copy of the policy available for public inspection.

SCOPE:

The Policy applies to the reimbursement of expenses and the provision of resources and facilities support for the Mayor and Aldermen of the Council.

The Policy covers expenditure which is additional to the Aldermen's Allowance as determined by legislation.

POLICY:

Council will reimburse expenditure incurred by Aldermen in undertaking their role as Alderman of the Council.

Expense reimbursement and the provision of resources and facilities will be made consistent with:

- a) Local Government (General) Regulations 2005 (S.R. 2005, No. 64); and
- b) the provisions of this policy (which includes the Regulations).

Resources the Council makes available to Aldermen (for example, a mobile/smart phone, tablet computer, PC or laptop) remain the property of the Council and must be returned at the end of the Alderman's Term of Office. At the end of the term, retiring Aldermen may be given the opportunity of purchasing items at a rate approved by the General Manager.

Any repairs for Council-owned equipment must be organised through the General Manager's office.

The Council recognises that Aldermen may have existing arrangements in place around, for example, bundled phone and mobile data/internet access. If this is the case, the Council will make arrangements for reimbursement of expenses with Aldermen on a case-by-case basis, subject to the limits detailed in the policy and the approval of the General Manager.

The support provided by this policy can be categorised as follows:

Resources and Facilities

- Communications and Administrative Support
- Information Technology
- Provision of Gifts to Others
- Mayoral Vehicle
- Parking

Expense Reimbursement

- Travel, Meals, Accommodation and Functions
- Private Vehicles
- Child Care
- Personal Care
- Claims for Reimbursement Procedure

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Section 1 COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

- **Report (Agenda and Minute) Distribution**

The arrangements for report distribution are:

- (a) Agendas for Council and Strategic Planning and Policy Committee will be distributed electronically.
- (b) Printed agendas will be available for collection from the Town Hall.
- (c) Minutes will be distributed electronically.

Printed minutes will not be provided.

- **Phone/s**

Aldermen will, on request, be provided with a mobile phone of the standard make and type that is being acquired by the Council at the time of the request.

Phone expenses will be reimbursed as follows:

A maximum of **\$150** per month for mobile telephone costs for a Council-provided mobile phone
OR

A maximum reimbursement of **\$150** per month for phone costs for a privately provided mobile phone and/or fixed line.

- **Office facilities, services and support staff**

Secretarial assistance for Council related correspondence will be made available. Assistance will not be provided for personal/private business matters.

Stationery will be provided for Council-related business.

- **Business Cards**

Aldermanic business cards will be provided on request.

Section 2 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- **Computer and Internet Access**

Aldermen will be provided with a tablet computer and mobile data service suitable for receiving and accessing electronic Council papers and related documentation. The monthly data allowance will be determined by the Council. **The cost of the mobile data service will be met by the Council.**

Aldermen will, on request, be provided with a PC or laptop computer of the standard make and type that is being acquired by Council at the time of the request. Internet access for the PC or laptop computer will be via the internet service that each Alderman elects to arrange and use with their preferred Internet Service Provider (ISP). Configuration of the PC or laptop for the internet connection is usually part of the Internet Service Provider's (ISP) package.

Aldermen will, on request, be provided with a once-only contribution of \$250 toward the cost of acquiring an internet connection or a wireless capability.

Aldermen will receive a contribution of \$50 per month toward the cost of their internet access (service provider charge).

Aldermen are expected to adhere to the basic information technology security principles recommended by the Council in their use of these devices (for example, PIN or password protection).

- **Software**

The tablet will be supplied with a document distribution application (DocsOnTap). The PC/laptop will be supplied with the same version of Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office that is installed on Council computers. Virus protection software will also be supplied.

Aldermen may install other applications to meet their own needs. Purchasing, licensing, installation and support of these other products is the responsibility of each Alderman.

- **Council Network**

The computers will be configured for stand-alone use. They will not have access to the Council's network. Aldermen are able to use the Council's network facilities via the PCs located in the Aldermen's area.

[Explanation: In order to protect the overall security (viruses etc.) of the Council's network, there are strict controls on the computers that can be connected to the network. To provide this capability for Aldermen would mean prohibiting the installation of other software on the laptop and restricting internet (site) access. For the expected type of use by Aldermen, a greater benefit and flexibility is provided by stand-alone operation than a restricted network configuration.]

- **Printers**

Aldermen will, on request, be provided with a contribution of \$200 toward the cost of purchasing or replacing a printer. The printer belongs to the Alderman.

An allowance of **\$10** per month will be provided toward the cost of consumables for personally owned printers.

A suitable printing device, at a standard determined by the General Manager, will be available in the Alderman's area to enable printing.

- **Email**

Council email is accessible externally via an internet connection. The final configuration of email accounts including email redirection facilities will be arranged with individual Aldermen. The Council's information management policies and standards apply to emails.

