

Councillor Support & Expenses Policy 2025

1. Purpose	The Councillor Support & Expenses Policy (Policy) establishes the resources, facilities and administrative support to be provided to Councillors and members of delegated committees of Darebin City Council. It provides for Councillors and Delegated Committee members to have out-of-pocket expenses reasonably incurred while performing their official duties, either reimbursed or paid for directly by the Council. The Policy also provides guidelines for Councillors and Delegated Committee members on the process for claiming expenses and outlines the methods and standards for reporting and accountability. This Policy is not intended to prescribe for every possible situation that may arise.
2. Scope	The Policy applies to all Councillors and members of Delegated Committees.
3. Definitions and Abbreviations	In this Policy: Carer means a Carer is defined under s.4 of the <i>Carers Recognition Act 2012</i> Chief Executive Officer (CEO) means the person appointed by Council to be its Chief Executive Officer, or any person acting in that position. Council means the Darebin City Council being all the Councillors collectively. Councillor means a person holding the office of member of Darebin City Council. Confidential information has the same meaning as at section 3 of the <i>Local Government Act (Vic) 2020</i>. Delegated Committee means delegated committees defined under section 63 of the LG Act. Delegated Committee member means a person appointed to a Delegated Committee. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment means any device including mobile phones, iPads, laptops and any peripheral or related devices or accessories. LG Act means the Local Government Act 2020. Model Councillor Code of Conduct has the same meaning as at section 3 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>. Out of Pocket Expenses means expenses related to undertaking official Council business that have been met by the Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee, using their own funds, which may later be reimbursed.

	Personal Activity means activity that is conducted for purposes other than official business. Reasonable meal and accommodation costs means expenses for meals and accommodation will be considered reasonable where it does not exceed the relevant amounts set by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) as adjusted from time to time (Appendix B) and is incurred as a result of attending official Council business or business related to the Delegated Committee. Travel Expenses means cost for travelling by car, taxi, bus, train or air in relation to official Council business or business related to the delegated Committee not exceeding the relevant amounts set by the ATO as adjusted from time to time (see Appendix B).
4. Policy Statement(s)	This policy describes the provision of facilities, resources and support necessary or appropriate to the performance of duties by Councillors and members of delegated committees. This policy should also be read in conjunction with other relevant Council policies adopted from time to time, including but not limited to the Model Councillor Code of Conduct and specific policies and procedures regarding the use, security and maintenance of Council equipment.
5. Responsibilities	All Councillors and members of Delegated Committees are expected to read and understand this policy and effectively implement and both support and demonstrate a positive commitment to the policy.
6. Organisational Values	Council's organisational values enable and support the effective application of this policy by guiding Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees in the course of their work.
7. Breach of Policy	Breaches of policies are treated seriously. Any concerns about non-compliance should be reported immediately to the owner of this policy.

8. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

This policy has been developed in accordance with the provisions of the LG Act and any associated Regulations (refer **Appendix A**).

9. DUTIES AS A COUNCILLOR OR MEMBER OF A DELEGATED COMMITTEE

'Duties as a Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee' means duties performed by a Councillor or a member of a delegated committee that are necessary or appropriate for the purposes of achieving the objectives of a Council, having regard to any relevant Act, Regulations, Ministerial guidelines or Council policies.

Duties of a Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee will therefore include, but not be limited to, attendance at:

- Meetings of the Council or its Delegated Committees.
- Briefing sessions, workshops and civic or ceremonial functions convened or scheduled by the Council or the Mayor.

- Meetings of community groups, organisations and statutory authorities to which a Councillor or member of a delegated committee has been appointed as Council representative.
- A meeting, function or other official role as a representative of the Council, delegated committee or the Mayor.
- Other meetings, inspections or events attended by a Councillor or member of a delegated committee in an official capacity, together with the associated research, discussions and communication.

10. ALLOWANCES FOR MAYORS AND COUNCILLORS

The Victorian Government views Councillor allowances *'not as a form of salary, but as some recognition of the contributions made by those elected to voluntary, part time roles in the community'*.

The Government acknowledges the value and significance of local government Councillors – both through their skills and ability to represent and engage with their constituents and their leadership in developing solutions to the pressing social and cultural, environmental and economic challenges facing communities everywhere.

Section 39 of the Act provides the framework for payment of allowances to Mayors and Councillors which provides a three-level structure for allowances based on Council population and total revenue. The allowance is reviewed annually through a Determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal under the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019*.

Details of current allowances fixed for the Mayor and Councillors of Darebin City Council are available for public inspection on [Council's website](#) and at the Council offices.

Allowances are paid fortnightly in advance and considered to be taxable income. Personal taxation implications are the responsibility of individual Councillors.

11. RESOURCES AND FACILITIES FOR THE MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS

The following resources, facilities and support will be provided to Councillors to assist in performing their duties as a Councillor:

11.1 ICT Equipment

11.1.1 ICT Devices

All Councillors will be provided with the following ICT devices:

- Smart phone with voice and data plan.
- A laptop / tablet unit with built-in data service and associated peripherals software ("Apps").
- Both the mobile phone and the laptop/tablet have Mobile Device Management (MDM) to secure and manage the devices. This service incurs a monthly fee to Council.
- A multifunction printing, scanning, copying, fax device and all associated consumables, toners, paper, etc. which is available in the Councillor room at Council.

