

Council Support and Resources Policy

Preamble

The elected Councillors are provided with a range of resources to enable them to effectively carry out their role. These resources include a Councillors' allowance, administrative support, reimbursement of expenses associated with Council business, travel and accommodation entitlements, professional development opportunities and information technology support.

Delegated committees play an important role in decision making and supporting good governance. Members of delegated committees are also provided with administrative support and reimbursement of expenses associated with their delegated role.

This policy outlines the resources and support to be provided by Council to Councillors and members of delegated committees as well as eligible expenditure that may be reimbursed in performing their duties as elected or delegated representatives as outlined in Section 63 of *The Local Government Act 2020*.

Policy objectives

- Provide Councillors with the resources required to carry out their role as representatives of their communities, and communicate with each other, Council staff and the Bass Coast community.
- Provide members of delegated committees with the resources required to carry out their role, and communicate with each other, Council staff and the Bass Coast community.
- Assist Council staff in providing the necessary resources, equipment and professional support to Councillors and members of delegated committees.

Councillors who are also members of delegated committees will continue to have access to all Councillor entitlements as set out in this policy.

Definitions

Delegated Committee.

As set out in the *Local Government Act 2020*, a delegated committee means:

- (a) a delegated committee established by a Council under section 63; or
- (b) a joint delegated committee established by 2 or more Councils under section 64; or

(c) a committee, other than a Community Asset Committee, exercising any power of a Council under this Act or any other Act delegated to the committee under this Act or any other Act;

Carer Expenses

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.

Policy statement

Councillor Entitlements

Mayoral and Councillor Allowance

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors are entitled to receive a Mayoral and Councillor allowance, pursuant to Section 39 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The level of the allowance will be determined by Council after each general election, within the statutory limits set by the Minister for Local Government.

Administrative and Meeting Support

Councillors will attend regular meetings of Council both formal and informal. The following support will be provided:

- Council Policy Workshops occur on the first, second and fourth Wednesdays. All business papers will be distributed to Councillors for these meetings from the Governance and Property Department.
- Ordinary Meetings of Council will occur on the third Wednesday of the month or alternative date by resolution of Council. Agendas will be provided to the Councillors from the Governance and Property Department. Minutes of these meetings will be taken by the Governance Officer and made available to the public via Council's website.
- The Councillor Support team will manage all Councillor invitations received. They will be clear with the intent of the invitation and the nature of the event. Partners are welcome to events at their own expense.
- Council support will be provided by staff in the Governance team. Councillor Support staff will manage all Councillor requests and responses will be provided in the Councillor Request System (CRS).
- All Councillor communication will be through the Councillor Support team or with a relevant General Manager unless by agreement with the Chief Executive Officer.

Travel

Councillors will be reimbursed for travel involved in attending any meeting of Council whether formal or informal. Travel costs will be reimbursed at the vehicle use allowance rates included in the Bass Coast Shire Council Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. Travel reimbursement will apply for:

- Representing Council as an official delegate or Council representative at meetings, briefings, announcements and functions, including:

- Events, State / Federal Government announcements, Ministerial visits
 - Attending Council or Committee meetings or formal briefings of Council called by the Mayor or CEO
 - Civic events and community celebrations arranged and / or hosted by Bass Coast Shire Council
 - Meetings or events arranged and/or hosted by community groups where Councillors are invited to attend as a Councillor, with or without formal duties
- Attending site-inspections pertaining to a planning application or other matter that is likely to be considered by Council.
 - Attendance at professional development opportunities.

Council will not reimburse travel for distances less than 10km.

Travel arrangements can be made for Councillors to travel with an officer when attending the same event.

A Council pool car may be booked by a Councillor, subject to availability of a vehicle, for travel to/from official meetings, conferences, seminars, training and events.

For distances greater than 150km a pool car must be used unless a Councillor needs to drive a modified vehicle due to medical requirements as confirmed by a medical practitioner.

Any parking fees associated with travel at events will also be reimbursed.

