




COUNCILLORS SUPPORT AND REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES POLICY

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Signed by Chief Executive Officer

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This document is available in alternative formats (e.g. larger font) if requested.

1 PURPOSE

Significant demands and expectations are placed on Councillors in fulfilling their civic and statutory duties, including attendance at Council and Committee meetings, representing the Council on many other organisations and communicating with residents, business, community groups and others on a range of issues.

Given the costs associated with the demands and expectations placed on Councillors, this policy details how Loddon Shire provides assistance and support to the Mayor and Councillors in carrying out their role and official duties as Councillors.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to Councillors. The assistance and support is additional to the Mayoral and Councillor annual allowances set by state government.

3 POLICY

The Local Government Act requires the development of a policy to deal with reimbursement of Councillors' expenses and the policy must be available for public inspection. It also requires the policy to address reimbursement of expenses to members of Council committees where applicable. The Recognition and Support Package for Councillors is outlined in the Victorian Government's Policy Statement on Local Government Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and Resources (April 2008), and provides the framework for support of Councillors.

In the event of a Councillor completing, or not serving, their full term, all Council property must be returned to the Loddon Shire Council and Councillors are not able to acquire these items upon their departure.

3.1 Information technology

3.1.1 Computer facilities

Internet – Councillors will be provided with an internet connection to allow access to email and internet.

Email – Councillors will be provided with an email account managed through Loddon Shire Council. Councillors' email addresses will be part of the domain name: loddon.vic.gov.au.

Anti-virus – Councillors' laptops will have anti-virus software installed and automatically updated. This process will be seamless to the Councillors.

Document management – Councillors are responsible to ensure all corporate information is forwarded to Loddon Shire Council for registration in the electronic document management system. This refers to, but is not limited to, formal letters in Microsoft Word and emails.

Personal use – Personal use is permitted as long as it does not affect the primary use of the computer. Councillors will not install any non-council products on the computer.

Councillors will be provided with suitable computer and appropriate hardware and software for the primary purpose of accessing and keeping Council meeting agendas and minutes and performing their roles as councillors.

3.1.2 Telecommunications

Councillors will be provided with a mobile telephone. Where a Councillor wishes to retain their mobile phone for council use, the Council will fund the replacement of one mobile phone per term of office. Councillors must make their personal mobile number available for publication.

Council will, upon receipt of a claim, reimburse Councillors for the council-related portion of their personal phone account on a monthly basis.

The Council telephone number will be made available to the public, and should only be answered by the relevant Councillor or the built-in message bank service. The mobile telephone is provided on the basis that personal calls are to be kept to a minimum. It is acknowledged that on occasion personal calls may be required when a Councillor is:

- unable to access a landline or
- on Council business outside normal business hours.

3.1.3 Information technology support

The Corporate Services Directorate will provide familiarisation training for Councillors in addition to documentation aiding Councillors in relation to using the IT systems provided. Council will provide Councillors with application-specific training where necessary through a local training provider.

The Corporate Services Directorate will update the software on each desktop computer. Any non-council software will be uninstalled during maintenance.

The Corporate Services Directorate will provide IT support in line with that provided to Council.

All equipment is to be returned to the Corporate Services Directorate on the conclusion of the Councillor's term, or in the event the Councillor resigns the position earlier.

Faulty equipment or issues are to be reported to the Corporate Services Directorate as soon as possible.

In the event that equipment is lost, stolen or misplaced the Corporate Services Directorate is to be informed as soon as possible to put in place all preventative measures.

Personal calls in these situations and in urgent and/or emergency situations are acceptable. Personal calls outside the situations referred to above are not permitted.

Mobile telephone internet activities should be limited due to the costs associated with internet usage through the mobile telephone. Councillors may be required to reimburse Loddon Shire Council for excess charges if this policy is not followed.

Usage of mobile phones and internet will be monitored closely throughout the first few months with changes to the plan where necessary.

3.2 Meeting room facilities

Councillors will be provided with meeting room facilities upon request.

3.3 Training and development

Loddon Shire Council will meet the cost of participation in training and development courses, seminars and activities in a variety of professional and personal development areas within the limits of the budget approved by Council. These programs are generally offered by professional bodies, private organisations and educational institutions in Victoria.

3.4 Vehicles

Loddon Shire Council will provide the Mayor a vehicle for his/her Council and personal use during their term. The provision of the mayoral vehicle is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (a) The Mayor will be responsible for maintaining the vehicle in a reasonable state of cleanliness and keeping the vehicle off-street at his/her place of residence.
- (b) All fuel for both private and official Council use will be paid for by Loddon Shire Council.
- (c) The Mayoral vehicle will be available for Council business use by other Councillors when not required by the Mayor.

3.5 Conferences and functions

Conferences – Loddon Shire Council will cover registration fees associated with attendance by Councillors at conferences, seminars and functions held locally, interstate and overseas within the limits of the budget approved by Council. These are normally held by local government related organisations, professional bodies and institutions, and private sector providers on issues and events which impact on the role of Councillors and the Shire in general. The cost of partners attending conferences will not be met by Loddon Shire Council.

