



Reimbursement of Councillor Expenses Policy

CONTROL:

Policy Type:	Statutory
Authorised by:	Diamantina Shire Council
Head of Power:	Local Government Regulation 2012 – Section 250
Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Responsibilities:	Review and Implement Policy
Adopted / Approved:	August 19 2024, Minute No. 2024.08.19-OM-12
Last Reviewed:	April 2024
Review:	April 2028 - Minimum every four years after each Local Government Election
Version	7

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to meet the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2009* and ensure that clear and concise instruction is available for the reimbursement of Councillor expenses.

1.2 POLICY OBJECTIVES:

The policy will ensure accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors. This Policy will also ensure that Councillors are provided with reasonable facilities to assist them in carrying out Council Business.

1.3 COMMENCEMENT OF POLICY:

This Policy will commence on adoption.

1.4 SCOPE:

This Policy applies to all Councillors and the Mayor.



2. POLICY

2.1 POLICY STATEMENT:

Council will meet or reimburse the cost of, or pay allowances to cover the cost of reasonable expenses and facilities provision that are necessary and required by Councillors for conducting Council Business. Allowable expenses and facilities to be provided by Council are limited to those contained within Section 3 of this Policy.

3. STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

3.1 KEY PRINCIPLES

To ensure that all Councillors have the facilities and other support necessary to undertake Council Business.

To ensure that public resources are utilised in a transparent, effective and accountable way that meets community expectations and in compliance with the local government principles of:

- Transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest; and
- Sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of effective services;
- Democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement;
- Good governance of, and by, local government; and
- Ethical and legal behaviour of councillors, local government employees and Councillor advisors.

3.2 SPECIFIC AND STANDARD

3.2.1 Expenses Categories

3.2.1.1 Conferences, Meetings and Workshops

Where Council resolves Councillors are required to attend conferences or workshops to deliver a paper or as a delegate of Council, Council will meet the cost or reimburse the reasonable expenses associated with attending the event.

3.2.1.2 Professional Development – Mandatory Training

Where Council resolves that one or more Councillors are to attend training courses or workshops for skills development related to a Councillor's role, Council will meet or reimburse the total costs of the course.

Note: Some examples of this training are Councillor Induction, Code of Conduct, Meeting Procedures and Legislative Obligations.



3.2.1.3 Professional Development – Discretionary Training

Other than mandatory training referred to above, where Council gives approval for a Councillor to attend a conference, workshop or training to improve skills relevant to their role as a Councillor, Council will meet the costs for the discretionary training up to a limit of \$5,000 per Councillor per quadrennial term.

3.2.1.4 Travel Expenses (including flights, taxi, parking and public transport)

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for all reasonable travel costs when representing Council of Council Business. In some cases this may involve interstate and overseas travel. If Councillors travel using their own private vehicles or planes, an allowance can be claimed based on log book details to substantiate the relevance of the travel to Council Business.

It is acceptable for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to register for the Qantas Frequent Flyers Loyalty Program to enable savings on airline and accommodation travel expenses. The Qantas points are to be used only for savings and not for personal gain.

The amount reimbursed will be the actual and reasonable costs (or equivalent mileage/plane hours) incurred by the Councillor.

The vehicle allowance will be in accordance with RACQ vehicle operating costs as recorded on its web site.

The hourly rate claimable for general aviation is \$400 per hour.

Where a Council vehicle is available for use by the Councillor for Council Business and the Councillor chooses to use their own private vehicle, the Councillor is not entitled to claim travel costs associated with the use of their own private vehicle.

Any fines or infringements issued while undertaking, and associated with Council Business by the Councillor is the personal responsibility of the Councillor. Council will not meet the costs of any fine.

All approved Councillor travel will be booked and paid by Council. All travel is to be undertaken by the most direct route. Economy class travel is standard, unless otherwise is reasonably necessary and approved by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Airline tickets purchased are not transferable.

3.2.1.5 Hospitality Expenses

Councillors may have occasion to incur hospitality expenses while conducting Council Business separate from official civic receptions organised by Council. The Mayor, in particular may require additional reimbursement when entertaining dignitaries outside of official events. Councillors are entitled to claim reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred by them to entertain dignitaries up to a limit of \$4,000 for the Mayor and \$500 for councillors, per financial year.

Any claims will also be assessed and determined in accordance with Council's Entertainment and Hospitality Expenses Policy No. 10.

