


STRATHFIELD COUNCIL

POLICY
COUNCILLORS
EXPENSES AND
FACILITIES POLICY

14 November 2023



| | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------------|
|  | COUNCILLOR FACILITIES AND EXPENSES POLICY | | |
| RESPONSIBILITY | Corporate Services | | |
| DATE ADOPTED | 7 August 2018 | MINUTE | 178/18 |
| REVISED | 14 November 2023 | REVIEW | October 2024 |
| RECORD NO. | 22/19050 | | |
| ASSOCIATED POLICIES | Strathfield Council Code of Conduct | | |
| ASSOCIATED LEGISLATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Local Government Act 1993, Sections 252 and 253</i> • <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021, Clauses 217 and 403</i> | | |
| ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Guidelines for the payment of expenses and the provision of facilities for Mayors and Councillors in NSW, 2009</i> • <i>Local Government Circular 09-36 Guidelines for Payment of Expenses and Facilities</i> • <i>Local Government Circular 05-08 legal assistance for Councillors and Council Employees.</i> • <i>Local Government Circular 17-17 Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy Better Practice Template</i> | | |

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Policy Summary

This policy enables the reasonable and appropriate reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities to Councillors to help them undertake their civic duties.

It ensures accountability and transparency, and seeks to align Councillor expenses and facilities with community expectations. Councillors must not obtain private or political benefit from any expense or facility provided under this policy.

The policy has been prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993* (the Act) and *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* (the Regulation), and complies with the Office of Local Government's Guidelines for the payment of expenses and provision of facilities to Mayors and Councillors in NSW.

The term General Manager where referenced in this document refers to the statutory General Manager under section 334 of *Local Government Act 1993*.

The policy sets out the maximum amounts Council will pay for specific expenses and facilities. Expenses not explicitly addressed in this policy will not be paid or reimbursed.

The main expenses and facilities are summarised in the table below. All monetary amounts are exclusive of GST.

| Expense or facility | Maximum amount | Frequency |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Travel expenses including general, interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate travel expenses | \$2,000 per Councillor \$3,000 for the Mayor | Per financial year |
| Accommodation and meals | As per the NSW Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009, adjusted annually | Per meal/night |
| Professional development | \$2,000 per Councillor | Per financial year |
| Conferences and seminars | \$35,000 total for all Councillors (\$5,000 per Councillor) | Per financial year |
| Information and Communications Technology ICT Devices | \$3,000 per Councillor | Per Council term |
| ICT Expenses | \$1,500 per Councillor | Per financial year |
| Communication expenses | \$220 per Councillor | Per month |
| International roaming services (on Council overseas trips approved under this Policy) | \$50 per Councillor | Per day |
| Carer expenses | \$2,000 per Councillor | Per financial year |
| Home office expenses | \$1,500 per Councillor | Per financial year |
| Business cards | 500 per Councillor 1,000 for the mayor | Per financial year Per financial year |
| Access to facilities in a Councillor common room | Provided to all Councillors | Not relevant |
| Superannuation Contribution | 11% as at 1 July 2023 rising half a percent each year until 1 July 2025 when it reaches 12% | Monthly |
| Reserved parking space at Council offices | Provided to Mayor | Not relevant |
| Furnished office on Council premises | Provided to the Mayor | Not relevant |
| Motor Vehicle | Provided to the Mayor | Not relevant |

Additional costs incurred by a Councillor in excess of these limits are considered a personal expense that is the responsibility of the Councillor.

Councillors must provide claims for reimbursement within three (3) months of an expense being incurred. Claims made after this time cannot be approved.

Detailed reports on the provision of expenses and facilities to Councillors will be publicly

tabled at a Council meeting every six (6) months and published in full on Council's website. These reports will include expenditure summarised by individual Councillor and as a total for all Councillors.

