

<b>Councillors Entitlements (Expenses &amp; Facilities)</b>	Document No:	SCS - 001
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Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer	
Authorising Officer:	Chief Executive Officer	

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide Councillors with a clear understanding of their entitlements with regard to reimbursement of out of pocket expenses and provision of Council owned resources, whilst performing duties as a Councillor.

## 2. Scope

This policy covers the reimbursement to Councillors for reasonable bona fide out-of-pocket expenses incurred whilst performing duties as a Councillor and facilities, support and resources provided.

## 3. Application

This policy applies to all persons holding the position of Councillor of the Surf Coast Shire.

## 4. Definitions

Not Applicable.

## 5. Policy

### 5.1 Resources, Facilities and Support

The following resources, facilities and support will be provided to Councillors to assist in performing their official duties as an elected member.

#### 5.1.1 Home/Workplace facilities

The following equipment will be provided to each Councillor for the purposes of conducting Council related business only:

- One notepad computer (which is compatible with the corporate network) including mobile wireless Internet access
- One printer
- Relevant computer software
- One mobile phone or PDA.

Council will arrange for the installation of the necessary equipment and provide the necessary maintenance and consumable products required for its operation.

Mobile phone usage must comply with the mobile phone management procedure. Requests for mobile phones should be completed on the form provided in the procedure.

Use of Council's corporate network, including the internet, must be in accordance with Email/Internet Guidelines.

Use of mobile devices must comply with mobile device use management procedure.

Council will bear all operating costs of Council supplied equipment incurred in Australia. Council will not be responsible for calls/transmissions made outside Australia unless a prior arrangement has been made with the Chief Executive Officer.

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The Chief Executive Officer shall maintain a register of all equipment provided to Councillors for Council business. Such equipment is returnable to Council on completion of tenure of the particular Councillor. This register shall be available for public inspection.

After a period of 2 years, Councillors will have the option to purchase equipment (at market value) if the equipment is deemed obsolete by the Chief Executive Officer. Council will seek at least two independent market valuations for the obsolete equipment, and the Chief Executive Officer will assign a value and advise respective Councillors of the value at the completion of the two year period.

Councillors will be provided with monitored internet access (either directly or by reimbursement) for the purpose of conducting Council business.

Each Councillor must reimburse the direct costs of any private use of these facilities to Council. Where Councillors are appointed to regional bodies as a representative of Council, Councillors are to discuss the usage and possible contribution by these bodies with the Chief Executive Officer prior to commencement of appointment.

Accessories or services beyond the standard equipment referred to in this clause may be provided upon written request to the Chief Executive Officer. The additional cost of any accessories provided may be charged to the Councillor.

## 5.1.2 Insurance

Councillors are covered by the following Council Insurance policies on a 24-hour, 7-day a week basis, while discharging the duties of civic office including attendance at meetings of external bodies as Council's representative:

- Personal Accident Insurance
- Public Liability Insurance
- Professional Indemnity Insurance
- Councillors and Officers Liability Insurance.

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. Councillors are expected to exercise due care in protecting the equipment from damage or theft.

## 5.1.3 Civic Entertainment

Councillors (and their partners) will be invited to attend civic functions and events over their term of office as Councillors. Civic events tend to fall into the categories of civic receptions, mayoral functions or hospitality.

There are occasions where it is appropriate for the Mayor, on behalf of the Council, to provide hospitality to groups or individuals who are regarded as key stakeholders in the Shire and with whom the Council seeks to develop closer or more effective working relationships.

These events may include meetings with key community groups or leaders, discussions with Parliamentarians, business people and others whose interests are consistent with the Council's objectives. The hospitality extended could include a meal or refreshments.

The common element which underpins hospitality extended by the Mayor on behalf of the Council is that such hospitality is judged to be of assistance to the Surf Coast Shire in furthering Council's interests and objectives.

There may be occasions when it is more appropriate for Council hospitality to a particular group or individual to be extended by a Councillor other than the Mayor. Such proposals are to be discussed and approved by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

## **5.2 Meals and Refreshments**

To set guidelines for the provision of meals associated with briefings/meetings of Council.

This procedure is applicable to the provision of meals for Councillors or Officers who are expected to attend Council briefings or meetings at times which extend through normal meal times. These procedures do not apply to meals associated with Civic or Mayoral Functions.

### **5.2.1 Authorities & Responsibilities**

Where Council meetings or briefings are held at times which extend through normal meals times, Councillors and officers will be provided with suitable meals served on the premises. Appropriate meals will be arranged by the EA to Mayor and Councillors.

Councillors and Officers not requiring a meal are to respond within the specified timeframe to enable catering to be arranged.

Councillors and Officers will be notified, of the meal arrangements for each meeting.

