



COUNCIL POLICY

Reimbursement of Expenses and Provision of Facilities for Councillors Policy

Policy Number	CP012
Directorate	Organisational Services
Owner	Ken Diehm, Chief Executive Officer
Last Approved	24/04/2024
Review Due	24/04/2025

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide for the –

- payment of reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by councillors for discharging their duties and responsibilities as councillors; and
- provision of facilities to councillors for that purpose

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Fraser Coast Regional Council councillors.

This policy does not provide for salaries or other forms of councillor remuneration which is determined by the Local Government Remuneration Commission.

3. HEAD OF POWER

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulation 2012 – sections 229 – 252

4. DEFINITIONS

To assist in the interpretation of this Policy the following definitions apply:

“**CEO**” means the Chief Executive Officer of the Fraser Coast Regional Council.

“**Councillors**” means the mayor and councillors of Fraser Coast Regional Council, within the meaning of the *Local Government Act 2009* unless specifically identified.

“**Excess**” when referring to insurance coverage means the deductible as prescribed by the Insurer.

“**Expenses**” means costs reasonably incurred, or to be incurred, by a councillor whilst fulfilling their obligations under the *Local Government Act 2009*. Expenses are not included as remuneration.

“Council Facilities” means facilities deemed necessary to assist councillors in their role.

“Official Council Business” means official business conducted by a councillor on behalf of Council that:

- (a) should result in a benefit being achieved for the local government and/or local government area; or
- (b) is required to satisfy legislative requirements or achieve business objectives for the Council.

Examples of official council business include:

- attendance at council and committee meetings
- attendance at prescribed local government training/workshops and conferences
- attendance at civic ceremonies and community events where a formal invitation has been received inviting Councillors in their capacity to undertake official duty
- attendance at public meetings, annual meetings, community meetings, organised/official events or presentation dinners where invited as a councillor
- attendance at meetings of community groups where invited to speak about council programs or initiatives
- attendance at private meetings with constituents about council strategies, programs or initiatives
- attendance at civic reception functions as mayor or at the request of the mayor
- attendance organised meetings, inspections and community consultations pertaining to council responsibilities.

Participating in a community group event or being a representative on a board not associated with Council is not official council business.

“Private Use of Council Vehicle” means the use of a council vehicle for other than official council business. For the purposes of this policy, private use does **not** include:

- travel between a councillor’s home and the official council business
- any incidental deviations from the direct travel route where the distance travelled is not material

Example - a Councillor who is attending official council business could stop enroute at the corner store, provided that the Councillor does not make a significant deviation from the most direct route).

The home garaging of the council vehicle is permitted.

“Professional Development” includes study opportunities, attendance at industry workshops, courses, seminars and conferences that improves councillors’ skills and knowledge and relevant to their responsibilities as councillor.

“Reasonable” means that Council must make sound judgments and consider what is prudent, responsible and acceptable to the community when determining reasonable levels of facilities and expenditure.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

Councillors are entitled to be reimbursed for expenses incurred, or to be incurred in undertaking official council business and to be provided with facilities to assist them in undertaking their duties and responsibilities as councillors.

In the preparation of this policy Council has considered what is fair and reasonable, given the size and complexities of councillors' responsibilities. The payment and/or reimbursement of expenses and the provision of facilities for councillors must only be for the actual cost of legitimate business use and be:

- in accordance with local government principles and financial sustainability criteria as defined by the *Local Government Act 2009*
- open and transparent
- prudent, responsible and acceptable to the community
- based on ensuring economy and efficiency
- subject to an allocated and approved budget

5.1. Expense Categories

Official Council Business Expense	
Regional Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors are entitled to reimbursement of an amount of \$800 (excluding GST) per annum to assist with hire of facilities required to make themselves available and easily accessible to the public. • This may include occasional office space or community venue hire.
Out of Pocket Expenses	<p>Councillors are entitled to reimbursement of reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred in the conduct of official council business. The maximum amount of out of pocket expenses that may be claimed is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor: \$2,000 (excluding GST) per annum. • Councillors: \$750 (excluding GST) per annum. <p>Out of pocket expenses may include entertainment and hospitality expenses. Refer the Entertainment and Hospitality Council Policy for guidance however where any conflict exists between this policy and the Entertainment and Hospitality Council Policy, this policy will take precedence.</p>
Fuel Costs	Fuel for council owned vehicles used for official council business will be provided or paid for by Council.
Insurance Cover	<p>Council will indemnify or insure councillors in the event of injury sustained while undertaking official council business.</p> <p>Council will pay the excess for any injury claims made by a councillor resulting from undertaking official council business</p>
Professional Development Expenses	
Budget	A budget of \$6,000 (excluding GST) will be available to each councillor each financial year to cover a councillor's professional development expenses.