The make, model and style of the ICT devices provided will be determined by the responsible Council Officer based on current telecommunications plans and offers available to Council.

A Councillor may elect to use their own personal mobile phone and claim reimbursement of call charges associated with performing their duties as a Councillor, rather than being issued a Council provided mobile phone.

All equipment remains the property of Darebin City Council and must be returned at the end of a Councillor's term of office or, if requested, during leave of absence of a Councillor.

Councillors will also be issued with a Darebin Council email address.

11.1.2 Data Costs

Council will meet the fixed charges of the smart phone and internet services. Council will also meet the call or data costs for these services incurred for duties as a Councillor.

Usage of all ICT devices will be restricted to the Councillor to whom they have been assigned and the assigned Councillor shall be responsible for all usage incurred on the devices. Councillors will take care to safeguard any personal or Council information stored on devices so as it cannot be accessed by other persons. All devices must be kept in secure locations when not in use.

Council will not provide or contribute to the costs of existing internet services or plans of a Councillor beyond what is set out in this policy.

11.1.3 Private Use of Council Provided Resources

Whilst it is acknowledged that there may be some incidental private use of mobile communications equipment, such as occasional standard phone calls and text messages within Australia, Council devices provided to Councillors should be used for official Council business only.

11.1.4 Appropriate Use of ICT Equipment

Mobile devices and communication systems owned or managed by the City of Darebin are to be used in an effective, safe, ethical, and lawful manner in accordance with Council policy and relevant state and federal legislation. Use may be monitored, and misuse may be referred to IBAC or Local Government Inspectorate for investigation.

Councillors must not use Council's mobile devices and communication systems to engage in any activity which violates or infringes the rights of others, or which a reasonable person would consider to be abusive, profane, offensive or defamatory.

Councillors must adhere to Council's Privacy Policy and the Model Councillor Code of Conduct in using any IT resources provided by Council. Council equipment and electronic communications system must be used within the boundaries of normal appropriate practice. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Storage, transmission, downloading or display of material must not contravene any state or federal law such as equal opportunity, occupational health and safety, and sexual harassment legislation.
- Communication activities must not defame an individual, organisation, association, company or business.
- The use must not contravene a Council policy, procedure, statute or regulation.
- The equipment or electronic communications system must not be used to run a private business, whether for profit or not-for-profit.

11.1.5 Use of Council Equipment Overseas

Councillors must obtain written approval from the Chief Executive Officer prior to taking Council equipment on overseas travel.

If approval is granted by the Chief Executive Officer, the Councillor must consult with the Chief Information Officer to discuss the most effective travel packs to be purchased for work related usage.

The co-ordination of access to international voice and data services and the cost of all calls and data usage related to overseas travel for personal reasons are the responsibility of the Councillor, not the organisation.

The Councillor will be responsible for ensuring phone settings are adjusted to avoid unexpected call and data charges.

11.1.6 Replacement of Equipment

If any Council issued equipment needs to be replaced, for whatever reason, it shall be returned to the responsible Council Officer at the same time as the replacement equipment is issued.

If ICT equipment in the care of the user is lost, stolen, damaged, or unavailable for normal business activities, this must be reported to the IT Service Desk immediately. Devices will be remotely wiped if lost or stolen.

11.1.7 Equipment Not Available for Sale

Equipment provided to Councillors will not be available for sale or transfer to Councillors at the cessation of the Councillors term of office.

11.1.8 ICT Support (Helpdesk)

Support for Councillors to set up their Council provided ICT resources and day to day trouble shooting assistance is provided by Council's Information Services Help Desk staff.

Requests for assistance shall be made directly to the Helpdesk on 8470 8811 or via helpdesk@darebin.vic.gov.au

Training in the use of ICT resources provided to Councillors may be arranged on an as required basis at the Councillor's request.

IT support will only be provided in relation to the devices issued to Councillors by Council.

11.2 Mayoral and Councillor Administrative Support

Administrative support will be made available to assist the Mayor in performing their official duties by the EA to the Mayor and Councillors.

Office accommodation and associated equipment will be provided to the Mayor at the Darebin Civic Centre at 350 High Street, Preston.

Reasonable administrative support will also be made available to Councillors by the EA to the Mayor and Councillors primarily in the form of assistance with diary management, responding to correspondence, enquiries and requests for service as part of their official duties as a Councillor.

11.3 Building Access

Each Councillor will receive a security access card allowing 24-hour access to the Councillors' office / lounge area and meeting rooms only at Darebin Civic Centre at 350 High Street, Preston.

An intercom system (linked to the Chief Executive Officers area) at the entrance to the Councillor office / lounge area is available for Councillors to use.

11.4 Car Parking

The car park at the rear of Darebin Civic Centre at 350 High Street, Preston accessed from Kelvin Grove is available for Councillors to park when attending the Council offices. The security access card will allow access to this car park and the secure bicycle shed.

Allocated car parking for Councillors is not provided (except for the Mayor). Access to parking spaces will be dependent on availability.