- **System Backup**

The backup of the data on the tablet and PC or laptop is a matter for each Alderman to manage as appropriate to their needs. Regular system backups are strongly recommended to protect from data loss in the event of failure.

- **System Support**

Training in specialised applications (e.g. DocsOnTap) will be provided as part of the induction process for Aldermen. Any other training for Aldermen (e.g. in the use of Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office) will be arranged on request through the Aldermen's Administration Officer with an external training provider. The Council will pay for reasonable costs as approved by the General Manager.

Support for the operation of the PC or laptop and tablet will be provided by the IT department during office hours. This support is primarily for equipment problems, not training. Any equipment failures and repairs are to be reported to the IT department so that repairs can be arranged. After hours support will not be available.

- **Return of Tablet and PC or Laptop**

When the tablet, PC or laptop is to be replaced or an Alderman leaves the Council, the equipment is to be returned to the IT department for removal of data and any non-standard software applications prior to reallocation or disposal.

Section 3 PROVISION OF GIFTS TO OTHERS

In fulfilling their civic and ceremonial roles and responsibilities, Aldermen will meet local, national and international delegates and officials.

In circumstances where the exchange of gifts between the host and visitor is considered courteous and expected, Council will provide a gift for the Alderman to exchange.

The provision of corporate gifts by Aldermen will be by request through the General Manager's office and will be of a standard considered appropriate for the event.

Requirements for the disclosure of gifts presented to Aldermen is detailed in the Policy for Acceptance of Gifts and Benefits by Aldermen (14-Plx-031).

Section 4 MAYORAL VEHICLE

Council is to make a vehicle available to the Mayor, or the Mayor's representative, when representing the City at meetings, functions, and other activities.

The Mayoral Vehicle is to be available on either of the following bases -

	Garaged at Home	Limited Private Use
Private Use	Drive to and from Council	Private use other than when on leave
Periods of Leave	Garaged at Town Hall	Garaged at Town Hall
Mayoral Contributions	Not required	Yes - to cover private use other than to and from Council

Use of the vehicle by other Aldermen and the General Manager will only occur at the Mayor's discretion.

Section 5 PARKING

Car parking will be made available for Aldermen in the car park near the Town Hall for use on meeting days and whilst conducting Council business.

Parking permits will be made available for use when on Council related business. Permits will relate to both on-street and off-street parking.

Section 6 TRAVEL, MEALS, ACCOMMODATION AND FUNCTIONS

- ***Attendee at Seminars/Conferences etc.***

The Council will pay for the cost of Aldermen to attend Council approved seminars, conferences and training programmes, including accommodation and travel expenses providing these are arranged through the General Manager's Office.

The actual cost incurred for meals and incidentals will be reimbursed (where these are not part of Conference Registration package) subject to the presentation of receipts and tax invoices for expenses claimed.

- ***Attendee at Functions***

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Aldermen may receive invitations to attend functions in their capacity as an Alderman.

Invitations with Council budgetary implications, will be referred to the General Manager for approval prior to agreeing to attend (retrospective payments will not be provided). Requests for approval will only be considered where the invitation is addressed specifically to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor or an individual Alderman.

The Council will not meet any costs during an election period where the Mayor, Deputy Mayor or particular Alderman standing for re-election is requesting payment.

It is recognised that the Mayor may still need to attend functions as Council's representative during an election period which will be funded by the Council subject to prior approval by the General Manager.

- ***Accompanying partners/guests***

A partner or guest may accompany an Alderman to conferences or a function where other attendees are generally accompanied by partners.

The Council will not generally pay or reimburse for guests' or partners' meals, accommodation, travel, social packages or attendance as an accompanying guest, unless specifically approved by a vote of Council, with the exception that the Council will pay the cost of partners attending conference dinner functions and partners' programs where an Alderman is attending a Council approved State or National conference.

- ***Council Meeting Meal Allowance***

A meal allowance of **\$35** for any Council meeting that extends beyond 5.30pm will be paid.

- ***Sister City Visits***

When an Alderman chooses to participate in an official visit to a Sister City as part of a delegation the Council will reimburse 100% of the Alderman's economy airfare.

The Council will determine how many Aldermen participate in overseas visits.

If billets are not available for Aldermen, accommodation costs for up to five nights will be paid by the Council for Aldermen and their partners.

Section 7 PRIVATE VEHICLES

Costs relating to private vehicle use will be reimbursed.

Reimbursement will be for the cost of private vehicle travel to meetings of a committee/group or a function, outside a 37 kilometre radius of the Town Hall, where an Alderman is representing Council at the direction of Council or the Mayor.

The rate of reimbursement is to be based on an appropriate industry reference or Australian Taxation Office rates.