Events – Loddon Shire Council will meet the cost of Councillor(s) attending external events to which they have been invited. If a partner has been invited, Loddon Shire Council will meet the cost of the partner attending, where it is necessary for Council to be represented at the function.

Approval of Councillors' attendance at conferences and events will be determined by the Mayor in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, and in accordance with the following guidelines:

- relevance of the program to the efficient and effective operations of the Loddon Shire Council
- cost/benefit of being represented
- expertise, interest and experience of Councillors in the areas of conference business
- numbers to attend being regulated by distance/cost
- a report of the conference will be provided to all Councillors at the next available Council meeting
- in the event that a Councillor attendance is not considered relevant by the Mayor, the matter will be referred to Council for information and review.

Charity events – Loddon Shire Council will meet the cost of the Mayor or his/her representative to attend a charity fundraising event. If other Councillors wish to attend to support the charity, they will be required to make their own contribution to attend.

Political functions - Where Councillors attend a political party fundraising event for which payment is required, the cost is to be borne by the individual Councillor. Council does not financially support any political party.

Council representation at events and functions - In circumstances where the Mayor has been invited to an event or function in a particular Ward, and is unable to attend, the Ward Councillor will be given the first option to represent the Mayor.

3.6 Travel expenses

3.6.1 Within Victoria

Loddon Shire Council will meet transport costs incurred in attending meetings, functions and other commitments within Victoria. This includes reimbursement for use of a private vehicle while conducting Council business, car parking fees and the provision of car parking permits.

This category includes costs associated with accommodation and incidentals incurred when travelling on Council business in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. Reimbursement of private vehicle use will be on the basis of the Council rate per kilometre amount paid to home care staff, as amended from time to time.

A remote area travel allowance shall be payable at the rate of \$40 per approved Council meeting or municipal/community function (maximum \$5,000 in any one year) for each Councillor who permanently resides more than 50 kilometres from the specified meeting centre (ref: Order in Council, Local Government Councillor and Mayoral Allowances, 1 December 2008).

Councillors are requested to submit travel and expense claims on a monthly basis and payment will be made within two weeks.

3.6.2 Interstate

Loddon Shire Council will cover costs associated with Councillors travelling interstate on Council business as approved by the Council (with the exception of the Mayor who does not require approval of the Council) within the limits of the budget approved by Council. This comprises airfares, accommodation costs, car hire, taxis and meals.

3.6.3 Overseas

Loddon Shire Council will cover costs associated with Councillors travelling overseas on Council business as approved by the Council within the limits of the budget approved by Council. This comprises airfares, accommodation, visas, passport costs, car hire, taxis and meals.

3.7 Councillors' welfare

Councillors may approach the Chief Executive Officer with regard to any specific guidance, counselling or coaching that may be required to enhance their performance as a Councillor.

Councillors encountering difficulties with the role or personal difficulties that may impact on their role as a Councillor, are able to seek counselling on a confidential basis through David Mitchell and Associates Counselling Services. The service can be contacted on 5442 2605. Normally, up to three sessions are provided, however, further sessions can be arranged on a needs basis.

3.8 Reimbursement of expenses

It is anticipated that there will be occasionally small expenses such as taxi fares, parking fees, meals, public transport fares paid directly by Councillors when travelling for training, conferences or other events.

If a Councillor expects to incur an out-of-pocket expense of more than \$100, the Councillor should endeavour to contact the Director Corporate Services or CEO to check whether an out-of-pocket expense is appropriate or whether another method of payment would be more suitable.

Loddon Shire Council will reimburse a Councillor for expenses if the Councillor:

- (a) applies in writing for reimbursement of expenses and
- (b) establishes in the application that the expenses were reasonable bona fide Councillors out-of-pocket expenses incurred while performing duties as a Councillor.

3.8.1 Tax invoices and receipts

Reimbursement of out of pocket expenses is on the basis of tax invoices and receipts, and details of the date and purpose of the event/function associated with the expenditure.

Councillors submitting claims for reimbursement of expenses must do so using the Councillor Expense Claim Form available from the Executive Assistant to the CEO.

3.9 Reporting Councillors' expenses

Claims for communications, travel, and out of pocket expenses must be submitted to the CEO for approval.

Costs associated with interstate and overseas travel are recorded and are available for public inspection in accordance with Local Government Act 1989.

3.10 Reimbursement of Council's Internal Audit Committee

Council has an active Audit Committee that has been operating since 2001. Members of the Audit Committee are reimbursed for travel expenses related to Audit Committee meetings. Reimbursement is paid at the same rate as for Councillors (refer 3.6 Travel expenses). Reasonable travel is required by most committee members to attend quarterly meetings and professional development opportunities, and committee members must submit a quarterly claim for this expense.

Independent members of the Audit Committee are also provided remuneration for their services at a rate that is determined by Council each year.

4 HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT

It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights Act (2007). Loddon Shire Council is committed to consultation and cooperation between management and employees. The Council will formally involve elected employee Health and Safety Representatives in any workplace change that may affect the health and safety of any of its employees

5 REVIEW

The Chief Executive officer will review this policy for any necessary amendments no later than 4 years after adoption of this current version.