1.2 Title and Commencement

This policy is titled *Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy* and was adopted on *14 November 2023* by approval of the Council. The following amendments have been made:

| Date | Version | Authority |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 25 July 2018 | Strathfield Policy Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy – draft for consultation | |
| 7 August 2018 | Council adopted Draft Policy for consultation | Resolution 178/18 |
| 9 August to 6 September 2018 | Policy Exhibition – no submissions received | PN180908 |
| 19 September 2018 | Policy Effective | |
| 23 September 2020 | Policy review | |
| June 2021 | Policy review | CEO / Mayor |
| 5 April 2022 | Clauses 3.2.6 and 4.1.5 added to Policy. Removal of term CEO and refer back to General Manager title. Added \$1,500 per Councillor per year to ICT as per resolution 5 April 2022. | |
| 13 April to 11 May 2022 | Public Exhibition period for Draft (v6) | |
| 6 September 2022 | Removal of part clause 2.26 regarding funding for Sister City visits | Resolution 213/22 |
| 4 July 2023 | Updated to provide clearer understanding of what is claimable Increasing allocations for conference attendance. | Resolution 192/23 |

1.3 Background and Purpose of Policy

The provision of expenses and facilities enables Councillors to fulfil their civic duties as the elected representatives of Strathfield Council.

The community is entitled to know the extent of expenses paid to Councillors, as well as the facilities provided.

The purpose of this policy is to clearly state the facilities and support that are available to Councillors to assist them in fulfilling their civic duties.

Council staff are empowered to question or refuse a request for payment from a Councillor when it does not accord with this policy.

Expenses and facilities provided by this policy are in addition to fees paid to Councillors. The minimum and maximum fees a Council may pay each Councillor are set by the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal as per Section 241 of the Act and reviewed annually. Council must adopt its annual fees within this set range.

1.4 Objectives of the Policy

The objectives of the policy are to:

- enable the reasonable and appropriate reimbursement of expenses incurred by Councillors while undertaking their civic duties
- enable facilities of a reasonable and appropriate standard to be provided to Councillors to support them in undertaking their civic duties
- ensure accountability and transparency in reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities to Councillors
- ensure facilities and expenses provided to Councillors meet community expectations
- support a diversity of representation
- fulfil the Council's statutory responsibilities.

1.5 Policy Principles

Council commits to the following principles:

- Proper conduct: Councillors and staff acting lawfully and honestly, exercising care and diligence in carrying out their functions
- Reasonable expenses: providing for Councillors to be reimbursed for expenses reasonably incurred as part of their role as Councillor
- Participation and access: enabling people from diverse backgrounds, underrepresented groups, those in carer roles and those with special needs to serve as a Councillor
- Equity: there must be equitable access to expenses and facilities for all Councillors
- Appropriate use of resources: providing clear direction on the appropriate use of Council resources in accordance with legal requirements and community expectations
- Accountability and transparency: clearly stating and reporting on the expenses and facilities provided to Councillors

1.6 Private or Political Benefit

1.6.1 Councillors must not obtain private or political benefit from any expense or facility provided under this policy.

1.6.2 Private use of Council equipment and facilities by Councillors may occur from time to

time. For example, telephoning home to advise that a Council meeting will run later than expected.

- 1.6.3 Such incidental private use does not require a compensatory payment back to Council. Councillors should avoid obtaining any greater private benefit from Council than an incidental benefit. Where there are unavoidable circumstances and more substantial private use of Council facilities does occur, Councillors must reimburse the Council.
- 1.6.4 Campaigns for re-election are considered to be a political benefit. The following are examples of what is considered to be a political interest during a re-election campaign:
- production of election material
 - use of Council resources and equipment for campaigning
 - use of official Council letterhead, publications, websites or services for political benefit
 - fundraising activities of political parties or individuals, including political fundraising events.