Air Travel

Air travel will be by economy class unless determined by Council resolution.

- Council will pay up to 10% variation for a comparative flight at a comparable time for Councillors travelling on their nominated airline. Any costs over and above this will be paid or reimbursed by the Councillor.
- Airline tickets are not transferable and cannot be used for defraying or offsetting any other costs including the costs of other persons accompanying the Councillors.
- Councillors may upgrade the class of travel at their own expense.

Accommodation

Where the Councillor attends a conference, event or function that is held over more than one day, accommodation will be provided on successive nights. For example should a conference, event or function commence on a Friday afternoon and finish on Sunday at 12.00pm, accommodation will be provided for the Friday and Saturday nights only.

- Council will pay up to a 10% variation for comparable hotels of a similar standard to that nominated by the conference, or previous conferences. If no hotel is nominated then accommodation will be a maximum four star single room accommodation. Any additional costs incurred as a result of extended stays, the attendance of partners and/or children and the cost of non-essential room extras such as mini bar, tips or in-house movies shall be borne by the Councillor.

- Where the Councillor attends a meeting, conference, event or function commencing at or before 11.00am which is located more than 100kms from the Wonthaggi Civic Centre at 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi, accommodation is provided on the night prior to the meeting.
- Where the Councillor attends a meeting, conference, event or function concluding later than 8.00pm which is held more than 100kms from the Wonthaggi Civic Centre at 76 McBride Avenue, Wonthaggi, accommodation will be provided on the night.

Carer Expenses

Reimbursement of child and/or carer expenses incurred when attending any appointments which would be deemed claimable under the above criteria for travel expenses:

- Reimbursement will only be paid for services where a receipt from the caregiver is received showing the dates and times the care was provided.
- Reimbursement for care is available up to \$25 per hour for Council activities that are deemed claimable. Reimbursement will not exceed a Councillor's out of pocket expense once all applicable subsidies have been applied.
- The care must be for a person who resides with the Councillor, and for whom the Councillor is the sole primary carer.
- The care must not be provided by a person who is an immediate family member and/or normally or regularly lives with the Councillor.

Information Technology Support

Information Technology support for Councillors will include:

- A smartphone with voicemail facilities and hands free (Bluetooth) kit will be provided. The account for this mobile telephone will be paid for by Council.
- A computer with access to email and internet services and loaded with Microsoft Office and Anti-Virus software will be provided for use during the Council term. At the end of the term, all devices will be returned to factory settings and any private information will be deleted.
- A landline telephone connected to Council's phone system will be provided to each Councillor during their Council term. The account for this landline will be paid for by Council.
- Councillors will be provided with a Council email address. The Council email will be linked to the Council Outlook Calendar to allow for diary management by Councillor Support.
- Cases to protect the smartphone and tablet will be provided.
- Councillors will be provided with access to a printer located at the Wonthaggi Civic Centre.
- Council's IT department will provide support for Council provided equipment and software. If Councillors wish to use their own equipment, Council is unable to provide full IT Support.

- Council officers will provide support for virtual meetings/teleconferences where the meeting was initiated by Council. Council is unable to provide IT support to community groups or other organisations where Councillors are invited to attend.
- All confidential Council information stored on private devices must be deleted at the end of the Council term.
- All Council provided equipment must be returned to Council on the first business day following Council elections, if the Councillor is not returned to office.
- Use of Council provided equipment and services are intended for Council use only, however it is recognised that some personal use may occur for practical purposes.
- Any information or portals that Council provide access to and content that is included remains the property of Council. Access to this information will be removed at the end of the Council term.

Uniform and Stationery

Councillors will be provided with uniform and stationery items that include:

- Standard stationery required to carry out Council duties, including but not limited to, diaries, notebooks and pens.
- Councillors can be provided with a Council embroidered blazer or vest, and rain jacket. Additional uniform items are available to be purchased by Councillors and will not be reimbursed by Council.
- Councillors will be provided with any required personal, protective equipment to enable them to fulfil their role.
- All unused stationery provided by Council must be returned to Council on the first business day following Council elections, if the Councillor is not returned to office.