### **5.2.2 Meals**

Council Meeting – Dinner in the form of a two course served meal together with tea, coffee and beverages.

Council Briefing – Lunch or dinner in the form of a two course buffet meal together with tea and coffee.

Councillors will be requested to complete form MF-008 Councillors Catering and Dietary Requirements form at the commencement of their term of office and advise of any alterations during the course of their term.

## **5.3 Meeting Rooms and Councillor Office**

The main office of Council includes an office and a number of meeting rooms available for use by Councillors.

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.

Other meeting rooms at the Council office can be booked for meetings during and after office hours through the EA to Mayor and Councillors. Meeting equipment and refreshments can be made available for meetings upon request.

Other venues owned and controlled by Council can be used (subject to availability) by Councillors for meetings, interviews and other functions associated with their role as Councillors. The EA to Mayors and Councillors can assist in the booking of these venues.

## **5.4 Stationery and Administrative Support**

Council will provide the following support facilities for Councillors. These facilities are provided for use by the Councillor in the conduct of their duties of office. All equipment provided shall remain the property of the Council and shall be returned within two weeks of retirement or termination of office.

### **5.4.1 Stationery**

Each Councillor will have access to an adequate supply of the following:

- A4 Letterhead (Ref 5.4.5 regarding use of Letterhead)
- Business cards
- Name badge
- Diary, planner or time manager
- Consumables for equipment (including paper, ink cartridges, etc).

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## 5.4.2 Office equipment

Upon request a 4 draw filing cabinet will be available from Council to establish a home office. The Mayor or any Councillor wishing to purchase additional furniture or equipment shall do so at their own cost.

## 5.4.3 Administrative Assistance

Limited typing/secretarial assistance will be made available to Councillors for work directly related to the duties of the office. All such work should be coordinated through the EA to Mayor and Councilors and approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

## 5.4.4 Mail Inward

All mail received by Council is deemed to be Council business and will be opened by Council's Records staff. The exception is mail marked 'private and confidential'. Private mail should not be sent via the Council address.

## 5.4.5 Mail Outward

Letterhead paper incorporating the Council logo must be used for all Council related correspondence. Councillors must exercise care to ensure that correspondence does not commit Council funds or convey a position which is contrary to that adopted by Council. Letterhead incorporating the Council logo must not be used for personal correspondence.

Each Councillor may leave up to 50 standard mail items or equivalent per month cumulative within each financial year for postage through the Australia Post system.

Mail must be contained within Surf Coast Shire envelopes and coordinated through the Shire offices by the EA to Mayors and Councillors. Mail posted in Surf Coast Shire envelopes must be accompanied by a completed Australia Post mailing statement.

Mail posted outside of the above requirements will require stamps for which Councillors will be reimbursed.

Council letterhead must not be used in relation to a Council Election and Councillors need to remain mindful of caretaker provisions that apply in the lead up to an election.

## 5.4.6 Courier

Council will seek to use digital/electronic delivery as often as possible of Council agendas and other papers to Councillors. If required, Council will also provide for the delivery of Council agendas and other papers to Councillors.

## 5.5 Building Access and Parking

Each Councillor will receive a swipe card allowing agreed access to the Shire Offices at 1 Merrijig Drive, Torquay. Car parking is available at the rear of these offices.

## 5.6 Professional Development

Councillors and members of Special Committees will be given the opportunity of attending training programs, conferences and functions. The selection of a meeting or conference should be based on its relevance to the role and development of the Councillor or Member of Special Committee.

Attendance at any local, interstate or overseas meetings or conferences where the total cost exceeds \$3,000 must be subject to approval by a meeting of Council.

Attendance at any local, interstate or overseas meetings or conferences at a total cost to Council of \$3,000 or less may be approved by the Mayor provided such expenditure by a Councillor does not exceed \$3,000 in any given financial year.

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All Councillors will be entitled during their term of Office to complete the Company Director course provided by the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), and as long as the course is completed in the first two years of their term in office, is not subject to the above requirements. Council will also pay Councillors AICD membership fees for the remainder of their term in Office.

Application to attend any local, interstate or overseas meetings or conferences involving Council expenditure must be made on the attached MF-004 form (Application to Attend Meeting or Conference – Councillors and Members of Special Committees).

Council will pay registration fees for attendance at meeting or conference sessions, the main conference dinner (if not covered by registration cost) and all meals within reasonable limits for the duration of the meeting or conference. Additional meal costs incurred as a result of the attendance of partners and/or children shall be borne by the councillor.