Councillors will be requested to register their vehicle at the commencement of their term (and advise of any changes to vehicle use).

11.5 Meeting Rooms and the Councillors Office / Lounge

The Civic area on the first floor of Darebin Civic Centre includes the Councillors' office / lounge area and meeting rooms available for use by Councillors. This area is not open to the public and restricted to Councillors and staff only.

The Councillors' office / lounge is reserved for exclusive use by Councillors. The room is equipped with computer access and is suitable for office work, reading and research, and small meetings.

If materials and consumables are not available in the Councillors' office / lounge, Councillors should contact the EA to the Mayor and Councillors.

Light refreshments including water, tea, coffee and soft drinks will be made available in the Councillors' Lounge.

Private and secure lockers are available for Councillors and located adjacent to the carpark.

Other meeting rooms in the Civic Area can be booked for meetings through the EA to the Mayor and Councillors. Meeting equipment, tea / coffee and chilled water can be made available for meetings upon request.

This does not extend to use by community members, groups or organisations.

11.6 Stationery / Mail / Miscellaneous

On request, the EA to the Mayor and Councillors will manage reasonable requests for stationery held or obtained for the organisation's requirements. This may include (but is not limited to) paper, writing implements, diaries, business cards, writing pads, data storage devices, envelopes etc. Council letterhead is not available for Councillors' general use. Christmas, greeting cards or postage are not available.

Each Councillor will be provided with a Darebin City Council name badge for use while on Council business. Personal mail and other Council information will predominantly be placed in Councillors lockers for collection.

Council agendas / minutes, briefing agendas and the majority of information from the organisation will be made available electronically via Council's online Content Management System.

Paper/printed copies of agendas, minutes, etc. will not be provided.

Meals and Refreshments - where Council or Committee meetings are held at times which extend through normal mealtimes, Council will provide suitable meals served on the premises.

11.7 Councillors with Disabilities

The Council will meet the reasonable additional expenses to assist a Councillor with a disability to perform their duties as a Councillor. The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for facilitating any process or plan to best support a Councillor with a disability to effectively perform their role.

11.8 Health Initiatives

Councillors can access the free Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through [Acacia](#) by calling 1300 364 273 or 0480 087 020. EAP free and available to Councillors and their immediate family members.

The EAP offers private confidential counselling on personal and family-related issues. This includes mental illness, relationship and family issues, grief, stress, addiction, work stress and domestic violence.

Councillors will also have access to a free influenza vaccination each year.

12. TRAVEL AND VEHICLE EXPENSES

12.1 Mayoral Vehicle / Transportation

The Mayor is expected to perform a range of additional duties throughout the mayoral year. Council will support the Mayor of the day through the provision of a vehicle or through the reimbursement of Council business vehicular travel costs. This support will be provided on the following terms and conditions:

- (a) The vehicle provided will be in accordance with the Council Light Vehicle Fleet Policy which for passenger vehicles specifies environmentally friendly vehicles (fully electric or hybrid) (see Note 1); or
- (b) The reimbursement of personal vehicle use (i.e. submitted kms claims) to an amount not exceeding the annual cost of a Council provided vehicle. (see Note 2). Any such claims must be fully substantiated.

The Mayoral vehicle will be fitted with a hands-free mobile phone car kit and include a fleet card for fuel purchases.

Note 1 The use and provision of the vehicle will be in accordance with Council's Light Vehicle Fleet Policy to the extent applicable, with full private use (and no driver contribution) and with the Mayor nominated as the assigned driver. The vehicle will be exempt from the carpool.

Note 2 The annual cost of an environmentally friendly vehicle will be determined annually by the officer responsible for Council's Fleet and will represent the total annual operating cost for this vehicle.

A Council owned bicycle can be provided in lieu of a maintained vehicle. All Councillors may use Councils electric bike fleet based at the Preston Office.

12.2 Taxi / Ride Share

Where it is not possible or convenient to use public transport or a private motor vehicle, Councillors will be supplied with cab charge e-tickets for travel related to official council business.

Travel of a private nature will not be reimbursed or paid by Council. E-tickets can be requested from Governance Services.

If a Councillor incurs costs for the use of an e-ticket they will be required to complete an online 'Declaration of Cab Charge Usage' form within 14 days of the e-ticket being used.

Further, where a Councillor completes a Councillor's Declaration of Cab Charge Usage form and indicates that a charge/s was for personal use, an invoice shall be generated, and the Councillor shall pay the invoice within Council's normal payment terms and conditions.

Failure to complete the Councillor's Declaration of Cab Charge Usage Form or to pay an invoice within Council's normal payment terms for personal use charges will result in Councillors' access to the e-tickets being revoked. In such circumstances the Councillor will then be required to personally pay for the use of cabs and submit a claim for reimbursement of the charges upon the supply of evidence that the charge/s was / were incurred as a result of undertaking Council related business.

12.3 Council Fleet Vehicles

Access to the Council Fleet Vehicle Pool may be provided for use by Councillors if it is assessed as the most practical means to attend a location to conduct Council-related business.

12.4 Private Vehicle Use

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses incurred in the use of their private vehicle (including electric vehicles) for Council purposes.