Mayoral Support

- The Mayor will be provided with a furnished Mayoral office.
- Reasonable private use of a medium sized, environmentally friendly vehicle with a five star safety rating and fuel card will be supplied upon request. Alternatively a fuel card could be provided if the Mayor wishes to drive their own vehicle.
- The Mayoral vehicle may not be used for other commercial employment or external business activities.
- The Mayor will be provided with a corporate purchase card to pay for Council business expenses incurred in carrying out Mayoral duties.

Professional Development

Councillor professional development is encouraged to develop and maintain Councillors' skills and abilities with regard to effective community representation, decision making and strategic Council planning.

There are three avenues for Councillors to utilise professional development opportunities.

- Through a Councillor Transition Program.

- Through workshops, seminars, conferences, and other day training as offered by industry partners, local government networks, support organisations and internally. These are generally of a lower cost and do not entitle the attendee to a formal qualification. Council approval to attend these is not required, and arrangements will be coordinated by Councillor Support.
- Through formal study courses at appropriately recognised training facilities. These are often at a higher cost and entitle the attendee to a formal qualification, such as a certificate, diploma, undergraduate or postgraduate degree, on successful completion. Council approval to attend these is required via resolution and conditions may be applied by Council, eg, Councillor to pay 50% of fees. The Councillor must demonstrate the benefits of undertaking formal study to not only themselves, but the organisation and Council. Formal study funded by Council, either in part or in full, must not cross over Council terms.

All costs associated with Councillor professional development will be recorded in the Councillor Expense Register.

Members of Delegated Committees

Administrative and Meeting Support

Members of delegated committees will attend regular formal meetings. Meeting frequency and meeting days will be determined when a delegated committee is formed.

The following support will be provided:

- All business papers, including formal meeting agendas, will be distributed to committee members from the Governance and Property Department.
- Minutes of Delegated Committee meetings will be taken by a Council officer and made available to the public via Council's website.
- All Committee member communication will be through the Councillor Support team or with a relevant General Manager unless by agreement with the Chief Executive Officer.

Stationery and equipment

Members of delegated committees will be provided with standard stationery required to carry out their role. Members of delegated committees will be provided with any required personal, protective equipment to enable them to fulfil their role. Uniform items are not provided for members of delegated committees.

Other Reimbursements

Reimbursements will be made to Councillors or members of a delegated committee where the cost of purchasing a ticket or paying a fee is associated with them performing their official role. An official role includes performing a nominated civic function (Citizenship Ceremony), giving a speech, opening a new venue, or performing some other nominated role as requested by the event organiser.

Resources paid for by Councillors and members of delegated committees

Councillors must pay for all other costs associated with carrying out their responsibilities unless the Chief Executive Officer approves the payment of these expenses because of extenuating circumstances.

Payment and reimbursement of expenses

Claims for the reimbursement of costs must be submitted on the appropriate claim forms provided by Councillor Support.

Receipts are required as proof of purchase for reimbursement.

Reporting of expenses

A report of expenses of Councillors and members of delegated committees will be reported quarterly to Council and to each Audit and Risk Committee meeting.

Additional documents

The *Bass Coast Shire Council Enterprise Bargain Agreement - Part B* relates to the payment of travel expenses, forms part of this Policy and can be viewed by contacting Council staff.

The *Information Sheet – Councillor allowances and remuneration* relates to the payment of Mayoral and Councillor allowances, forms part of this Policy and can be viewed by contacting Council staff.

Reference to other documents

Local Government Act 2020

Carers Recognition Act 2012

Councillor Code of Conduct

IT Usage Policy

Privacy and Data Protection Policy

Review process

Each new Council will review this Policy within six months of the general election. However, Council can review and change this Policy at any time.

Accountability process

All claims for the reimbursement of expenses will be authorised for payment by a representative from the Governance and Property Department.

Approval

Approved by Council at its meeting held on Date:

Signed by the Mayor, Cr

Date:
