

Councillor Resources

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Scope

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that our elected representatives are provided with the necessary resources to assist them in discharging their responsibilities as Councillors.

To ensure a consistent approach in this regard, the following policy has been developed.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to ensure:

- Provision of Resources in accordance with the Victorian Government's Policy Statement on Local Government Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and Resources (April 2008)
- Reimbursement of expenses incurred in carrying out Councillor duties as authorised/required by Council
- Provision of Information Technology resources to facilitate communication with each Councillor
- Provision of transport where required

Approach

A toolkit of support is provided for the Mayor and Councillors, details of which are set out under the following headings:

1. Allowances
2. Provision of resources and facilities
3. Reimbursement or payment of expenses
4. Training
5. Insurance

1. Allowances

1.1 Councillor and Mayoral Annual Allowance

The Councillor and Mayoral Allowance comprises two parts (Part A and Part B):

Part A

Based on revenue and population data Council is classified as a 'Category 1 Council'.

The allowance is paid in the middle of each month for the period from the fifth of that month to the fourth of the following month. Payment is made directly to each Councillor's nominated bank account.

Under section 74 of the Local Government Act (1989) a Council must review and determine the level of the Councillor allowance and the Mayoral allowance within the period of six (6) months after a general election or by the next 30 June, whichever is later. The allowances determined are payable during the next four (4) financial years.

A person has a right to make a submission under section 223 in respect of a review of allowances.

Under section 73B the Minister must, at least one every year, review the Councillor and Mayoral allowance limits and ranges and this review may result in a finding that Councillor and Mayoral allowances be adjusted. A Council must increase Councillor and Mayoral allowances in accordance with the adjustment factor specified by the Minister in a notice published in the Government Gazette.

Part B

As Council is not an Eligible Local Governing Body (under the Income Tax Assessment Act) an amount equal to the superannuation guarantee will apply to Part A.

The superannuation guarantee rate is currently 9.5% and will rise to 10% on 1 July 2021 and then gradually to 12% on 1 July 2025.

Part B is not superannuation.

1.2 Remote Travel Allowance

A remote travel allowance is also available to provide compensation for the time spent on long distance travel by Councillors in remote areas. This allowance has a maximum limit of \$5,000 per annum (at a daily rate of \$40).

This allowance is payable to Councillors where the meeting venue is more than 50 kms from the Councillor's place of residence. The allowance must be claimed on the Councillor Expense Reimbursement Form and authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

2. Provision of resources and facilities

2.1 Administrative support for the Mayor

Administrative support for the Mayor is provided by the Executive Assistant.

2.2 Office for the Mayor and Councillors

An office is available at the Tallangatta Council Office for use by the Mayor and Councillors.

The office is equipped with office furniture and a telephone.

A photocopier, printers and facsimile machine are also located within the general office area and available for use by the Mayor and Councillors.

2.3 Vehicle for the Mayor

A motor vehicle is provided for the Mayor for use in carrying out Council duties. All fuel and other associated costs (e.g. servicing) are met by the Council. A fuel card is located in the vehicle for fuel purchases. The Mayor is responsible for ensuring the vehicle is kept clean.

2.4 Computer

iPads, laptop computers, monitors, docking stations and appropriate software are provided for all Councillors as requested. Council will meet the cost of acquiring and setting up the laptop computer. Council policy relating to the security, maintenance and usage of such equipment must be adhered to.

Councillors will be provided with all necessary training for the use of their computer and software. This training will be at the expense of Council.

2.5 Mobile Phone and Landline

Each Councillor will be provided with a phone line to their place of residence as requested. The cost of installation and the ongoing operation of this phone line will be met by Council for the duration of each Councillor's term. This line is also intended for the use of any facsimile provided by Council. Council will provide an appropriate internet service e.g. ADSL, 3G or Satellite depending on the individual

Councillor's circumstances. Where established lines and connections are used in place of Council operated lines, Council will reimburse half the line and ADSL, 3G or Satellite costs. Councillor telephone calls will be reimbursed at cost.

Copies of invoices must be provided to the Executive Assistant when submitting monthly Councillor Expense Reimbursement forms. These expenses will, unless authorised by Council, be paid in arrears.

Councillors will be provided with a mobile phone if requested. Council will meet the purchase cost and ongoing operational costs of the mobile phone. All personal call costs will be met by the responsible Councillor. At the conclusion of each Councillor's term the mobile phone is to be returned to Council.

2.6 Stationery

The Council shall, upon request, provide Councillors with standard stationery held or obtained generally for the organisation's requirements.

The stationery may include, but not necessarily be limited to, paper, business cards, writing implements, diaries, writing pad/books, computer supplies and paper, envelopes and the like.

Stationery shall not be used for election/re-election or personal purposes.

2.7 Access to fax and photocopier

A combined facsimile/printer machine together with necessary consumables (e.g. paper and toner) will be provided to each Councillor if required. The facsimile/printer will utilise the phone line provided by Council (refer item 4 above).