Section 8 CHILD CARE

Council will reimburse the cost of necessary child care expenses incurred by Aldermen in the course of carrying out their duties, including:

- Attendance at Council and Council Committee meetings

- To attend meetings arising as a result of an Alderman being appointed by Council to an internal or external body or committee except where the body or committee reimburses relevant child care expenses incurred by the Alderman
- To attend informal briefing sessions or meetings with prior approval of the General Manager

Claims must be accompanied by a receipt from a licensed child care provider showing the date and time care was provided and detail the reason care was needed on each occasion.

Claims must be submitted on a fortnightly basis and be submitted on the approved Child Care Reimbursement Claim Form.

Alderman claiming reimbursement for child care expenses are required to provide the General Manager with documentary evidence regarding their entitlement or non-entitlement to the Commonwealth Government Child Care Benefit Scheme. Any entitlement is to be off-set against the hourly rate charged by the registered Child Care provider.

Section 9 PERSONAL CARE

Where an Alderman is required to employ or engage the services of a personal carer to attend to the needs of a member of the Alderman's immediate family or household, in order for that Alderman to carry out their duties as an Alderman, the Council will reimburse the cost of the personal carer expenses.

Claims must, on each occasion, be accompanied by a receipt from the personal care provider showing the date, time, and detail the reason and for whom the care was provided.

Where an Alderman is able to claim reimbursement for the provision of personal care services under any Commonwealth Government or Private Insurance Health Benefit Scheme, the Council will only reimburse the difference between the amount reimbursed by the scheme and the total cost of the service provided. Claims are to be submitted against any scheme before submission to the Council.

For the purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

Duties of an Alderman include:

- Attendance at the Council and Council Committee meetings;
- Attendance at meetings arising as a result of an Alderman being appointed by the Council to an internal or external body of committee;
- Attendance at informal briefing sessions or meetings with prior approval of the General Manager.

Immediate Family includes:

- Spouse or de facto spouse. (A de facto spouse means a person who lives with the Alderman as their spouse or partner on a bona fide domestic basis); and

- Child or an adult child (including an adopted child, a step child or an ex-nuptial child), parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling of the Alderman.

Section 10 CLAIMS FOR REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURE

Claims for reimbursement are to be submitted on a fortnightly basis using the Claim Form provided.

When making claims for reimbursement of expenses, Aldermen must provide original receipts, tax invoices and documentation to support a claim. Each claim must clearly identify the purpose, in order to make clear the basis of the claim and its relation to the policy guidelines.

Claims for reimbursement are to be submitted to the General Manager.

Where, in the opinion of the General Manager, a question arises as to whether a claim for reimbursement of expenses or any part thereof is eligible under this policy, the matter will, in the first instance be brought to the attention of the Mayor who will, in turn, discuss the matter with the Alderman making the claim. Should the question still remain, the matter is to be referred to a Closed Session of Council for a decision.

PUBLICATION

Section 72 of the *Local Government Act 1993* requires the Council to publish in its Annual Report a statement of the total allowances and expenses paid to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Aldermen. These will be reported so that individual's expenses are identified.

PRINCIPLES:

The following principles have been (with some minor modifications/explanation) taken from the Victorian Government guidelines and underpin the basis for this policy.

1. Appropriate Aldermanic conduct (use of public resources).
2. Diversity in participation, equity and access (not to create a financial barrier to participation).
3. Accountability, transparency and community acceptance.
4. Local flexibility according to complexity, needs and standards.
5. No disadvantage - separation of allowances from reimbursement of expenses and provision of resources and facilities.

There is no right of offset between expense types, where maximum amounts have been set under this policy.

Council's Organisational Values apply to all activities.

RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES:

17-Plx-006 Record Keeping for Aldermen Policy

14-Plx-031 Policy for Acceptance of Gifts and Benefits by Aldermen

14-Plx-032 Code of Conduct for Aldermen Policy

RELATED LEGISLATION:

Local Government Act 1993

Local Government (General) Regulations 2005 (S.R 2005, No. 64)

REFERENCES:

Mayor and Councillor Entitlements Information Guide, Department of Planning and Community Development - Victoria, November 2008 (last viewed 4 July 2014).

DEFINITIONS:

"duties of office" includes attendance at official Council meetings, approved functions and whilst working on Council business other than at home.

"reasonable expenses" means a standard unit or hourly rate that is readily available to members of the public for a similar service.

"reimbursement of child care expenses" means reimbursing the cost of securing licensed child care, less any amount received as a Commonwealth Government subsidy for the care provided. This may from time to time be only available from Council nominated child care providers at the discretion of the Council.

"phone costs" includes rental and call costs.

REVIEW:

This policy will be reviewed to coincide with Council elections or more frequently, if dictated by operational demands and with Council's approval.