

Strathbogie Shire Council Councillor Expenses Policy

September 2023



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Councillor Expenses Policy

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PART 1 POLICY

1. PURPOSE

Section 8 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) states that the role of a council is to provide leadership and good governance for the municipal district for the benefit and wellbeing of the municipal community. It must adhere to, and implement, the Overarching Governance Principles and supporting principles outlined in section 9 of the Act in its day to day operations and decision making.

To successfully undertake their role as required under the Act, Councillors need the support of the organisation, along with access to resources and facilities.

Section 39 of the Act outlines provisions for allowances for the mayor, deputy mayor and councillors.

Section 40 of the Act states that council must reimburse a councillor or member of a delegated committee for out-of-pocket expenses if they:

- are bona fide expenses; and
- have been reasonably incurred in the performance of the role of Councillor or member of a delegated committee; and
- are reasonably necessary for the Councillor or member of a delegated committee to perform that role.

This section also requires the details of reimbursements to be provided to Council's Audit and Risk Committee (see clause 37 of this policy).

Section 41 of the Act requires all councils to prepare and adopt a council expense policy, which can also be applied to council committees. The policy must:

- specify procedures to be followed in applying for reimbursement and in reimbursing expenses
- comply with any requirements prescribed by the regulations in relation to the reimbursement of expenses
- provide for the reimbursement of childcare costs where the provision of childcare is reasonably required for a Councillor or member of a delegated committee to perform their role
- have particular regard to expenses incurred by a Councillor who is a carer in a care relationship within the meaning of section 4 of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012*.

Section 42 states that the resources and facilities reasonably required for Councillors to perform their duties must be made available to them, including considerations relating to:

- the support that may be required by a Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Councillor because of a disability
- the support that may be required by a Councillor who is a carer in a care relationship within the meaning of section 4 of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012*.

Section 57 requires Council to adopt a Public Transparency Policy to give effect to the public transparency principles outlined under section 58. As outlined in this policy, our website will include

information about the mayor and councillors, along with their contact details. The reports submitted to the Audit and Risk Committee in relation to Councillor expenses will also be published on Council's website.

While no regulations have been made under the 2020 Act, guidance will be taken from section 14 (2)(db) of former Act's Planning and Reporting Regulations, which required details of the expenses, including any reimbursed expenses, for each councillor and member of a council delegated committee paid by the council, categorised separately as–

- (i) travel expenses
- (ii) car mileage expenses
- (iii) childcare expenses
- (iv) information and communication technology expenses
- (v) conferences
- (vi) training expenses

Given the need to cater for Councillors with disabilities or carer responsibilities, the reimbursement of expenses relating to these two additional matters will be included in these pre-existing reporting categories.

As councils are funded with public money, a substantial portion of which comes from rates income, it is essential that this policy identifies how public resources and funding will be allocated to support councillors in efficiently and effectively performing their duties. This policy sets out how Strathbogie Shire Council will achieve maximum transparency around Council expenses.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy aims to:

- identify the reasonable levels of expenditure, resources and facilities to be provided to support councillors in fulfilling their duties on behalf of the community under the Act
- clarify the circumstances under which Council will make payment for
 - professional development; and
 - reimbursement of expenses as specified by the Act.
- outline the procedures and internal controls for the review and consideration of councillor expense claims
- specify how expenditure under this policy will be closely and independently monitored
- explain how expenses and resources provided under this policy will be reported on a regular basis to Council, the Audit Committee and the community in accordance with the Planning and Reporting Regulations.

3. APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

Section 42 of the Act requires a minimum level of resources and facilities to be provided to councillors so that they can undertake their duties.

It is imperative that the following policy principles underpin expenses and resources relating to Strathbogie Shire Councillor activity and the actions of our councillors:

- **Value** for the expenses claimed and resources used
- **Demonstrated community benefit** from the expense incurred or resources provided

- **Accountability and consistency** through adequate internal review of claims and regular independent auditing and data analysis to identify anomalies
- **No disadvantage** by ensuring there is separation of, and no subsidisation between, mayoral and councillor allowances from reimbursement of expenses and other minimum resources and facilities
- **Transparency** through the provision of information to the community as required by the Act and any future regulations.

This policy presumes councillors are residents in the Shire and any additional costs or expenses attributable to a councillor's residence being outside the municipality are considered inappropriate for reimbursement in the absence of a prior Council resolution to the contrary.

Any cost or expense (or portion thereof) which should reasonably be borne by another entity, or for which another entity is reasonably liable, is outside the scope of this policy and shall not be paid or reimbursed by Council.

Council resources must not be used for the purposes of election campaigns for Councillors under any circumstances as per Council's Election (Caretaker) Period Policy which forms part of the Governance Rules which come into effect on 1 September 2020.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibilities
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and comply with the policy and its procedures • Review and adoption of the policy as required • Submission of forms and information supporting expense claims as required by this policy.
Director People and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation and general oversight of the policy's implementation • Submission of quarterly reporting on Councillor expenses to the Audit and Risk Committee
Audit and Risk Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of this policy and its procedures as its required • Independent review and oversight of quarterly Councillor expenses reports/claims
Governance Officer and EA to the Chief Executive Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt of claim forms, check the accuracy of the information provided and submit to approval workflows.
Finance department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely processing of approved expense claim forms.