	<p>Professional development expenses incurred, or to be incurred will be paid for, or reimbursed from the councillor's budget for the financial year.</p> <p>This budget allowance is inclusive of registration fees, travel, meals, accommodation and other out of pocket expenses associated with the professional development activity (refer to the relevant conditions regarding travel, meals, accommodation and out of pocket expenses detailed in this policy).</p> <p>A councillor who has expended their professional development budget must apply to the CEO to attend any additional professional development activities.</p>
Approval	Personal professional development must be endorsed by the mayor and/or the CEO.
Attendance as Council Representative	Expenses related to a councillor attending a seminar or conference activity as a nominated council representative will not reduce the professional development budget available for the councillor.
Travel Expenses	
Approval	<p>All travel for official council business or professional development must be approved by the CEO prior to any expenses being incurred.</p> <p>Councillors are to travel via the most direct route, using the most economical and efficient mode of transport.</p>
Bookings	All councillor travel, approved by Council, will be booked and paid for by Council.
Flights	<p>Economy class is to be used where possible although the CEO and/or mayor may approve business class if the circumstances warrant it.</p> <p>Airline tickets are not transferable and can only be procured for the councillor's travel on official council business. They cannot be used to offset other unapproved expenses (for example, the cost of partner or spouse accompanying the councillor).</p> <p>Frequent Flyer points or other loyalty program benefits accrued on council business must not be used for personal travel and, where possible, should be utilised to offset future council travel expenses.</p>
Accommodation	<p>Council will pay for reasonable expenses incurred for overnight accommodation when a councillor is required to stay outside the local government's region.</p> <p>All councillor accommodation for official council business will be booked and paid for by Council. Council will pay for the most economical deal best suited to the needs of council business. Where possible, the maximum standards for councillors' accommodation should be 4 star rating.</p> <p>Where accommodation is recommended by conference organisers, Council will take advantage of the package deal that is the most economical and convenient to the event.</p>

Meals	<p>Council will reimburse reasonable costs of meals and refreshments for a councillor when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the councillor incurs the cost personally; and • the meal was not provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ within the registration costs of the approved activity/event; ○ during an approved flight. <p>Refer the Entertainment and Hospitality Council Policy for guidance however where any conflict exists between this policy and the Entertainment and Hospitality Council Policy, this policy will take precedence.</p>
Transfer Costs	<p>Any travel transfer expenses associated with councillors travelling for official council business or professional development will be reimbursed for example, trains, taxis, buses and ferry fares.</p> <p>Cab Charge vouchers may also be used where Councillors are required to undertake duties relating to the business of Council.</p>
Private Vehicle Usage	<p>Councillors' private vehicle usage for travel for official council business or professional development may be reimbursed by Council if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the travel has been endorsed by Council resolution; • the claim for mileage is substantiated with log book details; and • the total travel claim does not exceed the cost of the same travel using economy flights plus the cost of taxi transfers.
Overseas Travel	<p>Overseas travel can only be approved by a Council resolution.</p>
Incidental Costs	<p>Council will reimburse any reasonable incidental costs incurred by councillors required to travel, and who are away from home overnight, for official Council business or professional development upon provision of receipts.</p>
Travel Insurance	<p>Councillors are insured for travel outside of a 50km radius of their place of work, when undertaking travelling for official council business.</p> <p>Travel insurance for any additional or extended excursions undertaken beyond the official council business remains the responsibility of the Councillor.</p> <p><i>Example - during an official council business travels interstate or internationally a Councillor decides to extend their stay with the intention of having a holiday excursion. The Councillor would be required to take personal travel insurance for the period in which the holiday excursion occurs</i></p>

5.2. Council Facilities

General Matters	
Ownership	<p>All facilities provided to councillors remain the property of Council. All equipment must be returned to Council when a councillor's term expires unless they have been re-elected.</p>
Private Use	<p>Based on the principle that <i>no private benefit is to be gained</i>, the facilities provided to councillors by Council are to be used only for official council</p>

	business unless prior approval has been granted by resolution of Council except for minor or incidental use, or as otherwise permitted by this or another policy.
Maintenance	Council will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance and reasonable wear and tear costs of council-owned equipment that is supplied to councillors for official business use.
Administrative Tools	
Administrative Tools	<p>Councillors are entitled to use council facilities as required to assist in discharging their duties and responsibilities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shared office space and meeting rooms • computers • stationery • shared access to photocopiers • printers • publications • use of Council landline telephones and internet access in Council offices • secretarial support
Information Technology (IT) Facilities	
Provision of IT Equipment	<p>Councillors are provided with the following IT equipment to assist in discharging their duties and responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tablet and/or laptop • smartphone • printer • any other IT equipment as deemed appropriate by the CEO for the Councillor to efficiently discharge their duties and responsibilities.
IT Equipment: Private Use	Councillors are authorised for reasonable private use of council owned telecommunication devices.
Vehicles and Parking	
Vehicle Allocation	<p>Selection of vehicle and conditions of use are as per the Commuter and Private Use of Vehicles Management Policy and Fleet Management Policy.</p> <p>As per these policies the mayor is entitled to select a Level 1 specific passenger, SUV or light commercial (4WD) vehicle and a councillor is entitled to select a level 3 specific passenger, SUV or light commercial (4WD) vehicle.</p>
Council Vehicles – Private Use	<p>Councillors and their authorised drivers as defined in the Commuter and Private Use of Vehicles Management Policy are authorised for unrestricted private use of Council-owned motor vehicles using one of the following methods:</p> <p>Log Book Method</p> <p>Councillors are to reimburse Council for the private use of Council owned vehicles based on an annual log book assessment over a period of 12 weeks. Reimbursement to be based on the relevant Australian Tax Office published rate for the vehicle type.</p> <p>Annual Cost Method</p> <p>Councillors may purchase the rights to private use of Council vehicles by paying an amount equal to 10% of the total annualised average cost of the</p>