Reasonable travel expenses include travel to and from:

- Council Meetings, Councillor Briefing Sessions, meetings of Committees of Council, civic functions
- Meetings of community groups, organisations and statutory authorities to which the Councillor has been appointed the Council delegate
- Site inspections or meetings
- Any meeting, event, function or other activity which the Councillor attends in performing duties as Councillor.

All travel claims will be from each Councillor's notified place of residence. All vehicle expense claims will be submitted via the online '*Councillor Reimbursement of Expense Claim Form for Private Vehicle Usage*', (available to councillors on Councils Content Management System). Councillors shall be reimbursed based on the distance travelled, in accordance with the applicable and current vehicle allowance as specified in the City of Darebin Enterprise Agreement in operation at the time claims are submitted.

Councillors who have an environmentally friendly vehicle which does not fit a standard cylinder vehicle classification are eligible for the 4 cylinder or less vehicle reimbursement classification amount.

Vehicle travel that exceeds 600km (for one event / trip in total) requires approval from the Chief Executive Officer.

12.5 Fines and Infringements

Any costs arising from a breach of road, traffic parking or other regulations or laws or for damage or loss of a vehicle is the responsibility of person travelling and will not be reimbursed or funded by Council.

12.6 Green Travel Plan

Council's Green Travel Plan encourages a range of travel options conducive to the environment. Public transport can be a convenient and efficient form of travel for many Council business events in Darebin and in the Central Business District of Melbourne.

Public travel expenses incurred by Councillors in the course of official duties as a Councillor will be reimbursed.

12.7 Interstate and Overseas Travel

A resolution of Council is required where a Councillor requests to attend training or conferences that requires interstate or overseas travel. Council may then cover costs associated with Councillors travelling interstate or overseas on Council business as approved by the resolution within the limits of the budget approved by Council. Costs covered may comprise conference or training fees, airfares, visas, passports, car hire, taxis, and ride-sharing fares and other genuine expenses.

All Councillor travel will be booked by the EA to Mayor and Councillors and will utilise the most direct route and the most practical and economic mode of transport. When travelling interstate, the mode of transport is to be the most cost-effective form of transport.

All air travel will be in economy class. To ensure value for money, all requests for airline bookings and accommodation must be advised as soon as the travel is approved by Council.

Travel claims will be to and from the Councillor's notified place of normal residence.

13. FAMILY CARE

The Council will reimburse the cost of necessary expenses for childcare up to and including the age of 16 years and for the care of elderly, disabled and / or sick immediate family members of Councillors, who live with the Councillor while a Councillor is conducting Council business.

Childcare costs are not eligible for reimbursement if paid to a family member or a person who normally or regularly lives with the Councillor, except where a live-in (professional) helper such as a nanny is required to work extra time at extra expense because of the Councillor's duties.

Carer expenses may consist of:

- Childcare centre fees
- Hourly fees
- Agency booking fees (if claimed)
- Reasonable travelling expenses, if claimed by the Carer, in accordance with the applicable and current vehicle allowance as specified in the City of Darebin Enterprise Agreement in operation at the time claims are submitted.

Fees that can be reimbursed are per hour (or part of an hour) and subject to any minimum period which is part of the provider's usual terms, to a maximum hourly rate approved by the Chief Executive Officer (guided by industry rate).

Travelling expenses may cover the transport costs of the carer to and from the Councillor's residence or of the person to be cared for to and from the place of care.

Claims must be accompanied by a receipt from the care provider showing the date and time care was provided and details of the reason care was needed on each occasion. All claims shall be substantiated by an invoice or receipt or other relevant documentation provided by the caregiver.

Any claims for family care by a Councillor will be considered and have regard to the definitions and provisions of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012*.

14. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING AND CONFERENCES

14.1 Mandatory Professional Development

Professional development training is required to be completed by all Councillors at least once each year beginning in the first full calendar year after being elected under section 33A of the Act.

A professional development program is any program which involves a deliberate and ongoing process of improving and increasing the professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness of people in the workplace through professional development activities specific to their needs. In local government, an effective professional development program can ensure Councillors fill any skills or knowledge gaps they have that may otherwise prevent them from making the best possible contributions to their communities.

Councillors have a responsibility to perform their role in the best interests of the local community. To do this, Councillors need to understand the responsibilities of their role and to understand certain technical matters, such as strategic planning, budgeting, and good governance. Professional development training is intended to upskill Councillors by ensuring they understand what is required of them and have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the role.

All Councillors must complete professional development training which covers prescribed matters, each year of their term, beginning in the year following their election.

For the purposes of section 33A(7) of the Act, the prescribed matters that must be covered are:

- (a) working together in a Council;
- (b) decision making, integrity and accountability;
- (c) community representation;
- (d) strategic planning and financial management;
- (e) conduct;
- (f) land use planning;
- (g) any other matter relating to the role of a Councillor which the Chief Executive Officer has determined should be addressed.

To ensure compliance with the provisions of the LG Act, Councillor group professional development will be facilitated and funded by a budget provided the organisation.

14.2 Other Training and Conferences

In addition to the mandatory professional development training required under the LG Act, Councillors may seek approval to attend other training or conferences that are relevant to their role as a Councillor during their term.