A photocopier, printers and facsimile machine are also located within the general office area at each Council office and available for use by the Mayor and Councillors.

2.8 Website development as part of Council website

Council's website includes pages dedicated to the Mayor and Councillors (when at the home page click on 'The Council' button on the left side of the screen).

The website address is www.towong.vic.gov.au

2.9 Access to pool car for Councillors

Councillors are offered a Council vehicle (to be kept at their residences) for use for all Council related activities. Our research and data indicates that this

approach is more cost effective than paying mileage for Councillors to use their own vehicles. Councillors are encouraged to take the option of a Council vehicle.

Where a Council vehicle is not accepted, Council pool cars are offered to Councillors to carry out their Councillor duties. A log book is located in the vehicle and must be completed. A fuel card is also located in the vehicle for fuel purchases.

Councillors must book use of the vehicle with the Executive Assistant. Council's Motor Vehicle Policy outlines in detail Council's requirements in relation to the use of vehicles

3. Reimbursement or payment of expenses

3.1 Out-of-pocket expenses

Under section 75 of the Local Government Act a Council may reimburse Councillors or members of Council Committees for necessary out-of-pocket expenses incurred while performing duties as a Councillor or Committee member. Accordingly, Council will reimburse expenses incurred by Councillors while performing duties as a Councillor or Committee member authorised by Council.

All expense claims must be made on the Councillor Expense Reimbursement Form and authorised by the Chief Executive Officer or Executive Assistant.

3.2 Reimbursement of Childcare expenses

Councillors incurring bona fide child care expenses paid to:-

- a recognised child care provider; or
- to a person who does not have a familial or like relationship with the Councillor; or reside either permanently or temporarily with the Councillor; or 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 such child care expenses when the child care is necessary in order to allow the Councillor to attend Council meetings and Council businesses related to Council meetings, Council functions and meetings arising as a result of a Councillor being appointed by the Council to an external body.

3.3 Conferences and Seminars

Attendance by Councillor's at conferences and seminars will be subject to prior approval by the Chief Executive Officer.

Councillor's sponsored by the Council to attend conferences and seminars shall have all reasonable expenses for travelling, transport, accommodation, registration fees and meals and other out of pocket expenses relating to the conference/seminar reimbursed or paid on their behalf.

In order to avoid unnecessary expense to Council, Councillors are encouraged to use a Council car when travelling to and from conferences and seminars. Where a Council car is not available, the need for attendance at the event should be evaluated in conjunction with the Chief Executive Officer.

Councillors wishing to make their own arrangements for transport or accommodation shall have reasonable expenses reimbursed, as determined by the Chief Executive Officer.

Where it is necessary that a Councillor's child (less than 16 years of age) attend the conference/seminar, Council will meet the cost of the child's registration.

3.4 Other Expenditure

Any expenditure not specified above as expenditure for which a Councillor is entitled to be reimbursed or paid by Council shall be the responsibility of the Councillor, except where the Council otherwise agrees.

4. Training

Councillors will be provided with all necessary training in order to meet the requirements of their position. Examples of training (but not limited to) include computer use, media training, meeting procedures, Local Government Act and other relevant legislation, etc. Training will be coordinated by and at the expense of Council.

5. Insurance

Councillors are covered under the following Council insurance policies on a 24 hour basis, while performing the duties as a Councillor including attendance at meetings of external bodies as Council's representatives:

- Public Liability/Professional Indemnity
- Councillors and Officers Liability
- Personal Accident/Corporate Travel (accompanying partners are also covered)

All policies have limitations. Some limits include the requirements to act honestly, to act in good faith and not to act recklessly.

Insurance policies generally have requirements for early notification to the insurer of potential claims, the right for the insurer to take over the handling of the matter and appoint lawyers and settle the matter and a requirement for a full disclosure of all relevant material.

The 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.

Receipts

Unless under exceptional circumstances, Councillors are to provide receipts for any expenses incurred. The expenses will, unless authorised by the Council, be paid in arrears.

Reporting

Details of civic expenses will be disclosed annually in the Council's Annual Report.

The Chief Executive Officer shall present a report to the Council by the end of July, in respect of individual Councillors, of the value of amounts claimed and paid with respect to travel claims, and the amounts claimed and paid for every form of allowances paid under section 75 of the Local Government Act 1989.

Return of resources

Within four weeks of the conclusion of each Councillor's term the computer, facsimile/printer and mobile phone is to be returned to Council.

If the Councillor wishes to retain any of these resources the Councillor must, within the notice period of one week, agree to reimburse Council the current market value of the resources in question.

Responsibilities

The Audit Committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy together with all expenditure incurred as a result.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for authorisation of all expense reimbursement claims.

The Director Community and Corporate Services is responsible for implementation of this policy including the sourcing and provision of the Information Technology hardware and software identified above.

The Executive Assistant is responsible for all car bookings.

Results

The deployment of this policy together with the results achieved will be reviewed at least annually using the ADRI (Approach Deployment Results Improvement) process.