3.2.1.6 Accommodation

Where it is reasonable necessary for a Councillor to have an overnight stay to attend to Council Business, including attend Council meetings (for example, to manage fatigue and minimise night



driving), Councillors may stay in a motel/hotel accommodation (four star or equivalent as available), including pre and post meeting.

When attending conferences, Councillors are encouraged to take advantage of the package provided by conference organisers and stay in the recommended accommodation.

In all other cases, the CEO will authorise reasonable accommodation arrangements. In these instances, Council will meet the cost of, or reimburse reasonable accommodation costs.

Where accommodation is provided outside the region, Council will pay for reasonable dry-cleaning costs.

3.2.1.7 Meals and Incidental Expenses

Given the distance that Councillors may need to travel to attend, on ordinary or special Council meeting days, Councillors will be provided with breakfast, lunch and dinner (if necessary).

Councillors have the option to be reimbursed for meal expenses incurred personally when travelling or attending Council Business outside the region and where it is not included with the accommodation booking or as part of the registration costs of the activity. The meal costs incurred by a Councillor will be reimbursed in accordance with the Australian Tax Office's Taxation Determination.

When travelling for Council Business purposes, Councillors may charge the reasonable costs to a Council issued credit card or claim for the reimbursement of the reasonable costs incurred personally. Should Councillors want a Credit Card issued, Council must resolve to approve a financial delegation of a set amount under Section 262(3) (a) of the *Local Government Act, 2009*.

Alternatively, Councillors may claim a daily meal allowance based on the Australian Tax Office's Taxation Determination: "Income Tax: what are the reasonable travel and overtime meal allowance expense amounts" or the relevant year and the reasonable travel expenses for the town in which they are staying. Councillors may only claim a meal allowance where they have personally incurred a cost for the meal.

Reasonable alcoholic beverages may be included with the evening meal only, in addition to the meal cost.

3.2.1.8 Spouse/Partner Arrangements

Council is not responsible for making arrangements to cater for situations where a spouse or partner accompanies the Councillor to events. Partners of Councillors may accompany Councillors to events at their own cost and can travel in a Council vehicle if a seat is available.

3.3 CANCELLATION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAVEL OR ACCOMMODATION

If a Councillor wishes to cancel travel or accommodation previously planned and booked by the Council, then the Councillor must advise their support staff as soon as possible to maximise the opportunity to recover expenses paid on their behalf.



3.4 MAKING CLAIMS

When seeking reimbursement for expenses, Councillors must complete and sign a Councillors Fees and Expenses Claim form and provide receipts for allowable expenses together with details of the Council Business to which the expenses relate.

Expenses claims or reimbursement requests that comply with the requirements of this policy must be forwarded to the CEO.

Councillors are responsible for ensuring that they do not make claims for expenses that do not come within this Policy, are unreasonable or in excess of allowable limits set out in the Policy. Failure to comply with this Policy, falsifying claims or logbooks, or the misuse of facilities may constitute Official Misconduct and will be referred to the Crime and Misconduct Commission, or misconduct or a conduct breach and referred to the Office of the Independent Assessor.

Claims must be presented within three months of incurring the expense for review and approval by the CEO. Claims will be processed within a two-week period.

3.5 PROVISION OF FACILITIES

Council will provide and meet operational costs of facilities that are deemed necessary and required to support and assist Councillors in their role.

When determining the facilities to be provided, Council will consider what are reasonable requirements and standards for an individual Councillor. If a Councillor chooses a higher standard of facility than that prescribed by Council, any difference in cost must be met by the Councillor personally. Ownership of any facilities provided to a Councillor will remain with Council.

3.5.1 Residential accommodation for Mayor

The Mayor will be provided with residential accommodation in Bedourie, Council's administrative centre, in the event that the Mayor's principal place of residence is located outside of Bedourie. This is so that the Mayor may discharge the Mayor's responsibilities effectively, such as attend all necessary Council meetings and work the hours necessary to fulfil the Mayor's duties.

Residential accommodation will be provided in accordance with Council's Housing Policy No. 23.

3.5.2 Administrative Tools and Access to Council Office Amenities

Councillors are entitled to use the following facilities:

- a) At Council administration Centre – office space, Council meeting rooms, landline telephone, internet;
- b) Secretarial support;
- c) Stationery;
- d) Publications – copies of the Act and other legislation, books, journals considered necessary; and
- e) Any other administrative necessities which Council considers necessary to meet the business of Council.



3.5.3 Home Office

Upon request, Councillors will be provided with a laptop computer or equivalent and a multi-function printer for Council purposes.