This includes, but is not limited to, training and conferences run by Industry Peak Bodies such as:

- Australian Local Government Association (ALGA);
- Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA);
- Victorian State Government;
- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) (includes the Australian Institute of Company Directors Program); and
- Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA).

The types of training and conference activities and events at which Councillors seek approval to attend, must have a direct correlation to performing the role of Councillor. Such activities may involve seminars, conferences and formal study courses.

Council will provide a maximum of \$7,000 per annum per Councillor for training and conference attendance activities (See Note 1). All approved costs related to training and conference attendance activities will be reported against the Councillors per term training allowance.

Where Councillor training or conference attendance involves related costs such as accommodation, travel or other general costs, these should be identified by the Councillor when seeking authorisation from the Chief Executive Officer.

Council funded attendance at training and conferences requires the prior approval of the CEO, unless interstate or overseas travel is involved, in which case a resolution of Council is required.

The Chief Executive Officer will:

- Consult with all Councillors to identify training and development opportunities that best support their individual needs on an annual basis.
- Provide a compulsory training program for a newly elected Council in line with legislation.
- Maintain an annual budget which:
 - Accommodates the individual training requirements of Councillors across the Council term.
 - Limits individual Councillor expenses on training and professional development and conference attendance to \$7,000 per Councillor per financial year (See Note 1). If this amount has been expended, or the remaining funds are insufficient, Councillors can personally pay for costs or contribute funds towards attending approved training or conferences

Note 1. The Chief Executive Officer may, upon application, consider approving conference attendance or training opportunities that exceed the \$7000 per Councillor per annum threshold, if the annual cost for the Councillor is maintained within the overall adopted budget and the relevant Councillors per term training and conference budget is maintained within the established parameters (i.e. a maximum of \$28,000 per councillor per term.)

14.3 Pre-Approval Process

Councillors will seek approval for the funding of the following activities prior to seeking reimbursement or Council officers organising and paying for attendance:

- Training and development (other than mandatory professional development)
- Conferences
- Attendance at events when performing duties as a Councillor.

All requests for attendance at such activities which, if approved, will be paid for by Council (subject to the maximum financial thresholds for training and conferences) are to be made in writing to the Chief Executive Officer in advance.

Requests to attend training or conferences must be made in writing to the Chief Executive Officer and must contain all of the following information:

- The training/conference/event requested to be undertaken.
- The total cost of attendance, including any associated travel costs.
- How the training/conference/event contributes to their role as a Councillor.

Any Councillor funded training and conference attendance should be approved consistent with Section 14.4 prior to committing to the activity, otherwise it will not be reimbursed by Council.

14.4 Authorisation

The Chief Executive Officer, unless otherwise resolved by Council, is authorised to approve the funding of Councillors' attendance at training and conferences if:

- a) The attendance is in the community interest and reflects the identified needs of the Councillor.
- b) There is equity and fair and reasonable access to all Councillors to training and conferences, noting that conferences and seminars may be attended by the Mayor in the first instance.
- c) A quorum of Councillors is available to attend to the normal business of the Council.

14.5 Costs Related to Spouses for Specified Activities

The payment of travel, accommodation or any other expenses for spouses, partners or accompanying persons attending a conference will not be borne by Council.

14.6 Memberships and Subscriptions

The Chief Executive Officer will approve the costs of joining and ongoing membership of relevant professional associations (such as the Australian Institute of Company Directors) where they are satisfied that the membership is related to and will enhance the Councillor's ability to perform their role as a Councillor.

15. CIVIC AND COMMUNITY EVENTS AND FUNCTIONS

From time to time, Council representatives are invited to attend community functions and events. It is usual for the Mayor to represent the Council at these functions and any payment required to attend the function is paid by the Council. If another Councillor attends the function, either representing the Mayor or in an official capacity as Council representative, any attendance charge will be paid or reimbursed by the Council.

Councillors should seek approval from the Chief Executive Officer to attend events when performing duties as a Councillor and have these costs paid for by Council or reimbursed, as outlined in Section 14.4. Such events must be directly related to the municipality and must not be events organised by political parties.

If requested and approved by the Chief Executive Officer, Council will fund the costs associated with the attendance of the Councillor's spouse / partner when they are accompanying the Councillor. The costs shall be specifically limited to the ticket and/or associated with the relevant event.

16. REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

In line with the principles underlying this policy, the reimbursement of expenses incurred while performing duties as a Councillor shall be applied in a non-discriminatory way, recognising individual needs and circumstances and ensuring a Councillor is not financially or otherwise disadvantaged.

If expenses incurred by any Councillor are of a high value or higher than usual when compared to other Councillors incurring similar expenses, Governance Services will liaise directly with such Councillor to examine the basis for the variance. Any such variance must be approved by Chief Executive Officer.

Claims will not be reimbursed for the purchase / payment of:

- gratuities/tips
- alcohol
- entertainment
- any other expenses not directly related to the roles and responsibilities of a Councillor or member of Delegated Committee.

16.1 General Expenditure

General expenditure claims must relate directly to the performance of duties as a Councillor. General expenditure may include such expenses as the reasonable and minor purchase of refreshments (i.e. a coffee), car parking and public transport tickets.