	vehicles - as of 1 July 2023 the cost will be \$872.40pa for passenger vehicles and \$1, 334.40pa for light commercial, including 4x4, all paid fortnightly. This cost will be reviewed annually to take effect in July each year in line with the Commuter and Private Use of Vehicles Policy.
Council Vehicles – Official Business Use	Councillors may have access to a council vehicle for official council business.
Private Vehicles – Official Business Use	Councillors will be reimbursed for private vehicle usage on official council business on the following terms and conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • based on a claim for mileage substantiated by log book; • reimbursement calculations based on the relevant Australian Tax Office published rate for the vehicle type; • provision of Councillor Reimbursement Claim form to the CEO on a monthly basis; and • Claims for business use of private vehicles will be limited to a maximum of 20,000 km per annum.
Car Parking Amenities	Council will provide councillors with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • car parking at the local government office premises; and/or • reimbursement of parking costs paid by Councillors while attending to official council business.
Airport Parking	A Hervey Bay Airport Parking Card will be provided to councillors for parking within the regulated parking area at the Hervey Bay Airport for official council business only.
Fines	Any fines incurred while travelling in council-owned vehicles or privately-owned vehicles when attending to official council business, will be the responsibility of the councillor incurring the fine.
Other Facilities	
Corporate Credit Card	The mayor may be provided with a corporate credit card for business expenses in accordance with this policy.
Identity/Access and Name Badge	Councillors will be entitled to receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an identity/access card ▪ a name badge
Safety Equipment	Council will provide all the necessary safety equipment for use on official Council business eg safety helmet/boots.

5.3. Limitations to Expenses and Facilities

- 5.3.1. Councillors claiming reimbursement of expenses or utilising council facilities, or administrative services must not gain a private benefit.
- 5.3.2. Facilities and resources provided to councillors by Council are for the sole use of councillors in undertaking their duties and must be used responsibly and appropriately.
- 5.3.3. Spouses, partners and family members of councillors are not entitled to reimbursement of expenses or to have access to facilities allocated to Councillors.

- 5.3.4. Subsections 5.3.1 to 5.3.3 do not apply to the private use of vehicles allocated to Councillors in accordance with the Commuter and Private Use of Vehicles Management Policy and Fleet Management Policy.

5.4. Claims for Reimbursement and/or Payment

- 5.4.1. Expenses will be paid to councillors through administrative processes approved by the CEO subject to:
- the limits outlined in this policy; and
 - relevant approval processes eg Council resolution, mayor or CEO approval.
- 5.4.2. Expenses may be either reimbursed to councillors or paid direct by Council.
- 5.4.3. Councillors incurring hospitality and entertainment expenses are required to maintain documentary evidence of all such expenditure which will be recorded in a register maintained by the CEO on a monthly basis.
- 5.4.4. All claims for reimbursement of expenses will be made on the approved form and submitted with original receipts to the Office of the CEO.
- 5.4.5. Claims certified by a Councillor as complying with this policy will be authorised for payment by the CEO within 3 months of incurring the expense and claims will be paid on a monthly basis.

5.5. Councillors accept full responsibility for the accuracy of each claim

Failure to comply with this policy, falsifying claims or logbooks or the misuse of facilities may breach the Councillors' Code of Conduct and/or represent an offence under the Criminal Code and may be referred to the Crime and Corruption Commission and/or the Queensland Police Service.

5.6. Reporting

A report summarising all expenditure in relation to this policy will be included in the Council's Annual Report.

6. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Entertainment and Hospitality Council Policy (eDOCs #837208)
Commuter and Private Use of Vehicles Management Policy (eDOCs #1101685)
Fleet Management Policy (eDOCs #3116623)
Options for Private Use of Council Vehicles (eDOCs #871699)
Councillor Private Use of Council Vehicle Declaration (eDOCs #2313463)
Councillor Reimbursement Claim for Private Vehicle Use (eDOCs #846833)
Councillor Vehicle Log Sheet (eDOCs #2197919)
Direct Payment Request for Councillor Expenses Claim (eDOCs #1874609)

7. REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed when related legislation/documents are amended or replaced, other circumstances as determined from time to time by Council or at intervals of no more than one year.

Version Control

Version Number	Key Changes	Approval Authority	Approval Date	Document Number
22	Amended Policy Adopted	Council	26/10/2022	858978
23	Amendment – Ordinary Meeting No 6/23	Council	28/06/2023	858978
24	Minor amendments - Ordinary Meeting 4/24	Council	24/04/2024	858978