3.5.4 Maintenance Costs of any Council Owned Equipment

Council will cover all ongoing maintenance costs associated with Council owned equipment to ensure it is operating for optimal professional use.

3.5.5 Name Badge and Uniform

Council will provide each Councillor with a name badge and Councillor uniform (3 x shirts/blouses, and a blazer / jacket, all with a Diamantine Council crest.

3.5.6 Safety Kit

Councillors will be provided with a portable Safety Kit comprised of personal protective equipment not limited to, but including, safety boots, safety vest, protective eye wear, hearing protection and sun protection. The kit is provided so that Councillors may safely discharge their responsibilities, which will include site and field inspections.

3.5.7 Vehicle

Council will make available a Council owned vehicle (including fuel) for official Council Business as and when required.

Councillors are authorised reasonable private use of Council-owned vehicles when on Council Business, on condition that they reimburse Council for any private use at the adopted mileage allowance rate.

3.5.8 Telecommunications

3.5.8.1 Telecommunications Allowance

All Councillors will receive a telecommunications allowance of \$100 per month towards the cost of their private fixed telephone/data line, mobile phone plans and/or mobile data plans.

3.5.8.2 Mobile Phone

The Mayor will be provided with a Council mobile phone handset. In the event that the Mayor elects to use the Mayor's own personal mobile phone and not a Council-issued phone, the Mayor will be provided with an allowance to offset the mobile data plan costs incurred up to a limit of \$150 per month.

3.5.8.3 Internet Access

The Mayor will be provided with hardware to enable 4G to be received at their home office with data costs payable by Council. The Mayor will be provided with a mobile 4G data device for business purposes.

Where available, Councillors living in Bedourie will be provided with access to Councils WIFI network at Council's cost for business purposes.



Councillors who reside in satellite only areas will be entitled to claim \$50 per month towards the cost of satellite data. Where this cost is not incurred by the Councillor, the property owner may claim this amount from Council by forwarding a tax invoice.

3.5.9 Legal Costs and Insurance Cover

Councillors may be entitled to reimbursement of legal representation expenses in accordance with the Legal Assistance for Councillors and Employees Policy.

Councillors are included in its Workers Compensation Coverage (LGW) that provides for the level of benefits substantially the same as for the employee of Council with the exception that Councillors cannot bring a common law damages action against Council under the *Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003*.

Council has included Councillors under its Professional Indemnity Policy (LGM) to be covered under Council insurance policies while attending Council business.

3.5.10 Return of Assets

Councillors are expected to responsibly look after all Council assets and facilities provided to them for use. All equipment must be returned to Council immediately prior to completion of the Councillor's term, or vacation of the Councillor's office.

4. DEVIATION FROM POLICY

4.1 CEO APPROVAL REQUIRED

Deviation from this Policy will only occur where it is reasonably necessary and with written CEO approval.

5. REFERENCE AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

5.1 DEFINITIONS

To assist in interpretation, the following definitions shall apply:

Word / Term	Definition
Council	means Diamantina Shire Council.
Council Business or Business Purposes	<p>Council Business is defined as activities conducted on behalf of, and/or approved by, Council where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy legislative requirements or achieve business objectives for the Council. Council Business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local community. This includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing for, attending and participating in Council meetings, committee meetings, workshops, deputations and inspections

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for and attending meetings of associated bodied (i.e. LGAQ, RAPAD etc) • Attending civic ceremonies and community events such as representing Council at Anzac Day ceremonies, or opening a school fete, where they have been formally invited in their capacity as Councillor to undertake the official duty • Attending public meetings, annual meetings or presentation dinners where invited as a Councillor • Attending meetings of community groups where invited to speak about Council programs or initiatives. • Private meetings with constituents)residents, ratepayers, community groups, developers etc), where arranged through official Council channels and details of discussions are documented in official records or diaries.
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5.2 RELATED POLICIES, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Links to supporting documentation
Local Government Regulation 2012 – Section 20
Legal Assistance for Councillors and Employees Policy

5.3 VERSION CONTROL

Previous Version Number	Adopted/Approved Date
Version 1 Original	October 20 2014, Minute No. 2014.10.20-OM-15
Version 2	May 9 2016, Minute No .2016.05.09-OM-10
Version 3	May 15 2017, Minute No. 2017.05.15-OM-14
Version 4	June 25 2018, Minute No. 2018.06.25-OM-5
Version 5	May 20 2019, Minute No. 2019.05.20-OM-15
Version 6	April 20 2024, Minute No. 2024.04.20-OM-17
Version 7	August 19 2024, Minute No. 2024.08.19-OM-12