Council will provide a Councillor with transport to, from and during meetings or conferences, which may be by:

- Aircraft – economy class airfare out and 'flexi-fare' class for the inbound flight. Under this provision, the most economical fare should be chosen, provided that the departure and/or arrival times are reasonable. Hire car up to standard 6 cylinder
- Private/Council vehicle
- Train/Bus - economy class.

Appropriate accommodation selected by the Chief Executive Officer, will be available from the day prior to registration day and each day on which official sessions of the meeting or conference are held.

Any additional accommodation costs incurred as a result of the attendance of partners and/or children shall be borne by the Councillor.

After the conclusion of the Conference/Seminar, a summary of actual expenditure incurred must be provided to the CEO through the EA to Mayors and Councillors

## **5.7 Additional Expenses and Facilities for the Office of Mayor**

The Office of the Mayor operates to provide those functions of the Council carried out by the Mayor. It is allocated a budget by Council on an annual basis, and within that budget staff and other resources may be employed as considered appropriate. Any expenses incurred by the Mayor, or person nominated by the Mayor to fulfil the civic role as partner of the Mayor, shall be deemed to be expenses of the Mayor.

Council will provide at its cost to the Mayor a fully registered, insured, maintained and fuelled vehicle for use by the Mayor on official duties and for private use. Use of a Council motor vehicle will be in accordance with Council's Fleet Policy.

Council will provide the following facilities for the Office of the Mayor:

- Office suitably equipped with quality furniture and shelving, including desk and meeting table
- Telephone – mobile phone/PDA, Digital Handset with I.S.D. access
- Facsimile
- Personal assistant and other administrative support during normal office hours as required. Other necessary assistance to enable him or her to carry out the duties of civic office
- A corporate credit card with a credit limit of \$5,000 for use while discharging the functions of the office. Use of a corporate card will be in accordance with the Corporate Card Procedure. The Corporate card statement is to be reconciled with tax invoices and authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

## **5.8 Expenses to Be Reimbursed**

### **5.8.1 Travelling Expenses**

Notwithstanding anything contained in this Clause, Councillors are encouraged to use Council vehicles when officially representing Council at meetings and functions outside the municipality. Where practicable and by

prior arrangement with the EA to Mayor and Councillors, a Council vehicle may be made available to councillors for travel where use of private vehicles or other means of transport is not convenient.

## 5.8.1.1 Specific provisions - Travelling

- No private use of Council vehicles other than the Mayor is allowable.
- Councillors shall be eligible to claim travelling expenses when using their private vehicles on eligible Council business measured from and to their nominated Surf Coast Shire residence (or Surf Coast Shire rateable property).
- Approved claims for travelling expenses will be reimbursed to Councillors at the Victorian Local Authorities Award 2001 travel rate applicable to the engine capacity of the vehicle.

The following will be eligible Council business for the purposes of travel reimbursement:

- Council meetings and Assemblies of Councillors
- Standing Committee or Advisory Committee meetings of Council when the Councillor is the nominated representative/substitute or otherwise by approval of the Mayor
- Regional meetings where the Councillor claiming reimbursement is Council's endorsed representative and travel is not paid/reimbursed by the regional organisation or meeting convenor
- Functions to which Councillors are invited by an organisation (attendance by partners must be paid for by the councillor) and where there is a direct involvement of Council
- Travelling expenses incurred by Councillors embarking on inspection of issues raised by members of the community within the Shire, which are considered reasonable and necessary and where travel is within the Shire.
- Conferences and seminars approved in accordance with Clause 5.6.

## 5.8.1.2 General Provisions – Travelling

- Travel must be undertaken as efficiently as possible;
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- Claim forms will only be paid on the basis of the actual form of transport used and costs incurred.
- When a Councillor is elected as an office bearer to a regional group/association that group/association will be requested to contribute to travel expenses incurred for attendance at "non-standard" functions (e.g. functions attended as the Chair of the group/association rather than as Council representative). Councillors are to discuss the contribution with the Chief Executive Officer prior to commencement of appointment
- Councillors should use a Council pool car whenever practical to do so. Where a pool car is available and it is not unreasonable for a Councillor to use a pool car but elects to use his/her private vehicle, no travel allowances is payable.

## 5.8.1.3 Reporting - Travelling

- Councillors must submit claims for travelling expenses on a monthly basis within 14 days of the end of the month (form MF-001), such claims must show the purpose of the meeting or function and kilometres travelled
- The EA to Mayor and Councillors shall maintain a register of travel costs and interstate travel incurred by Councillors on behalf of Council. This register shall be available for public inspection.

## 5.8.2 Reimbursements of child care or special care expenses.

Councillors incurring bona fide child care expenses paid to:

- A recognised child care provider; or
- To a person who :
  - Is not an immediate family member of the Councillor; or
  - Does not reside either permanently or temporarily with the Councillor, or
  - Does not have a relationship with the Councillor or his or her partner such that it would be inappropriate for Council to reimburse monies paid to the care provider.

Will be reimbursed when the child care is necessary in order to allow the Councillor to attend any eligible Council functions as outlined in Clause 5.8.1 Such expenses are to be claimed on a monthly basis within 14 days of the end of the month.

Child care costs are not eligible for reimbursement if paid to 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 or Mayor's duties.

The Council will reimburse the cost of necessary care services for children up to and including the age of 14 years or, in special circumstances adults, while a Councillor is undertaking duties referred to in Clause 5.8.1.

The maximum hourly rate a Councillor will be reimbursed for care expenses is \$26 per hour.

Care of adults may be provided as above where the Councillor or Mayor is the carer for an adult and the CEO has determined that special circumstances exist.

## **5.9 Councillor Allowances**

Allowances shall be paid fortnightly.

Payment shall be withheld upon a Councillor ceasing to hold office or pending an election until such time as the Councillor is declared elected.

Payment shall be made by electronic funds transfer, in a manner authorised in writing by the Councillor.

Upon a Councillor ceasing to hold office, any moneys paid in advance shall be refunded.

The Mayor or any Councillor having completed a full term of office shall not be entitled to any pro rata adjustment of allowance to take into account any days less than or exceeding one year.

The EA to Mayor and Councillors is responsible for the prompt payment of allowances.

Allowances will be reviewed annually by the Minister for Local Government.

## **5.10 Legal Expenses**

Other than by specific Council resolution or in accordance with a Council policy, any legal expenses incurred by a Councillor shall be the responsibility of that Councillor.

## **5.11 Other Expenses**

Councillors may require reimbursement of other expenses not specifically dealt with in this policy which are incurred while performing their duties as a Councillor.

The following provisions will apply when making a claim for reimbursement of other expenses:

- All Claims for reimbursement are to be made on MF-007 – Reimbursement of Expenses – Councillors, and contain the name of the claimant, details of the nature of the claim and a signed certification that the expenses listed were incurred while performing duties as a Councillor
- Original receipts must be attached for all purchases (credit card receipts will not be accepted)
- Where the provider of the goods or service is registered for GST, a tax invoice must be obtained for all purchases.
- Other expenses claimed by a Councillor shall be approved by the Mayor or by resolution of Council.
- Other expenses claimed by a Mayor shall be approved by resolution of Council.

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## 5.12 Recoupment of Private Expenses

Councillors must reimburse the direct costs of any private use of home/workplace facilities to Council.

The direct costs of private use of home/workplace facilities provided by Council may be repaid to Council via two methods:

- Direct payment to Council on completion of MF-019 Councillor Private Expenses - Single Recoupment
- Fortnightly deduction from Councillor Allowance on completion of MF-018 Councillor Private Expenses - Fortnightly Deduction from Councillor Allowance.

## 5.13 Accountability and Audit

### 5.13.1 Reimbursement/Claiming of expenses

The following provisions apply in this policy when making a claim for reimbursement of expenses:

- Claims are to be lodged with the Council Support Officer on a monthly basis within 14 days of the end of the month
- Claims for reimbursement will be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer
- Any claims for expenses not covered by this policy must firstly be referred to the Chief Executive Officer before being submitted
- Reimbursements will be paid by electronic funds transfer (EFT) within 14 days of receipt of a properly completed and supported claim form.

### 5.13.2 Audit and Reporting

Councillor expenses are subject to regular audit by the Victorian Auditor General, the Victorian Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate and Councillor's internal auditors and reported to the Chief Executive Officer.

Any items considered to be in breach of the Local Government Act 1989 or this policy will be reported to the Audit Committee.

All payments made to Councillors during their elected term and falling within the terms of this policy shall be publicly disclosed on Council's website.

## 6. Records

Records shall be retained for at least the period shown below.

Record	Retention/Disposal Responsibility	Retention Period	Location
Management Forms	Council Support	4 years (Council term)	Shire office

## 7. Attachments

Nil

## 8. References

- Local Government Act 1989 Sections 74 and 75
- Mobile Phone Procedure
- Internet/Email Guidelines
- Mobile Device Use

### Management Forms

- MF-001 Overseas and Interstate Travel Summary of Actual Expenditure Incurred
- MF-002 Summary of Actual Expenditure Incurred – Conferences / seminars (Staff / Councillors)
- MF-004 Application to attend Conference or Meeting – Councillors
- MF-007 Reimbursement of Expenses – Councillors
- MF-008 Councillors Catering and Dietary Requirements
- MF-018 Councillor Private Expenses – Fortnightly Deduction from Councillor Allowance
- MF-019 Councillor Private Expenses – Single Recoupment