Councillors' Expenses and Resources Policy

PURPOSE

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

b) They are not financially 'out of pocket' because of carrying out their duties of office; and
b) The parameters for the reimbursement of expenditure are known and understood.

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

Schedule 5 of the Act 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.

It also makes provision for support services, facilities, and equipment on loan to a Councillor on any conditions the Council considers appropriate.

SCOPE

The Policy applies to the reimbursement of and/or contribution to expenses and the provision of resources and facilities support for the Mayor and Councillors of the Council.

The Policy covers expenditure which is additional to the Councillor's Allowance as determined by legislation. It sets out the conditions on which the Council considers it appropriate to provide support services, facilities and equipment on loan in accordance with clause 2 of Schedule 5 of the Act.

POLICY

The Council will reimburse reasonable expenditure incurred by Councillors in carrying out the duties of office as a Councillor of the Council.

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

b) *Local Government (General) Regulations 2025* (Tas) (the Regulations), Regulation 50; and
b) the provisions of this policy.

The Council may approve other expenses not explicitly listed in this Policy, where these are demonstrably tied to the performance of a Councillor's official duties.

Resources the Council makes available to Councillors (for example a tablet or laptop) remain the property of the Council and must be returned at the end of the Councillor's term of office. At the end of the term, retiring Councillors may request to purchase items at a rate approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

Any repairs for Council-owned equipment must be organised through the Chief Executive Officer's office.

The Council recognises that Councillors 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 Councillors on a case-by-case basis, subject to the limits detailed in the policy and the approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

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

Expense Reimbursement

- Telephone and Use of the Internet
- Travelling (including meals, accommodation, and functions)
- Care of a Dependant
- Stationery and Office Supplies.
- Other
  - Council Meeting Meal Allowance
  - Working with Vulnerable People Registration
- Claims for Reimbursement Procedure

Resources and Facilities

- Communications and Administrative Support
- Information Technology
- Provision of Gifts to Others
- Mayoral Vehicle
- Parking
- Insurance
- Training and Professional Development

There is no right of offset between expense types and Councillors cannot transfer unused reimbursement amounts from one expense category to another where maximum amounts have been set under this policy.

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Section 1 PHONE AND INTERNET EXPENSES

Telephone rental or plans, telephone calls and use of the internet are categories in which a Councillor is entitled to be reimbursed for their reasonable expenses pursuant to regulation 50 of the Regulations.

- ***Telephone***

Councillors can claim up to a maximum reimbursement of **$100 per month** for phone costs for a private mobile phone, upon production of an invoice that confirms the charges actually incurred.

- ***Use of the Internet***

Internet access for the Council-issued devices when not at a Council building will be via the internet service that each Councillor elects to arrange and use with their preferred Internet Service Provider (ISP).

Councillors can claim a maximum reimbursement of **$50 per month** toward the cost of their internet access (service provider charge). Proof of expense will be requried to support the claim for reimmbursement.

Section 2 TRAVELLING (including meals, accommodation and functions)

- ***Use of Private Vehicles***

Costs relating to private vehicle use while carrying out the duties of office as a Councillor will be reimbursed where a Councillor is representing Council at the direction of Council or the Mayor.

Reimbursement is available for the direct route to and from the venue where the meeting, committee/group activity or function, is outside a 37 kilometre radius of Town Hall.

The rate of reimbursement is to be based on Australian Taxation Office rates.

- ***Meal Expense***

A meal expense is claimable for reimbursement when attending:
- Council business such as a conference, function or event, where the meal is not provided as part of the registration
- a Council event that requires overnight stay and meals are not provided at the venue.

The maximum claimable amount for meals will be capped at the rates identified for each meal type in Table 1 of the Australian Taxation Office's Reasonable Travel Allowance Rates published annually [Travel allowances | Australian Taxation Office].

The Council will not reimburse alcoholic drinks at any time.

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

The Council will pay for the cost of Councillors to attend approved seminars/conferences, including accommodation and travel expenses providing these are approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

In relation to overseas seminars/conferences/travel, this will be referred to Council to determine whether any elected member/s should attend.

Costs incurred for meals and incidentals will be reimbursed where these are not included in the conference registration package, subject to the presentation of receipts and tax invoices for expenses claimed and the limits identified in this policy.

Councillors are encouraged to provide a written report on each interstate or overseas conference attended within three (3) months of the conclusion of the conference. The report may be prepared individually by elected members or may be a joint report of the Councillors who attended.

All travel undertaken by the Mayor must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer, with the Mayor providing justification for the travel. This may include travel of both intrastate and interstate. If approved, associated travel costs will be met by Council. Costs will only be covered for the Mayor and any accompanying Council staff.

- ***Attendee at Functions***

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors may receive invitations to attend functions in their capacity as a Councillor.

Invitations with Council budgetary implications will be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for approval before 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 Councillor.

The Council will not meet any costs during an election period where the Mayor, Deputy Mayor or particular Councillor 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 Chief Executive Officer.

- ***Accompanying partners/guests***

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

The Council will not pay or reimburse for guests' or partners' meals, accommodation, travel, social packages or attendance as an accompanying guest, unless specifically approved by the Chief Executive Officer or Council.

- ***Sister City Visits***

When a Mayor/Councillor is approved to participate in an official visit to a Sister City as part of a delegation, generally through a nomination process, the Council will fund the Councillor's appropriate airfare, accommodation and associated travel expenses.

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

Section 3 CARE OF A DEPENDANT

The Council will reimburse the cost of necessary care of any person who is a dependent or immediate family member of the Councillor and who requires the care while the Councillor is carrying out their duties of office, including:

- Attendance at Council and Council Committee meetings
- Attendance at meetings arising as a result of a Councillor being appointed by Council to an internal or external body or committee, except where the body or committee reimburses relevant care expenses incurred by the Councillor
- Attendance at informal briefing sessions or meetings with prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer

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

Where a Councillor is able to claim reimbursement for the provision of care 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.

Section 4 STATIONERY AND OFFICE SUPPLIES

Council staff will provide stationery and printing for Councillors when required for carrying out their duties of office.

Councillor business cards will be provided on request.

Section 5 OTHER

- ***Council Meeting Meal Allowance***

A meal allowance of **$40** will be paid for any Council meeting that extends beyond 5.30pm.

- ***Working with Vulnerable People Registration***

In accordance with regulation 50(c) of the Regulations, where a Councillor obtains a Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) Card for the activities and duties of office performed in their capacity as a Councillor with the Council, the Council will reimburse the registration or renewal cost of the WWVP check.

Section 6 CLAIMS FOR REIMBURSEMENT PROCEDURE

Claims for reimbursement are to be submitted on a fortnightly basis using Councillor's Reimbursement Claim Form (14-Fm-005).

When making claims for reimbursement of expenses, Councillors must provide original itemised 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 Chief Executive Officer no later than three (3) months after the expense has been incurred.

Where, in the opinion of the Chief Executive Officer, a question arises as to whether a claim for reimbursement of expenses or any part of a claim is eligible under this policy, the matter will, in the first instance, be brought to the attention of the Mayor. The Mayor will discuss the matter with the Councillor making the claim. If the question remains unresolved, the matter is to be referred to a Closed Session of Council for a decision.

Given the varied contexts in which expenses may arise, the Council may also obtain independent legal advice if there is any uncertainty whether the expense was incurred in carrying out the duties of office, particularly for expenses that may appear personal in nature.

The fundamental test for reimbursement under Schedule 5 of the *Local Government Act 1993* remains whether the expense was incurred in carrying out the duties of office, rather than whether it is merely personal or non-personal.

Section 7 COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

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

All administrative support for carrying out the duties of office will be provided for Councillors by Council staff. Assistance will not be provided for personal/private business matters.

A suitable printing device, at a standard determined by the Chief Executive Officer, will be available in the Councillor's area to enable printing.

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

The arrangements for report distribution are:

a) Agendas for Council, workshops and Council committee meetings will be distributed electronically. This is City of Launceston's preferred method of distribution.
b) Councillors who require printed agendas are to collect them from Town Hall.
c) Minutes will be distributed electronically only.

- ***Council Devices***

Councillors will be provided with a Council-issued device (tablet or laptop computer) and a protective cover of the standard make and type that is being acquired by the Council at the time. It will include a mobile data service suitable for receiving and accessing electronic Council papers and related documentation. The monthly data allowance will be determined by the Council and the cost of the mobile data service for the device will be met by the Council.

Councillors are expected to adhere to the information technology security standards recommended by the Council in their use of these devices (for example, PIN, password protection or multifactor authentication).

- ***Software***

Council-issued devices will be supplied with a document distribution application (DocsOnTap). Devices 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.

Councillors may not install other software applications on Council-issued devices unless approved by the Chief Executive Officer. If approved, any purchasing, licensing, installation and support of these applications will be the responsibility of each Councillor.

- ***Council Network***

Council-issued devices will be configured for stand-alone use. They will not have access to the Council's network. Councillors who have a Council-issued laptop are able to use the Council's network facilities via the Councillors' area.

- ***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 Councillors. The Council's information management policies and standards apply to emails.

- ***System Backup***

The backup of the data on the tablet or laptop is a matter for each Councillor 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 Councillors. Any other IT training for Councillors (e.g. in the use of Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office) will be arranged on request through the Councillor's administration support with an external training provider if required. The Council will pay for reasonable costs as approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

Support for the operation of Council-issued devices 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 Council Devices***

When the device is to be replaced or a Councillor 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 8 PROVISION OF GIFTS TO OTHERS

In fulfilling their civic and ceremonial roles and responsibilities, Councillors 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, the Council will provide a gift for the Councillor to exchange.

The provision of corporate gifts by Councillors will be by request through the Chief Executive Officer's office and will be of a standard considered appropriate for the event.

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

Section 9 MAYORAL VEHICLE

The 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 model and value of vehicle supplied to the Mayor is determined and approved by the Chief Executive Officer with consideration given to the Light Fleet Vehicle Management Policy and Usage Guidelines (13-Pl-002).

Use of the vehicle by other Councillors or the Chief Executive Officer will only occur at the Chief Executive Officer's discretion.

Section 10 PARKING

One parking permit and one electronic parking pass will be made available to each Councillor for use when undertaking their duties of office in any available unreserved space, subject to zoned time limits and relevant parking rules.

Permits will relate to on-street parking and passes will relate to off-street parking within the four Council-owned multi-storey car parks (CH Smith, Elizabeth Street, Paterson Street East, and Paterson Street West).

Section 11 INSURANCE

The Council will provide appropriate insurance coverage to Councillors, to apply whilst travelling to and from meetings and carrying out their duties of office on behalf of the Council, including but not limited to, Public Liability and Professional Indemnity, Personal Accident, and Corporate Travel Insurance.

Section 12 TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ***Post-Election Induction Program***

Following their election, Councillors will be provided with an induction program to familiarise themselves with the Council's values and culture, organisational structure, and the roles and responsibilities of Councillors under the Act. The induction program will involve a range of presentations from Executive and Senior Leaders, including strategic business planning and any specific issues affecting the City of Launceston at the time.

- ***Individual Professional Development Activities***

Councillors can request individual professional development to support them in carrying out their duties of office under the annual professional learning budget. The Council will pay for the cost of Councillors to attend approved training, including accommodation and travel expenses providing these are approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) Company Directors Course covers governance and the practice of directorship, the legal environment, risk and strategy, financial literacy and performance, and achieving board effectiveness. As this course is considered to provide significant value to elected members, the cost of the course is funded in addition to the annual professional learning budget.

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

The cost of any post-nominal award assessment or ongoing professional membership costs are not included.

PUBLICATION

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

PRINCIPLES

Council's Organisational Values apply to all activities.

RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES

14-Fm-005 Councillor's Reimbursement Claim Form
17-Plx-006 Record Keeping for Councillors Policy
14-Plx-031 Policy for Acceptance of Gifts and Benefits by Councillors
31-Pl-011 Mobile Devices Policy
31-Pl-004 Mobile Phones and Smart Phones Policy
31-Pl-005 Information Security Policy
31-Pl-009 Information Systems and IT Acceptable Use Policy
13-Pl-002 Light Fleet Vehicle Management Policy and Usage Guidelines
12-Pl-005 Corporate Credit Card Policy

RELATED LEGISLATION

Local Government Act 1993 (Tas)
Local Government (General) Regulations 2025 (Tas)
Local Government (Code of Conduct) Order 2024 (Tas)

REFERENCES

Councillor allowances information sheet, Department of Premier and Cabinet (Tas), June 2025
14-Rf-014 Councillor Expenses Allowances Reference

DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Duties of office	Duties performed in their capacity as a Councillor of the Council, including attendance at official Council meetings, approved functions, and while working on Council-related 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 care expenses	Means reimbursing the cost of securing licensed care, less any amount received as a Commonwealth Government subsidy for the care provided. From time to time, this may only be available through Council-nominated care providers, at the discretion of the Council.
Phone costs	Includes phone call and data costs only.
Immediate Family	Includes: • Spouse or de facto spouse (a de facto spouse means a person who lives with the Councillor 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 Councillor.