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## **1. Statement**

The objectives of this policy are:

- to provide set guidelines for the reimbursement of legitimate business expenses incurred or to be incurred by a Councillor while carrying out their civic duties as elected representatives of their local communities;
- to provide set guidelines for the provision of administrative support to assist Councillors fulfil their professional role for the community at an appropriate standard.

## **2. Purpose and Principles**

Councillors are elected representatives of the community who take on the role to set the strategic direction of the City. It is Council's responsibility to ensure that Councillors are not financially disadvantaged when carrying out the requirements of their role and are fairly and reasonably compensated. Council is also required to provide appropriate administrative support to allow the Councillors to fulfil their professional role for the community.

The payment and/or reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities for Councillors:

- is to be open and transparent, prudent, responsible, acceptable to the community and in accordance with statutory requirements;
- based on ensuring economy and efficiency; and
- subject to budget provisions.

Council's annual report must contain the particulars enacted by this policy and details of any expenses reimbursed under this policy.

## **3. Strategic Plan Links**

This policy relates to:

Listening, Leading and Financial Management

## **4. Regulatory Authority**

*Local Government Act 2009*

*Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*

Local Government Regulation 2012

## **5. Scope**

This policy sets out specific guidelines for the reimbursement of legitimate expenses incurred or to be incurred by a Councillor while carrying out Council business. It also deals with the provision of administrative support to enable Councillors to perform their duties with relative ease to discharge their duties and responsibilities as a Councillor.

This policy does not provide for salaries or any other form of remuneration to Councillors.

## 6. Policy Exclusions

- Spouses, partners and family members of Councillors are not entitled to reimbursement of expenses or to have access to facilities allocated to Councillors (This is not intended to exclude spousal attendance at events where it would be customary for the partner of the Mayor to attend or the Councillor deputising for the Mayor).
- Council will not reimburse or provide funds, services or facilities solely or mainly for the purposes of advertising by, or the self-promotion of Councillors.
- Councillors are not entitled to be reimbursed or provided with funds for the purchase of alcoholic beverages without the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer.
- No reimbursement is to be provided for expenses incurred during travel to internal meetings, informal policy discussions, party or political meetings between Councillors.

## 7. Legislative Responsibilities

The *Local Government Regulation 2012*, s252 states that “a local government cannot resolve under section 275 that a meeting at which a proposed expenses reimbursement policy is discussed (including its adoption or amendment) be closed”.

To ensure public accountability and transparency, Ipswich City Council will give public notice of any proposal to change the adopted Councillor Expenses Reimbursement and Administrative Support Policy by publishing in a newspaper circulating in the local government area and on Council’s website.

## 8. Reimbursements

In making a determination as to the validity of a claim for reimbursement, Council must consider public perceptions to ensure that the process meets the community’s expectations concerning accountability and transparency. Councillors incurring expenses should not gain personal funds as a result of their role servicing the community. The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for determining the appropriateness of payment of any request for reimbursement.

### 8.1 Council Business Expenses

Requests for reimbursement of expenses will only be considered where it can be proven, by the provision of appropriate documentation, that the expense is a genuine council-related business expense incurred whilst undertaking official duties. Payment will be on the grounds that the incurring of this expense could not be avoided.

### 8.2 Professional Development

Councillors are encouraged to undertake relevant professional development and council will organise and pay for all associated business costs (including registration, travel, accommodation, meals, etc) where the activity level is reasonable and the activity is associated with the councillor’s portfolio or organised by a government agency or an industry body eg LGAQ, ALGWA. Any funds expended at the event on personal pursuits will be payable by the Councillor from private funds. Refer to 8.3 Travel Expenses below for a list of examples of what is considered a personal expenditure.

### 8.3 Travel Expenses

Requests by Councillors to attend conferences, seminars or training are to be made in writing to the Chief Executive Officer outlining the details of the event and the benefits to the City of Ipswich. All requests for travel are to be made in sufficient time to gain the required approval as outlined below as well as allowing Council to take advantage of travel discounts and deals. Council's "Representation of the City at Official Functions Policy" outlines Councillors specific obligations concerning reporting requirements following their attendance at conferences/seminars.

Approval required:

- Local and Interstate Travel – Chief Executive Officer approval
- International – A resolution of Council

Economy class air travel is the standard and Councillors are required to travel by the most direct route. Where flight time exceeds five (5) hours, the Mayor is eligible for Business Class travel with all other councillors eligible for Premium Economy class in this circumstance.