A claim for reimbursement of general expenditure requires evidence in the form of a tax invoice including name and address of the supplier and details of the goods or services supplied.

16.2 Submitting Claims for Reimbursement

All claims for reimbursement must be fully substantiated and details lodged via the online '*Councillor Reimbursement of Expenses Claim form*' available to councillors on Councils Content Management System and include receipts for all purchases being claimed. A manual form is also available for use if a councillor is unable to access the online form (**Appendix D**).

Original receipts must be attached for all purchases (credit card receipts will not be accepted).

For a claim to be eligible for reimbursement, evidence of the expense and payment must be provided in the form of:

- a receipt for payment; or
- for expenses of \$82.50 incl GST and over, a tax invoice.

Reimbursements will be paid by electronic funds transfer (EFT) within 21 days of receipt of a properly completed and supported claim form.

Claims are to be lodged with the Chief Executive Officer in a timely manner to ensure transparency and accountability and will be managed by the EA to the Mayor and Councillors.

The period for the lodgement of any claim must not exceed three (3) months without written approval from the Chief Executive Officer, in response to a request in writing explaining the reason for such an extension. No claims will be permitted that exceed six (6) months and / or which do not relate to the current financial year.

16.3 Approval of Claims

Claims for reimbursement of expenses by Councillors, including the Mayor must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate. Upon approval, the EA to Mayor and Councillors will forward the claim forms to the Accounts Payable team for processing.

16.4 General

The following general provisions apply to out-of-pocket expenses that will be reimbursed to, or paid on behalf of, Councillors:

- Reimbursements will only be made in respect of expenses already incurred.
- Travel must be undertaken as efficiently and by the shortest route possible.
- Where travel is by air or by other means of public transport, economy class will be the standard.
- Travel claims will only be made on the basis of the actual form of transport used.
- Expenses incurred which are not directly related to the official Council duties of a Councillor cannot be included in the calculation of a claim for reimbursement.
- The cost of any penalties incurred for road, traffic or parking infringements will not be reimbursed.
- If a particular expense is not claimed, this cannot be offset against a claim for an additional amount of another expense.
- Council will reimburse the cost of a Councillor's partner accompanying the Councillor to civic engagements only where the presence of the partner is necessary to support the business or representation needs of the Council and will not apply to interstate or overseas travel. The engagement will normally be of a nature where other attendees will be accompanied by partners.

17. INDEMNITY PROVISION

Subject to the provisions of the LG Act, the following insurance covers will apply to all Councillors:

- Public Liability
- Professional Indemnity
- Councillors and Officers Liability
- Workcover
- Personal Accident (accompanying partners are also covered).

Council will pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim made against a Councillor arising from Council business where any claim is accepted by Council's insurers, whether defended or not.

Council equipment provided to Councillors to assist in performing their role, is covered for damage or theft under Council's insurance policies.

18. ACCOUNTABILITY AND AUDIT

18.1 Audit and Reporting

18.1.1 Councillor Expenses

Reports on Councillor expenses and reimbursements will be reported to Council on a quarterly basis via the Governance Report and will include details of reimbursement of expenses for each Councillor categorised separately as:

- Councillor Allowances.
- Family care and Childcare expenses.
- ICT (specifying mobile phone and data expenses).
- Travel expenses (specifying private vehicle expenses and cab charge or equivalent expenses).
- Conferences and seminars (specifying all costs associated with the attendance including transport, accommodation and meals).
- Training and development (specifying all costs associated with the attendance including transport, accommodation and meals).
- Functions / events (specifying all costs associated with the attendance).

Councillor Conduct expenses to support working relationships between Councillors, including but not limited to mediation and arbitration, will be reported as a total Council figure per quarter.

These reports will also be submitted to Council's Audit and Risk Audit Committee on a six-monthly basis and included in the Annual Report.

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

18.1.2 Interstate and Overseas Travel Register

The Chief Executive Officer will maintain a register of overseas and interstate travel in accordance Council's Public Transparency Policy.

A Council resolution is required for to endorse interstate or overseas travel for Councillor's.

19. REVIEW

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

20. GOVERNANCE

Parent Strategy/ Plan	N/A
Related Documents	Model Councillor Code of Conduct Public Transparency Policy 2020 Audit and Risk Committee Charter Council's Fraud and Corruption Control Policy & Risk Management Framework Governance Rules 2020 Council's Policies and Strategies
Supporting Procedures and Guidelines	ATO - TD 2024/3 Income tax: what are the reasonable travel and overtime meal allowance expense amounts for the 2024–25 income year?
Legislation/ Regulation	<i>Local Government Act 2020</i> <i>Carer's Recognition Act 2012</i> <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> <i>Children Youth and Families Act 2005</i> <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>
Author	Coordinator Governance Services
Policy Owner/ Sponsor	General Manager Customer and Corporate
Date Effective	Adopted by Council Resolution on 28 July 2025
Review Date	October 2029
Version Number	1.0
Document ID	A8164395
Content enquiries	Executive Manager Governance, Risk, Communications and Engagement Coordinator Governance Services Mayor to EA and Councillors

APPENDIX A

Legislative Framework

Section 33A – Regular professional development training of Councillors

Councillors must complete professional development training annually to ensure that the Councillor understands their role and responsibilities at least once each year of their term beginning in the first full calendar year after the Councillor is elected; and within the prescribed period, or by the prescribed day, in each year of their term beginning in the first full calendar year after the Councillor is elected.

Councillors must also make a written declaration before the Chief Executive Officer after completing the professional development training that states that the Councillor has completed the professional development training; and is dated and signed.

The CEO must ensure that the professional development training is available to be undertaken annually within the prescribed and provide reasonable assistance to a Councillor to enable them to access the professional development training.

If a Councillor is unable to take or complete professional development training because of a leave of absence, the Councillor must take or complete the training within one month after returning from leave.

The professional development training must be conducted in the prescribed manner and address any prescribed matters.

Section 33B - Failure to take professional development training and make declaration

If a Councillor fails to take or complete the professional development training and make a written declaration, the Councillor's allowance will be withheld until the Councillor has completed the training as required by section 33A and made the written declaration as required by section 33A(4).

A Councillor is entitled to receive any allowance that is withheld under subsection (1) after the Councillor takes or completes the professional development training and makes a written declaration as required by section 33A(4).

Section 39 – Allowances for Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors

A Mayor, Deputy Mayor or a Councillor is entitled to receive from Council an allowance in accordance with a Determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal under the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019*.

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 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 to receive the entire allowance to which they are entitled, or to receive a specified part of the allowance to which they are entitled or to receive no allowance.

Section 40 – Reimbursement of Expenses of Councillors and members of a delegated committee

A Council must reimburse a Councillor or a member of a delegated committee for out-of-pocket expenses which the Council is satisfied –

- (a) Are bona fide expenses.
- (b) Have been reasonably incurred in the performance of the role of Councillor or member of a delegated committee.
- (c) Are reasonably necessary for the Councillor or member of a delegated committee to perform that role.

Council must provide details of all reimbursements under this section to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Section 41 – Council Expenses

Council must adopt and maintain an expenses policy in relation to the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for Councillors and members of delegated committees. A policy adopted by a Council under this section must –

- (a) Specify procedures to be followed in applying for reimbursement and in reimbursing expenses.
- (b) Comply with any requirements prescribed by the regulations in relation to the reimbursement of expenses.
- (c) 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.
- (d) 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 – Resources and Facilities for the Mayor and Councillors

Council must make available to the Mayor and Councillors the resources and facilities reasonably necessary to enable them to effectively perform their role. Council must:

- (a) Consider the support that may be required by a Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Councillor because of a disability.
- (b) Have particular regard to 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 43 – Indemnity for Councillors - general

A Council must indemnify and keep indemnified each Councillor, member of a Delegated Committee and member of a Community Asset Committee against all actions or claims whether arising during or after their term of office in respect of anything necessarily done, reasonably done or omitted to be done in good faith:

- (a) 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.
- (b) 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.

Section 43A – Indemnity for Councillors – legal costs

A Council must not indemnify a Councillor for legal costs incurred by the Councillor as a result of —

- (a) an application made under section 143 (*internal arbitration*) or 154 (*councillor conduct panel*); or
- (b) a process or proceeding relating to—
 - (i) an application made under section 143 or 154; or
 - (ii) a decision or determination made under section 147 (*sanctions imposed by arbiter*) or 167 (*determination by CCP*).

A Council may indemnify a Councillor for costs incurred by the Councillor to obtain representation considered necessary under section 141(2)(c) (*internal arbitration*) or 163(2)(b) (*councillor conduct panel*) of the Act.

Section 123 – Misuse of position

- (1) A person who is, or has been, a Councillor or member of a delegated committee must not intentionally misuse their position—
 - (a) to gain or attempt to gain, directly or indirectly, an advantage for themselves or for any other person; or
 - (b) to cause, or attempt to cause, detriment to the Council or another person.

Penalty: 600 penalty units or imprisonment for 5 years.

- (2) An offence against subsection (1) is an indictable offence.
- (3) For the purposes of this section, circumstances involving the misuse of a position by a person who is, or has been, a Councillor or member of a delegated committee include—

- (a) making improper use of information acquired as a result of the position the person held or holds; or
- (b) disclosing information that is confidential information; or
- (c) directing or improperly influencing, or seeking to direct or improperly influence, a member of Council staff; or
- (d) exercising or performing, or purporting to exercise or perform, a power, duty or function that the person is not authorised to exercise or perform; or
- (e) using public funds or resources in a manner that is improper or unauthorised; or
- (f) participating in a decision on a matter in which the person has a conflict of interest.

Section 228 – Councillor may be ordered to stand down

- (1) On the recommendation of the Minister, the Governor in Council may, by Order in Council, stand down a Councillor—
 - (a) for a specified period not exceeding 6 months; or
 - (b) until an outcome specified in subsection (5) has occurred.
- (2) The Minister may make a recommendation under subsection (1) if—
 - (a) any of the following applies in respect of the Councillor—
 - (i) an application has been made to a Councillor Conduct Panel or VCAT alleging serious misconduct or gross misconduct (as the case requires) by the Councillor;
 - (ii) the Minister has appointed a Commission of Inquiry into the Council of the Councillor;
 - (iii) an application has been made to the Supreme Court for the ouster from the office of Councillor of the Councillor; and
 - (b) the Chief Municipal Inspector or a Municipal Monitor has given the Minister a report under this Part advising the Minister that the Councillor in respect of whom circumstances specified in paragraph (a) apply—
 - (i) is creating a serious risk to the health and safety of Councillors or Council staff; or
 - (ii) in the Councillor's capacity as a Councillor, is creating a serious risk to the health and safety of other persons; or
 - (iii) is preventing the Council from performing its functions; and
 - (c) the Minister is satisfied that the Councillor—
 - (i) is creating a serious risk to the health and safety of Councillors or Council staff; or
 - (ii) in the Councillor's capacity as a Councillor, is creating a serious risk to the health and safety of persons other than Councillors or Council staff; or
 - (iii) is behaving in a manner that is preventing the Council from performing its functions.
- (3) If an Order in Council is made under subsection (1), the Minister must give a written notification to—
 - (a) the Councillor, who by Order in Council, must stand down;
 - (b) the Chief Executive Officer.
- (4) If an Order in Council is made under subsection (1), for the duration of the Order—
 - (a) the allowance of the Councillor ordered to stand down is to be withheld; and
 - (b) the Councillor ordered to stand down must not perform the functions and duties of, or exercise the powers of, a Councillor including—
 - (i) attend any meetings of the Council; and
 - (ii) attend any delegated committee meetings; and
 - (iii) attend Council premises.

- (5) The following outcomes are specified for the purposes of subsection (1)(b)—
 - (a) on the making of a determination by a Councillor Conduct Panel or VCAT in respect of the application;
 - (b) on the withdrawal of the application to the Councillor Conduct Panel or VCAT;
 - (c) on the dismissal of the application by the Councillor Conduct Panel or VCAT;
 - (d) on the tabling of the report of a Commission of Inquiry under section 221;
 - (e) the Supreme Court has made a decision in respect of an application for the ouster from the office of Councillor of the Councillor that has been stood down;
 - (f) an application to the Supreme Court for the ouster from the office of Councillor of the Councillor that has been stood down is withdrawn.
- (6) Unless one of the following applies in respect of a Councillor that has been stood down under this section, the Councillor's allowance must be returned to the Councillor when the Councillor is no longer stood down—
 - (a) the Councillor Conduct Panel makes a finding of serious misconduct in respect of the Councillor;
 - (b) VCAT makes a finding of gross misconduct in respect of the Councillor;
 - (c) the Commission of Inquiry has made an adverse finding in its report;
 - (d) the Councillor is ousted from the office of Councillor by the Supreme Court.

Section 229 - Standing down of Councillor charged with offence

- (1) If a Councillor is charged with an offence specified in subsection (2), the Councillor is stood down until an outcome specified in subsection (5) occurs.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), the specified offences are the following—
 - (a) an offence against this Act for which the maximum penalty is at least 120 penalty units or a period of imprisonment of at least 12 months;
 - (b) an offence against a law of Victoria, or a law of another State, a Territory or the Commonwealth, that is punishable by a period of imprisonment of at least 2 years for a first conviction.
- (3) If a Councillor is stood down under subsection (1), the Councillor—
 - (a) must give written notice of that fact to the Chief Executive Officer of the Council immediately on becoming aware of that fact; and
 - (b) must not perform the functions and duties or exercise the powers of a Councillor; and
 - (c) must not attend any meetings of the Council, any delegated committee meetings or any Council premises.
- (4) If a Councillor is stood down under subsection (1), their allowance must be withheld.
- (5) A Councillor is no longer stood down under subsection (1) if—
 - (a) the charge is withdrawn; or
 - (b) all proceedings in respect of the charge (including any appeal) are finally determined.
- (6) A Councillor who is no longer stood down under subsection (1) is entitled to their allowance, including any allowance previously withheld under subsection (4), unless the Councillor is convicted of the offence.

APPENDIX B

Australian Tax Office

Table 2: Reasonable amounts for domestic travel expenses based on ATO TD 2024/3

Place	Food and drink (\$)	Incidentals (\$)	Daily total (\$)
Adelaide	breakfast 36.90 lunch 52.10 dinner 73.10	34.25	407.35
Brisbane	breakfast 36.90 lunch 52.10 dinner 73.10	34.25	453.35
Canberra	breakfast 36.90 lunch 52.10 dinner 73.10	34.25	442.35
Darwin	breakfast 36.90 lunch 52.10 dinner 73.10	34.25	489.35
Hobart	breakfast 36.90 lunch 52.10 dinner 73.10	34.25	431.35
Melbourne	breakfast 36.90 lunch 52.10 dinner 73.10	34.25	427.35
Perth	breakfast 36.90 lunch 52.10 dinner 73.10	34.25	441.35
Sydney	breakfast 36.90 lunch 52.10 dinner 73.10	34.25	460.35
High-cost country centres	breakfast 36.90 lunch 52.10 dinner 73.10	34.25	variable
Tier 2 country centres (see Table 5)	breakfast 33.90 lunch 34.65 dinner 67.50	34.25	377.30
Other country centres	breakfast 33.90 lunch 34.65 dinner 67.50	34.25	358.30