5. COUNCILLOR CONDUCT

Clause 2.1 of the Councillor Code of Conduct identifies the Primary Principles of conduct that in performing the role of a councillor, a Councillor must comply with the Act and must:

- a) act with integrity
- b) impartially exercise their responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- c) not improperly seek to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

General councillor conduct principles, which ensure councillors comply with the Act, state that a councillor must:

- avoid conflicts between their public duties as a councillor and their personal interests and obligations
- act honestly and avoid statements (whether oral or in writing) or actions that will or are likely to mislead or deceive a person
- exercise reasonable care and diligence and submit themselves to the lawful scrutiny that is appropriate to their office
- endeavour to ensure that public resources are used prudently and solely in the public interest
- act lawfully and in accordance with the trust placed in him or her as an elected representative
- support and promote these principles by leadership and example and act in a way that secures and preserves public confidence in the office of councillor.

The application of this policy is a fundamental way in which Strathbogie Shire Council demonstrates its commitment to the 2021-25 Council Plan, particularly Strategic Focus Area 6 Accountable. Transparent. Responsible, which details the following strategies around good governance:

As a Council we will:

Achieve the highest level of good governance across the organisation and as an elected Council

Maximise public transparency and accountability around our performance and decision-making processes

Be financially responsible, achieving the greatest possible community benefit from the programs, initiatives and services we fund

6. DEFINITIONS

Car mileage expenses	means all reimbursement of expenses to Councillors for kilometres travelled in their private vehicle for Council related business and expenses relating to the Mayoral vehicle (fuel card costs, servicing/maintenance) excluding depreciation costs
Childcare/family care expenses	means the cost of caring for children or other people where the councillor is in a care relationship as defined by section 4 of the <i>Carers Recognition Act 2012</i> including travel costs for the carer and hourly rates for care required to undertake Council business

Conference expenses	means conference registration fees, meals, accommodation, car parking (including airport parking) and any other legitimate costs incurred whilst at the event, tickets to dinners or events
Duties of a Councillor	means duties performed by a Councillor, including the Mayor, that are necessary or appropriate for the purposes of achieving the objectives of a Council having regard to any relevant Act, any regulations, Ministerial guidelines or Council policy
Information and communication technology expenses	means the reimbursement of expenses for phone calls or data to Councillors, capital costs of purchasing hardware and the cost of monthly mobile phone usage/data plans
Information Guide	means the Information Guide Mayor and Councillor Entitlements - reimbursement of expenses and provision of resources and facilities support for Victorian Mayors and Councillors, Department of Planning and Community Development 2008
Other incidental expenses	means expenses that cannot be attributed to other categories
the Act	means the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> , or where referenced, remaining sections of the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i>
the Regulations	means any regulations made under the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> or, where referenced, the former Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2014
the General regulations	means the Local Government (General) Regulations 2015
Training expenses	means training registration fees and any other legitimate costs incurred whilst at the training event.
Travel expenses	means transactions related to flights for conferences, train fares, taxi/Uber fares, Myki cards and bus fares/bus hire.

7. RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

- Information Guide Mayor and Councillor Entitlements - reimbursement of expenses and provision of resources and facilities support for Victorian Mayors and Councillors, Department of Planning and Community Development 2008
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019*
- *Carers Recognition Act 2012*
- Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020
- Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020
- Fraud and Corruption Controls – Local Government, Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO), June 2019

- Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Council Plan 2021-25
- Election (Caretaker) Period Policy as incorporated into Council's Governance Rules
- Fraud and Corruption Policy
- Media Policy and Protocols

8. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed within 12 months of each general election unless Council determines that an earlier review is required.

PART 2

9. DUTIES OF COUNCILLORS

The duties and activities considered to be necessary for each councillor to perform in accordance with their role as defined by the Act include, but are not limited to:

- attending Council meetings, meetings of advisory groups of Council, formal briefing sessions and civic or ceremonial functions convened by the Council, the Mayor or the Chief Executive Officer
- attending meetings or workshops scheduled by the Council, the Mayor or the Chief Executive Officer
- attending meetings with community members, including conducting a site visit, in response to issues raised by a community member or ratepayer
- participating in delegations or deputations to which the councillor has been duly appointed as a representative of Council
- attending a meeting or function as the nominated representative of Council or the mayor
- attending meetings of community groups, organisations and statutory authorities to which the councillor has been appointed Council delegate or the nominated representative of Council
- attendance at site inspections or meetings relevant to a matter which is, or is anticipated to be, the subject of a decision of Council
- attending conferences, seminars, training or professional development courses as an attendee and/or speaker and which:
 - contribute to the development of personal and professional skills or knowledge of the councillor which are necessary for the performance of the duties of a councillor; and
 - are consistent with Council's objectives; and
 - will cover or present material with application, importance or relevance to current or future issues faced by the Council; and
 - are within the annual budget allocations for the provision of councillor training.

10. MINIMUM RESOURCES AND FACILITIES FOR COUNCILLORS

Using the Information Guide – Mayor and Councillor Entitlements published in 2008 as a general guide, the minimum resources and facilities that will be made available to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors are:

Resources And Facilities

- limited administrative support for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor
- office for Mayor/Deputy Mayor/Councillors to share
- vehicle for Mayor
- access to Council pool vehicles for the Deputy Mayor and Councillors where available
- computer – laptop (including an email account)
- mobile phone
- stationery
- access to photocopier/printer at the Euroa Civic centre or Nagambie Visitor Information centre

Reimbursement of Expenses

- travel - including reimbursement of public transport costs
- phone – re-imbursement of relevant call costs (where a Councillor elects not to accept a Council phone)
- internet
- childcare/family care.

Strathbogie Shire Council will provide these resources and facilities to our Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors

The purchase and replacement of equipment, attendance at training and seminars and reimbursement of expenses is subject to the availability of relevant budget funds and the approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

Facilities will also be provided to any Councillor with a disability, as identified in consultation with them, to ensure that they are able to undertake their duties.

11. WHAT ARE REASONABLE EXPENSES?

The test to be applied in determining whether or not an expense is appropriately incurred is whether the expenditure is necessary because it is related to, or a consequence of, a Councillor undertaking their duties on behalf of the local community as specified by the Act.

Expenses incurred by councillors when acting in a private capacity will not be reimbursed or paid under any circumstance.

Any costs incurred by a councillor which are not covered specifically within this policy will not be met unless a resolution has been passed for Council to incur the expense.

Councillors must provide detailed supporting evidentiary documentation for all expense reimbursement requests for independent review prior to the authorisation of any reimbursement.

Failure to provide the required documentation specified by this policy will result in the request for reimbursement being refused.

Councillors must take personal responsibility and be accountable for all expenses paid.

Reimbursement / Direct Payment

Councillors may choose to receive reimbursements after incurring expenses.

Alternatively, Councillors may request direct payment to be made on their behalf by Council for expenses such as Myki cards, conference registration fees, accommodation or domestic/interstate travel.

Time Limit For All Reimbursement Requests

Reimbursement claims must be lodged no later than six (6) weeks from the expense was incurred. Expenses claimed out of this time will need to be approved via a Council resolution. Officers will prepare a Council report for Councillor consideration at the next available Council meeting cycle following the lodgement of a late claim.

Late claims occurring on a regular basis will not be approved.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

To ensure that GST input tax credits are correctly claimed all purchasing card transactions must be supported by a tax invoice from the supplier containing the following details:

- the supplier's identity (legal name, trading name as it appears in the Australian Business Register)
- the supplier's ABN
- a brief description of each item sold, including the quantity (if applicable) and the price of what was sold
- the GST amount payable for each sale, which may be shown separately
- the date the tax invoice was issued.

PART 3

12. MAYOR, DEPUTY MAYOR AND COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES

13.1 Context

Section 39(1) of the Act states that allowances for the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors will be set by a determination from the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal under the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019*. Until such a determination is made, the current allowances prescribed by the Minister via Order in Council will remain in place.

At its Statutory Meeting of 15 November 2016, Council resolved to set the Mayoral and Councillor allowances at the maximum prescribed by the Order in Council for Category 1 (small rural) council and that these allowances be indexed in future years in accordance with any future Order in Council issued by the Minister for Local Government.

An additional allowance equivalent to the superannuation guarantee contribution must also be paid to all councillors.

In accordance with the Act a:

- Mayor or a Deputy Mayor is not entitled to receive an allowance as a Councillor while the Mayor or Deputy Mayor is receiving an allowance as prescribed for a Mayor or a Deputy Mayor
- A Council cannot pay an allowance to a Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Councillor that exceeds the amount specified in the relevant Determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal under the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019*
- A Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Councillor may elect—
 - (a) to receive the entire allowance to which they are entitled; or
 - (b) to receive a specified part of the allowance to which they are entitled; or
 - (c) to receive no allowance.

13.2 Policy

As per the Act, allowances are to be paid at the level identified in the most recent determination by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal.

Mayoral and Councillor Allowances will be paid in 12 equal monthly payments, one month in advance by the seventh (7th) working day of each month.

No more than one month's allowance will be paid in advance.

The allowance equivalent to the superannuation guarantee contribution may be paid into a superannuation account of the councillor's choice or may be taken in addition to their allowance.

Mayor and Councillors' allowances are taxable income and councillors should put in place their own processes for documenting claimable expenses. Any personal taxation implications from the receipt of allowances are the responsibility of individual Councillors. An annual statement of total allowances, reimbursements and any contributions to the cost of the Mayoral vehicle will be provided by Council for tax purposes.

Where the Mayor or a Councillor is granted a leave of absence from Council for a period of time, it is at the discretion of the mayor or councillor if they wish to suspend their allowance during the period of absence.

Mayoral Vehicle

Council can resolve to provide to the Mayor a fully maintained vehicle (fully registered, maintained, fuelled and comprehensively insured) of a suitable standard in keeping with the role of the Mayor, having regard to community perception and environmental sustainability based on the following criteria:

- operating efficiency – fuel efficiency and cost of fuel
- safety – the level of occupant protection provided by vehicles in front and side crashes, with a minimum of five star safety rating
- price – the cost to Council.

The vehicle shall be used by the Mayor to assist him/her in carrying out their official duties, and for private personal and family use during the mayoral term. The use of the mayoral vehicle for interstate travel must be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

Eligible people able to drive the mayoral vehicle include direct family (household) members over 25 years of age including the Mayor's partner, spouse and children that hold a current, valid and full Victorian driver's licence, a Councillor or a Council officer.

Councillors must not leave items of a personal nature in Council vehicles as only limited coverage exists for personal effects.

The Mayor may choose not to accept the use of a vehicle and use his/her own vehicle and instead, with the ability to receive reimbursement for use of their private vehicle through a car mileage expense claim.

The mayoral car will be replaced in accordance with Council's Motor Vehicle CEO Directive.

Council Resolutions Regarding A Mayoral Vehicle

Council may resolve to require a contribution to be deducted from the mayoral allowance to assist in covering the cost of operating the vehicle.

13. TRAVEL EXPENSES

14.1 Context

Travel expenses, including any reimbursements, must be recorded and reported in Council's Annual Report.

Interstate/overseas travel, along with trips within Victoria of more than three days, must be recorded in a publicly available register in accordance with Council's Public Transparency Policy.

14.2 Policy

Travel may be by any of the following means:

- private vehicle
- Council pool vehicle subject to availability and with prior consent from the Chief Executive Officer pending availability of a pool car
- taxi charge card or vouchers provided by Council
- sustainable transport using a Myki card issued by Council or VLine ticket
- buses or vehicles hired by Council for group travel.

The following provisions will be applied to determine the amount of travel related out of pocket expenses that will be reimbursed:

- a) travel must be undertaken as quickly as possible and by the shortest route possible
- b) where travel is by air, the standard form of travel will be economy class.

Council will meet the cost of the following car parking fees relating to travel:

- c) hotel/motel parking – additional car parking fees not included in the accommodation cost
- d) airport parking for the parking of a councillor's private vehicle at an airport for the duration of the approved Councillor attendance requirement.
- e) Road tolls

A Councillor undertaking private travel arrangements in conjunction with Council approved and funded travel must ensure that all costs incurred from private travel are clearly separated from the Council funded travel arrangements.

14. REMOTE AREA TRAVEL ALLOWANCE

15.1 Context

Councillors may receive an additional allowance under circumstances where they are considered to live remotely from their duties.

15.2 Policy

If a Council member normally resides more than 50 kilometres one way by the shortest possible practicable road distance from the location or locations specified for the conduct of ordinary, special or committee meetings of the Council, or any municipal or community functions which have been authorised by Council resolution for the Council member to attend, the Council member is entitled to be paid an allowance specified by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal for each day on which one or more meetings or authorised functions were attended by the Council member, up to a maximum level set per annum.

15. CAR MILEAGE EXPENSES

16.1 Context

Councillors using their private vehicles may claim expense reimbursement where such travel is in the course of conducting legitimate Council business.

The following provisions will be applied to determine the amount of travel related out of pocket expenses that will be reimbursed:

- (a) travel must be undertaken as quickly as possible and by the shortest route possible
- (b) claims will only be paid on the basis of the actual form of transport used and in the form of reasonable allowances towards, or reimbursement of, necessary out of pocket expenses.

16.2 Policy

Reimbursement of car mileage expenses will only be approved if Councillors use the official claim form attached to this policy and provide adequate detail of:

- the purpose of the trip
- date and location of meeting/site visit
- odometer readings for the start and the end of the trip
- total kilometres travelled.

The cost of any tolls and/or commercial car parking fees incurred during the travel will be reimbursed by Council if the requirements of this clause are met.

Where parking meter/ticket machine expenses are incurred on Council business and a receipt is not available, a photograph of the parking meter and payment made by the councillor must be taken and submitted with the official claim form.

Documentary evidence of any travel related expenses must be provided by the councillor in the form of itemised tax invoice receipts or invoices for tolls, parking and petrol. Failure to provide this evidence will result in the claim being refused.

Reimbursement Rate Per Kilometre

The allowance payable to councillors for use of their own private vehicle on Council business will be in accordance with the rates prescribed by the Australian Taxation Office for the relevant financial year.

Traffic Or Parking Infringements

Council will not reimburse councillors for any infringements incurred for traffic or parking expenses under any circumstances.

16. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY EXPENSES

17.1 Context

Councillors will be provided with communications equipment to ensure they can efficiently and effectively undertake their duties.

Councillors may decline the provision of Council IT equipment, provide they have suitable devices to access Council network. Council will provide storage capacity (owned by Council or linked to Council infrastructure) for Councillors using private equipment when appropriate for Council business storage.

17.2 Policy

As a minimum, the following will be offered to Councillors:

- a smart phone
- tablet or equivalent
- access to a photocopier/printer at the Euroa Civic Centre or Nagambie Visitor Information Centre
- internet connection to be provided through the smart phone or tablet

Printed documents are available on request and can be collected from the Euroa Civic Centre or the Nagambie Visitor Information Centre

The make, model and specifications of all communications equipment, the associated contracts or plans and replacement of equipment shall be at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer or they/their delegate.

International calls and international roaming will not be permitted or provided as part of the phone and data plan.

All communications equipment remains the property of Council and must be returned at the end of the councillor's term of office, retirement or resignation or upon suspension.

Accounts for this equipment will be in the name of Strathbogie Shire Council and sent directly to Council.

The Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Council, will review Councillors' communication equipment provision and will update equipment at:

- the commencement of each new electoral term; and
- any stage during the electoral term where the organisation believes an update is appropriate.

Reimbursement of Council for Personal or Non-Council Business Use

Council provided communications equipment is to be used for Council related business activities.

At present, Councillor phones are on capped cost plans of a value less than \$40 per Councillor per month. This means unlimited phone calls can be made for the set capped price.

Given this, Council will cover the entire cost of plans for Councillor smart phones, however Councillors must ensure that there is limited, incidental private use of their equipment; this is because the phone is provided for Council business and the costs, along with wear and tear on the phone should be related to this purpose.

Use of Council Equipment

Council equipment is provided for councillor use only.

The information technology platform provided to Councillors is based on Strathbogie Shire Council licensed software. No additional software is to be loaded onto Council provided hardware without the consent of the Chief Executive Officer or they/their delegate.

Councillors are responsible for the protection of the equipment directly under their control, and in particular transport laptops and tablets securely.

Anti-virus protection and detection software is installed on Council communication's equipment. Any suspected virus activity should be reported to the IT Helpdesk immediately.

Councillors are required to inform the IT Helpdesk directly of any damage or malfunction of any equipment.

Email and Internet Usage

Use of email and internet is to be primarily for conducting Council business. Incidental and occasional personal use is acceptable, as long as the use does not contravene any relevant laws, regulations, Council policies or the Strathbogie Shire Councillor Code of Conduct.

All email on the Strathbogie Shire network is the property of Strathbogie Shire Council. The email address supplied to councillors is owned by Strathbogie Shire Council and will cease to exist at the end of the councillor's term in office.

17. CONFERENCE AND TRAINING EXPENSES

18.1 Context

It is essential that Councillors are aware of trends, issues and possible solutions to matters that impact on Strathbogie Shire and its community. Attendance at conferences, seminars and other such professional development opportunities is an important and legitimate way in which Councillors perform their duties.

There are limited funds for the attendance of Councillors at these types of events, so any expenditure on conferences or professional development must provide for maximum net community benefit when weighed up against expenditure incurred by Council.

Details of training courses, conferences and seminars which may be relevant and of interest to councillors will be circulated to all Councillors and will be accompanied by details of registration costs and a course outline.

18.2 Policy

Each Councillor may attend conferences and training up to a limit of \$1500 per financial year without approval from the Chief Executive Officer or a resolution from Council.

The Councillor must notify the Chief Executive Officer and fellow Councillors that they are attending the conference or training at the next available Assembly of Council by submitting a Councillor Conference and Training Attendance Form, as attached to this policy.

Should a Councillor wish to exceed the annual limit of \$1,500 expenditure on conferences and training, a resolution of Council is required to approve this additional expenditure. A Councillor Conference and Training Attendance Form, as attached to this policy, must be completed and forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer to support the Council report requesting funding.

For conferences or seminars:

- held interstate or overseas; and/or
- exceeding \$1501 in total cost (defined as including registration, travel and accommodation) must be approved by way of Council resolution prior to any bookings being made.

As a general guideline each councillor, other than the Mayor, will be limited to one (1) interstate conference per year.

Payment of registration fees for external conferences/seminars, accommodation, flights or train tickets and other incidentals such as conference dinner bookings must be processed through the Chief Executive's Office and attributed to the councillor's conference and training cost centre.

When booking accommodation, only the cost of a standard room will be covered by Council. Should the councillor wish to upgrade their room, it will be at their own personal cost.

Partners and Children

Where a Councillor is accompanied by a partner, spouse or child(ren) at a conference, the Councillor must incur all expenses associated with their partners/spouse/child's attendance except where no difference in cost in accommodation is incurred, based on a standard double room. Council will only cover approved airfare costs incurred for the Councillor.

Reporting of Public Benefit Gained through Conference/Training Attendance to Council

Following attendance at a conference or training that:

- was subject to a Council resolution to approve the travel; and/or
- must be recorded on the Travel Register (see section 14.1).

The Councillor must submit a written report to Council at the next Ordinary Meeting under the item 'Reports of Mayor and Councillors and Delegates'.

This report must identify the key issues discussed, issues of relevance to the Strathbogie Shire and the community benefit gained through the councillor's attendance.

Completion of Conference and Training Evaluation Form

All Councillors must complete a Conference and Training Evaluation Form within one month of attendance at an event.

The purpose of this form is to identify the community benefit gained from the event and whether or not, in the future, there would be community benefit gained from councillor attendance.

Professional Development Programs/Courses Available to All Councillors

Upon the commencement of each electoral term a comprehensive induction program will be provided to all councillors.

In addition to the Councillor Induction Program, in-house governance training facilitated by officers or an external presenter will be arranged from time to time.

Council will also provide access to professional development programs/initiatives on matters such as meeting procedures, governance training, financial training and team building/interpersonal skills throughout their term on Council.

All professional development expenditure should always be tested against the following criteria:

- Is it directly relevant to the councillor's role?
- Will the learning take place and be utilised during the councillor's term of office?
- Is it in the interest of the community?
- Is there sufficient budget allocation by Council?
- Demonstrated public benefit as distinguished from private benefit.

An annual budget allocation is available for councillors' professional development and is subject to annual review as part of the Council budget approval process. Unexpended money from the training budget cannot be carried forward into the next financial year.

18. CHILDCARE/FAMILY CARE EXPENSES

19.1 Context

This form of expense recognises the diversity of modern family structures and broader family responsibilities a councillors may have. It also recognises that Councillors may be a carer for another person.

Legitimate costs incurred by councillors for engaging carers to look after the children (up to and including the age of 16 years), or any other person as defined by section 4 of the *Carers*

Recognition Act 2012, will be reimbursed where these costs are incurred in connection with legitimate Council business.

19.2 Policy

All costs must be substantiated and certified in accordance with this policy and will be reimbursed in accordance with the amount payable to a Level 1 Home Care employee under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award, as updated from time to time.

Councillors incurring legitimate family care expenses paid to:

1. a recognised childcare provider; or
2. to a person who:
 - a) is not a family member of the Councillor; or
 - b) does not reside either permanently or temporarily with the Councillor; or
 - c) does not have a relationship with the councillor or their partner such that it would be inappropriate for Council to reimburse monies paid to the care provider

will be reimbursed such care expenses when the expenditure is necessary to allow the councillor to attend:

- a) Council meetings and functions involving Council business
- b) Council functions
- c) meetings arising as a result of a councillor being appointed by the Council to an external body
- d) on other occasions where the councillor is representing Council and notification is given to the Chief Executive Officer.

Child/family care expenses are considered to consist of:

- hourly care fees
- agency booking fees
- reasonable travelling expenses by the carer.

Fees are payable per hour or part of an hour subject to any minimum period which is part of the provider's usual terms.

An itemised invoice or receipt from the family care provider must be provided for the reimbursement of any expenses to be approved.

If a Councillor is eligible for the childcare rebate, Council will refund the gap between the rebate received and the cost of childcare.

19. INCIDENTAL MEALS AND REFRESHMENTS

Council will provide suitable meals taking into account dietary requirements on the limited occasions where a Council, Assembly of Council or Committee Meeting is held at a time that extends through normal meal times. Wherever possible, meetings will be scheduled to avoid the requirement to provide meals.

Meal and refreshment expenses incurred at any other time must be met by the Councillor unless the costs are incurred during the councillor's attendance at a Council business related event, conference or training session.

The maximum expenditure for meals is as follows:

Maximum cap

- Breakfast \$30
- Lunch \$30
- Dinner \$50

Costs for meals relating to conferences/training must be claimed as part of the total conference/travel expenses and attributed to the councillor conference/training budget.

Expenses for costs associated with the purchase of incidental meals and/or refreshments for Council staff, fellow councillors or other members of the public will not be reimbursed under any circumstances.

Reimbursement of expenses relating to the purchase of alcoholic refreshments is strictly prohibited.

20. REPRESENTING COUNCIL

21.1 Context

Each year Council resolves to appoint councillors to represent it on a number of committees and organisations.

Councillors, or their substitute, representing Council at regular meetings of these committees and any related special events are entitled to have paid by Council, or reimbursed, reasonable and legitimate costs associated with being the Council's and community's representative.

21.2 Policy

Where Council has not appointed a representative to a committee or group, and Council receives an official invitation seeking representation at an event, councillors shall be entitled to have paid by Council, or reimbursed, reasonable costs associated with representing Council.

Attendance at Dinners and Other Non-Council Functions

Council will meet the reasonable cost of a councillor's attendance at non-Council functions to which they have been invited where they are attending in their role as Councillors and where topics pertain to matters concerning local government or where local government representation is relevant to Council. This may include events promoting the Shire.

If an invitation to a relevant non-council function has not been received but a councillor wishes to attend, the councillor must notify the mayor and Chief Executive Officer of their intention to attend the function.

Invitations outside these parameters must be paid for by the individual Councillor attending the dinner or function.

Fundraising and Charitable Events

Council will cover the cost of ticketed events for Councillors invited by written invitation to attend local fundraiser/charitable events where the event benefits Strathbogie Shire Council and its community.

Councillor attendance must have a demonstrated benefit to the local community.

Presenter at a Conference

Councillors may receive invitations to speak at a conference in their capacity as a councillor. In some cases, conference organisers may waive or cover registration fees in recognition of their contribution and participation. It should be noted that this waiver of fees must be recorded on the gift register.

The reimbursement of expenses for these functions will be at the collective discretion of the Chief Executive Officer and Mayor and will depend on the benefit gained by the Strathbogie Shire community.

21. OTHER EXPENDITURE NOT SPECIFIED

Any expenditure not specified in this policy as expenditure for which a Councillor is entitled to be reimbursed or paid by Council shall be the responsibility of the Councillor, except where Council resolves that a claim is reasonable and legitimate expenditure.

A councillor may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in circumstances not provided for elsewhere in this policy following a Council resolution to do so.

PART 4

22. ADMINISTRATIVE AND DIARY SUPPORT FOR THE MAYOR, DEPUTY MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS

23.1 Context

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors require support to respond to community requests, keep abreast of current issues and to manage the broad range of information and matters directed to them.

Strathbogie Shire will strive to provide all councillors with the administrative support they require to efficiently and effectively perform their duties.

23.2 Policy

An appropriate level of administrative support will be made available to assist the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors in performing their role. This may include, but is not limited to, preparation of correspondence, responding to invitations, co-ordinating mayoral and civic receptions, press releases, preparation of speeches, issue research and constituent/community contact activities.

23. STATIONERY AND PUBLICATIONS

24.1 Context

Councillors require stationery and other supplies to enable them to perform their Councillor/Mayoral role. Such supplies will be provided by Council.

24.2 Policy

Stationery

Each Councillor will be provided with:

- Diary
- names badge

Councillors are responsible for requesting supplies through the Chief Executive's Office, however from time to time Councillors may be required to purchase stationery supplies locally if they live a significant distance from the Shire's Office or supplies are required out of normal business hours. In this instance, these costs will be reimbursed should a written request be received that complies with this policy.

Council branded stationery is not to be converted in any way and may only be used for Council business matters (not electoral purposes).

Publications

Councillors will have access to local government sector publications and other legislative or related documents through Council subscriptions.

24. COUNCILLOR ONLINE PRESENCE

Council will provide a web page councillors on its website containing:

- a photograph of the councillor
- contact details
- ward map
- Council appointment, committee memberships and community and professional affiliations
- a short bio of the councillors including professional memberships and associations.

Additional information may be included at the request of a councillor, subject to the content being approved for publication by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Council Media Policy and Protocols further outline the expectations of Council, the role of councillors and support provided.

25. APPAREL

The Council shall, upon request, provide Councillors with protective clothing (such clothing as may be held in store and to meet the organisation's Occupational Health and Safety requirements) necessary to assist in carrying out the duties of office.

26. CIVIC HOSPITALITY

All formal civic functions will be co-ordinated by the Chief Executive's Office and must be pre-approved by the Mayor.

All official civic entertainment expenses will be met from the annual budget allocation approved as part of the Council budget.

Where Council meetings, functions or events are held at times that extend through normal meal times (6.30pm – 8.00pm) Council will provide suitable light meals for councillors. Alcohol will not be served during these meals.

27. EXTERNAL HOSPITALITY

It is recognised that Councillors, on rare occasions, may need to use external hospitality services when conducting Council business outside Council offices.

Councillors will be reimbursed reasonable expenses incurred while entertaining visiting dignitaries or Council business guests on behalf of Council. The Chief Executive Officer must give prior approval to any such undertakings.

28. INDEMNITY

Section 43 of the Act requires Councillors to be indemnified against all actions or claims whether arising during or after their term of office in respect of anything necessarily done or reasonably done or omitted to be done in good faith:

- in the performance of a duty or a function or the exercise of a power under this Act, the regulations or a local law or any other Act; or
- in the reasonable belief that the act or omission was in the performance of a duty or a function or the exercise of a power under this Act, the regulations or a local law or any other Act.

Councillors are responsible for their own personal behaviour / accountabilities when attending Council authorised functions and are subject to their own personal liability.

Council will pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim made against a Councillor arising from Council business where Council has a liability.

Councillors need to be mindful that Council's insurance policies cannot cover a Councillors' own private liability responsibilities, nor damage to or loss of personal possessions.

29. HEALTH INITIATIVES

Councillors will have access to free influenza vaccinations.

30. LEGAL EXPENSES

Council will not cover any personal legal expenses incurred by a councillor, excluding requests for legal advice around possible conflicts of interest or other legal matters relating to the discharge of Councillor duties.

31. PARKING ENTITLEMENTS

Councillors are to use the parking spaces around the perimeter of the Euroa Shire Office in accordance with the displayed parking restrictions.

Bicycle parking facilities are provided at the entrance to the Conference Room.

32. BUILDING ACCESS

Each Councillor will receive a security access pass to the Euroa Councillor Office and Conference Room tailored to the needs and times required by councillors.

33. COUNCILLORS WITH DISABILITIES

Council will provide reasonable additional civic support, facilities and equipment for any councillor with a disability to enable that councillor to freely perform their civic duties.

34. CULTURAL DIVERSITY

In acknowledging and respecting cultural diversity, Council will do its best to respect and accommodate those requirements necessary for a councillor to undertake their duties.

35. COUNCIL ELECTIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

Councillors must not use Council provided materials and/or facilities for election purposes. This applies to their own candidature or in assisting the candidature of others. Further details on these restrictions will be made in the Councillor's Code of Conduct and the Pre-election Period Policy, as updated from time to time.

36. PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Professional memberships that are considered to be reasonable legitimate out of pocket councillor expenses are:

- Australian Institute of Company Directors
- the Victorian Local Governance Association
- the Australian Local Government Women's Association.

Other individual memberships, professional associations or subscriptions which are considered demonstrably beneficial to Council or the performance of the duties of a Councillor may be reimbursed subject to a resolution of Council.

PART 5

37. REPORTING AND AUDITING OF COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES

Quarterly reports on Mayoral and Councillor allowances and expenditure will be forwarded to Council's Audit and Risk Committee, reported through to Council through the Committee's minutes and published on Council's website on a quarterly basis after the information is available for:

- councillor / mayoral /deputy mayor allowances
- communication and information technology expenses
- conference and training expenses
- travel expenses
- child/family care expenses
- reimbursement of private car mileage expenses
- other expenses.

Review and Certification of Allowances and Expenses by Councillors

Councillors and the Mayor will be provided with quarterly reports on directly attributable Councillor expenses categories identified in the Regulations.

These reports must be certified by councillors as being true and correct prior to being forwarded to the Audit Committee and then for publication in a Quarterly Councillor Expenses and Reimbursements Report. Councillors and the Mayor will generally be provided 14 days to review a report and seek clarification where required.

Public Transparency

Details of Councillor and Mayoral expenses will be published on the Council website and made available to members of the public on request. The published report will include a total cost in each category for the mayor and councillors, as outlined in the template attached to this policy.

Expenses incurred as part of interstate, international travel and travel within Victoria for more than three (3) days undertaken on behalf of Council will also be recorded in the travel register required under the Act, as per the template attached to this policy.

The travel register and councillor allowance and expense reports will be published concurrently.

Councillors will be given an opportunity to reimburse Council for any expenditure incurred on non-Council related business. Where a councillor chooses to reimburse Council, reimbursement should occur within 14 days of the quarterly expense report being published on the Council's website.

Audits of Councillor expenses and reimbursements will be carried out from time to time as part of Council's internal audit program.

38. PROCEDURES FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF COUNCILLOR EXPENSES

When a Councillor requires reimbursement of monies expended whilst conducting Council business, provided such expenditure is deemed acceptable under the provisions of this policy, they should follow the procedure below:

- obtain an itemised tax receipt or invoice
- complete a Councillor Expenses Reimbursement Form within six (6) weeks of the expense being incurred
- attach the relevant receipt to the form and forward it to the Chief Executive Officer's Personal Assistant
- the claim will be reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer and, as a double control, reviewed by the Director People and Governance
- should the reimbursement of the expense be approved by the CEO and Director the claim will be forwarded to the Finance Manager for processing
- reimbursements will be paid into the Councillor's nominated bank account by electronic funds transfer.

Expenses claimed out of this time will need to be approved via a Council resolution. Officers will prepare a Council report for Councillor consideration at the next available Council meeting cycle following the lodgement of a late claim.

Late claims occurring on a regular basis will not be approved.

Dispute Resolution

Should there be a dispute in relation to the claiming of this expense policy, the matter will be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer and the Mayor.

If the matter involves the Mayor, the matter will be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer and the Deputy Mayor.