Any costs incurred which are deemed to be of a personal nature are required to be paid for by the Councillor from private funds. Below is a list of examples of what is considered to be a personal expenditure. This list of examples is not exhaustive:

- Tourism related costs
- Social events
- In-flight and in-house movies
- Mini bar purchases
- Airline club fees
- Alcohol not consumed as part of a meal
- Payment of costs associated with the return of personal items which have been left behind

#### 8.3.1 Meals while undertaking domestic or international travel

Councillors will be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals, associated with official business, when:

- the councillor incurs the cost personally;
- the meal was not provided within the registration costs of the approved activity/event/travel;
- the councillor can produce original documents sufficient to verify the actual meal cost;
- the expenses are reasonable;
- Reimbursement will be limited to a maximum of the Australian Taxation Office guidelines for meal allowance except for in exceptional circumstances (E.g. entertaining in an unusually expensive location outside the city) where approved by the Chief Executive Officer and the Mayor.

### 8.3.2 Accommodation while undertaking domestic or international travel

Where practical, Council will book accommodation offered as part of a conference package. In all other circumstances, Councillors are entitled to stay in accommodation to a standard of 4 stars or equivalent when undertaking professional development or other council business where it is not reasonable for the Councillor to return home for the night in accordance with the following conditions:

- Council will book and pay for all accommodation under this policy;
- where a Councillor chooses to stay with friends or family, no accommodation expenses will be paid.

Councillors may be reimbursed for reasonable incidentals in accordance with this policy (up to a maximum of the Australian Taxation Office guidelines).

## 9. Provision of Administrative Support and Resources

Council is responsible for the provision of appropriate administrative support and resources to ensure that a Councillor is able to undertake their civic duties with relative ease and at a standard appropriate to fulfil their professional role for the community. The provision of facilities and resources is for the sole use of councillors in undertaking their duties and should be used responsibly and appropriately.

### 9.1 Vehicle

A vehicle allowance of \$19,500 p.a. (by weekly payment) will be provided to Councillors in order to facilitate the costs of procuring, maintaining and running (including but not limited to fuel, registration, insurance, repairs, depreciation, finance costs etc.) a vehicle.

For the Mayor, a vehicle allowance of \$22,500 p.a. (by weekly payment) will be provided in recognition of the additional civic duties and responsibilities that this role is required to undertake.

Councillors will have access to Council's preferred salary packaging provider.

Councillors should seek their own independent financial advice regarding this allowance and any potential taxation implications.

### 9.2 Councillor Identification on Vehicle

Two (2) magnetic vehicle door decals, displaying the Councillor's name and the Ipswich City Council logo will be provided to each Councillor.

### 9.3 Corporate Wear, Personal Protective Equipment and Name Badges

Ipswich City Council has a non-compulsory uniform policy and Councillors will be considered eligible to participate in this corporate scheme under the same conditions that apply to general employees. No provision will be made for Council meeting the cost of any alterations to the garments if required. These costs will be met from the Councillor's private funds.

Councillors will be provided with all necessary safety equipment and are expected to observe the appropriate Workplace, Health and Safety requirements as outlined in Council's Workplace, Health and Safety Policy.

Councillors will be provided with a name badge displaying their name and the Ipswich City Council logo.

#### **9.4 Communication and Technology Resources**

- One (1) mobile telephone will be provided at the beginning of the Council term for the purposes of conducting council business. The model provided will be in accordance with the standard device made available for Council Managers. At the end of the term, the mobile device is to be returned to Council in fair condition. Limited personal usage is accepted in line with the provisions available to Council Officers. Any use deemed inappropriate will be required to be reimbursed.
- One (1) laptop computer will be provided at the beginning of the Council terms for the purposes of conducting council business. The model provided will be in accordance with the standard device made available to Council Officers. At the end of the term, the laptop computer is to be returned to Council in fair condition.
- One (1) iPad will be provided at the beginning of the Council terms for the purposes of conducting council business. The model provided will be in accordance with the standard device made available to Council Officers. At the end of the term, the iPad is to be returned to Council in fair condition.
- A docking station, monitor and non-colour A4 only printer will be provided to assist Councillors work from home. All items are to be returned to Council at the end of term. Items must be in a fair condition.
- A mobile internet connection for iPad and laptop will be provided.

#### **9.5 Office Facilities**

- A separate office for the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor will be provided in the Council Administration Building.
- Shared office facilities, located within the Council Administration Building, will be provided for the remaining Councillors with hot desk facilities available at other council Customer Service Centres subject to booking availability.
- Access to dedicated Councillor meeting rooms will be provided within the Council Administration Building. In addition, access to an external meeting room to meet with constituents will be available at Council's Customer Service Centres and library facilities subject to booking availability.

## 9.6 Secretarial Support

- The Mayor will be provided with the following support staff:
  - Executive Officer\* x 1
  - Executive Assistant x 1
  - Administration Officer x 1
- The Deputy Mayor will share the resources of the Mayor as well as access to the Councillor Support team.
- The remaining Councillors will share an administrative support pool consisting of:
  - Team Co-ordinator x 1
  - Executive Support Officer x 3
  - Administration Officer x 2

All support staff will be employees of Ipswich City Council and will be employed under guidelines set for employment by Council's People and Culture Branch based on substantial previous experience to ensure that the best level of service is provided to Councillors. Recommendations received from Councillors which may be construed as a political appointment will not be considered.

(\*Excludes Executive Officer to Mayor who will be employed on a fixed term, aligned with term of the Mayor)

## 9.7 Personalised Stationery Items, Electronic Media and Other Items

The following items will be made available to Councillors:

- Personalised Electronic Letterhead for Council business using a standard design format;
- Council email address
- Councillor Facebook account
- Business cards (English language only)
- Digital subscription to the following newspapers:
  - Queensland Times | Courier Mail
- Digital Council Christmas Card for Council business use using a standard design format.

## 9.8 Advertising and Sponsorship

All advertising undertaken which contains the Councillor's image and/or name is deemed to be for electioneering purposes and the costs involved will not be paid by Council under any circumstances. Should any Ipswich City Council events, programs or services be required to carry an acknowledgement of Councillor involvement, the standard wording will be:

Proudly supported by your Ipswich City Council

## 10. Assets Ownership

### 10.1 Facilities/Equipment

All facilities/equipment provided to Councillors to undertake their duties as a Councillor remain the property of Ipswich City Council and must be accounted for during Council's equipment audits.



Councillors are expected to responsibly look after all publicly funded facilities and assets provided to them.

All facilities/equipment must be returned to Council either;

- Prior to the completion of the Councillors term in accordance with Section 160 of the Local Government Act 2009 at a date and time agreed with by the Chief Executive Officer or;
- No later than close of business the day following the end of a Councillors term in accordance with Section 160 of the Local Government Act 2009 or;
- Immediately if a Councillor is suspended under Section 182A of the Local Government Act 2009.

### **10.2 Official Gifts Received by a Councillor**

As part of a Councillor's civic duties, there will be occasions where official gifts will be presented or exchanged. All such gifts are the property of Council, not the individual, and are to be handed to the Chief Executive Officer as soon as possible after the receipt of the item. Low value personal items can be retained following declaration and approval by both the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

The specific requirements, and supporting documents which need to be completed, are contained in Council's Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy. Councillors are to make themselves familiar with all the requirements of the Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy.

### **11. Asset Maintenance Costs**

Council will cover all ongoing maintenance costs associated with Council owned equipment to ensure it is operating for optimal professional use (subject to proper usage and standards of care).

### **12. Legal and Insurance Cover**

Council will cover the excess payable by Council, in accordance with any policy of insurance, available to Council which may cover councillors for the following events: any external inquiry, investigation, hearing or legal proceedings into the conduct of a councillor, or arising out of, or in connection with the councillors performance of his or her civic functions or role as a councillor or undertaking Council business. Coverage is available to councillors in accordance with the relevant Council insurance policies.

Councillors will be covered under the relevant insurance policies of Council, including cover under the following Council insurance policies: public liability insurance, professional indemnity insurance, councillor and officer's insurance, personal accident, international and domestic travel insurance.

### **13. Related Documents**

[Legal Assistance for Employees and Councillors Policy](#)

Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy

Councillor – Staff interaction Policy

Representation of the City at Official Functions Policy

Councillor Handbook

Councillor Administrative Support Handbook Procedure

Councillor Code of Conduct

#### 14. Roles and Responsibilities

This policy applies to all Councillors and any Council employee who either performs a support role for the Councillors or processes any of the requirements of this policy.

#### 15. Key Stakeholders

The following will be consulted during the review process:

Chief Executive Officer

Manager Executive Services (Coordination and Performance Department)

#### 16. Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy will be reflected in the Councillors of the City of Ipswich ability to fulfil their professional role as elected representatives to the high standards of good governance and transparency expected by the community, without being financially disadvantaged as a result.

Quarterly reports of Councillor Expenses and Reimbursements will be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee and published in the Annual Report at the end of the financial year.

#### 17. Definitions

Elected Representatives	Mayor and Councillors
Councillors	Mayor and Councillors
Domestic Travel	Travel undertaken in an official capacity outside of the boundaries of the City of Ipswich
Political Appointment	A person who has worked closely with a candidate on their campaign for election or who has a close affiliation through membership to the same political party which would be considered to align the person to the Councillor rather than to Council.

#### 18. Policy Owner

The General Manager (Corporate Services) is the policy owner and the Corporate Governance Manager (Legal and Governance Branch) is responsible for authoring and reviewing this policy.