39.CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ACT 2006 AND THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ACT 2010

The Council acknowledges the legal responsibility to comply with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*. The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* is designed to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. The Charter gives legal protection to 20 fundamental human rights under four key values.

40. FORMS (Samples)



Councillor Expenses Reimbursement Form

Creditor No _____

Councillor name: _____

Date	Details of expenses	Councillor duty the expense relates to	\$ Amount Claimed	\$ GST paid	Tax receipt or invoice reference	Expense Category
EXAMPLE ONLY 20/11/2019	6 hours car parking – Brown's car park, Smith Street, Melbourne	Councillor Smith – Council's delegate at the MAV Rural Councils meeting, Melbourne head office	62.35	6.23	Receipt from Brown's car park dated 20 November 2019	Conference & training expenses
Total \$						

OFFICIAL

PRIVATE CAR MILEAGE EXPENSES						
Date	Councillor duty the mileage relates to	Odometer reading at start of trip	Odometer reading at end of trip	Total kilometres travelled	Total \$ (as per current ATO prescribed rate) *	Expense category
EXAMPLE ONLY 20/11/2019	Councillor Smith - Council's delegate at the MAV Rural Councils meeting, Melbourne head office	20,123	20,357	234	159.12	Car mileage expenses
						Car mileage expenses
			Totals			

*Refer to ATO link for current kilometre rate [Cents per kilometre method | Australian Taxation Office \(ato.gov.au\)](https://www.ato.gov.au/ATO/your-tax-information/kilometre-method)

I (name) _____ certify that:

- the expenses claimed on this form were all legitimately incurred in the course of my duties as a Councillor as identified in the Councillor Expenses Policy and
- the information provided on and with this form is true and correct.

Councillor's signature: _____ Date: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY

<p>Reimbursement of expenditure approved by:</p> <p>Signature of Chief Executive Officer: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Signature of Director People and Governance: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p>	<p>Transaction entry in Magiq identifies the (please tick):</p> <p>Councillor name <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Date expense was incurred <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Details of the expense <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Councillor duty the expense relates to <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Account numbers for expenses allocated to (please tick):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1011111.770120 Travel expenses</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1011111.770110 Car mileage expenses</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1011111.770130 Child/family care expenses</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1011111.770150 Conference and training expenses</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1011111.766020 IT and Communications expenses</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1011111.770240 Other Miscellaneous Expenses</p>	<p>Processed by:</p> <p>_____ Date: _____</p> <p>Finance Department</p>



TEMPLATE FOR QUARTERLY REPORTS ON COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES
QUARTER AND FINANCIAL YEAR:

Councillor Name	Travel expenses	Car mileage expenses (incl Mayoral vehicle costs)	Child/family care expenses	IT and communication expenses	Conference and training expenses	Other expenses	Total

Councillor Name	Councillor Allowance (equivalent to the superannuation guarantee contribution)



COUNCILLOR TRAVEL REGISTER

Details of overseas or interstate travel, along with travel more than three days within Victoria, undertaken in an official capacity by any councillor for the 20 /20 financial year:

Councillor Name	Date Travel Began	Date Travel Ended	Destination	Purpose Of The Travel	Total Cost To The Council (Including Accommodation, Meals etc)	Date Of Ordinary Council Meeting At Which The Councillor Reported Outcomes Of Attendance

DEFINITIONS FOR EXPENSE CATEGORIES

Car mileage expenses	includes all reimbursement of expenses to Councillors for kilometres travelled in their private vehicle and expenses relating to the Mayoral vehicle (fuel card costs, servicing/maintenance) excluding depreciation costs
Childcare/family care expenses	the cost of caring for children or elderly/disabled family members including travel costs for the carer and hourly rates for care
Conference and training Expenses	includes conference registration fees, meals, accommodation, car parking (including airport parking) and any other legitimate costs incurred whilst at the event, tickets to dinners or events
Information and communication technology expenses	includes the reimbursement of expenses for phone calls or data to Councillors, capital costs of purchasing hardware and the cost of monthly mobile phone usage/data plans
Other incidental expenses	expenses that cannot be attributed to other categories
Travel expenses	flights for conferences, train fares, taxi/Uber fares, Myki cards and bus fares/bus hire



Councillor Conference and Training Attendance Form

Councillors must complete this form prior to attending any conferences if no Council resolution is required for the event

What is the event?		
When is the event?		
What is the cost to the organisation for your attendance at the event?		
Are you receiving any complimentary items (for example tickets to the event)?		
Is accommodation and travel required? If yes, please provide details as to how many nights and the mode of travel (e.g. plane, train, private car, Council vehicle).		
What is the community benefit gained from you attending this event?		
Councillor details		
Name:	Signature:	Date:
Confirmation of notification by Councillor		
Chief Executive Officer:	Signature:	Date:

Comments:

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Councillors must complete this form after attending any conferences or training

The information provided on this form must be of sufficient detail for translation into a Council report.

Councillors must make a verbal presentation to the Council and community on their attendance at the relevant Council meeting in support of the item on the Council Agenda.

Councillor Conference and Training Evaluation Form

What was the event?
When was the event?
How did the event or training relate to the Council Plan? (please refer to the Strategic Focus Area and any strategies or actions that relate directly to the training) If not relating to the Council Plan, then how did it relate to other Council Business?
What community benefit was achieved from attending this event?
Would you recommend this event to others in the future? If so, why?

Completed by		
Councillor name:	Signature:	Date:
Review by CEO		
Chief Executive Officer:	Signature:	Date:

Comments from CEO:

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