1.7 Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this policy.

| Term | Definition |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Accompanying person | Means a spouse, partner or de facto or other person who has a close personal relationship with or provides carer support to a Councillor |
| Appropriate refreshments | Means food and beverages, excluding alcohol, provided by Council to support Councillors undertaking official business |
| Act | Means the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (NSW) |
| Clause | Unless stated otherwise, a reference to a clause is a reference to a clause of this policy |
| Code of Conduct | Means the Code of Conduct adopted by Council or the Model Code if none is adopted |
| Councillor | Means a person elected or appointed to civic office as a member of the governing body of Council who is not suspended, including the mayor |
| General Manager | Means the General Manager of Council and includes their delegate or authorised representative |
| Incidental personal use | Means use that is infrequent and brief and use that does not breach this policy or the Code of Conduct |
| Long distance intrastate travel | Means travel to other parts of NSW of more than three hours duration by private vehicle |
| Maximum limit | Means the maximum limit for an expense or facility provided in the text and summarised in Appendix 1 |
| NSW | New South Wales |

| Term | Definition |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Official business | Means functions that the mayor or Councillors are required or invited to attend to fulfil their legislated role and responsibilities for Council or result in a direct benefit for Council and/or for the local government area, and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meetings of Council and committees of the whole • meetings of committees facilitated by Council • civic receptions hosted or sponsored by Council • meetings, functions, workshops and other events to which attendance by a Councillor has been requested or approved by Council |
| Professional development | Means a seminar, conference, training course or other development opportunity relevant to the role of a Councillor or the mayor |
| Regulation | Means the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2021</i> (NSW) |
| Year | Means the financial year, that is the 12 month period commencing on 1 July each year |

2.0 Expenses

2.1 General Expenses

All expenses provided under this policy will be for a purpose specific to the functions of holding civic office. Allowances for general expenses are not permitted under this policy.

Expenses not explicitly addressed in this policy will not be paid or reimbursed.

2.2 Specific Expenses

General travel arrangements and expenses

2.2.1 All travel by Councillors should be undertaken using the most direct route and the most practicable and economical mode of transport.

2.2.2 Each Councillor may be reimbursed up to a total of \$2,000 per year, and the mayor may be reimbursed up to a total of \$3,000 per year, for travel expenses, including interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate travel, incurred while undertaking official business or professional development or attending approved conferences and seminars within NSW. This includes reimbursement:

- for public transport fares
- for the use of a private vehicle or hire car
- for parking costs for Council and other meetings
- for tolls
- by Cabcharge card or equivalent

- for documented ride-share programs, such as Uber, where tax invoices can be issued.
- 2.2.3 Allowances for the use of a private vehicle will be reimbursed by kilometre at the rate contained in the Local Government (State) Award.
- 2.2.4 Councillors seeking to be reimbursed for use of a private vehicle must keep a log book recording the date, distance and purpose of travel being claimed. Copies of the relevant log book contents must be provided with the claim.

Interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate travel expenses

- 2.2.5 In accordance with Section 1.6, Council will scrutinise the value and need for Councillors to undertake overseas travel. Councils should avoid interstate, overseas and long distance intrastate trips unless direct and tangible benefits can be established for the Council and the local community. This includes travel to sister and friendship cities.
- 2.2.6 Councillors seeking approval for any interstate and long distance intrastate travel must submit a case to, and obtain the approval of, the General Manager prior to travel.
- 2.2.7 Councillors seeking approval for any overseas travel must submit a case to, and obtain the approval of, a full Council meeting prior to travel.
- 2.2.8 The case should include:
- objectives to be achieved in travel, including an explanation of how the travel aligns with current Council priorities and business, the community benefits which will accrue as a result, and its relevance to the exercise of the Councillor's civic duties
 - who is to take part in the travel
 - duration and itinerary of travel
 - a detailed budget including a statement of any amounts expected to be reimbursed by the participant/s.
- 2.2.9 After returning from overseas Councillors should provide a detailed report back to Council on the aspects of the trip relevant to Council business and/or the local community.
- 2.2.10 Any Council-funded airfares will be funded to economy level only.
- 2.2.11 Bookings for approved air travel are to be made through the General Manager's office.
- 2.2.12 For air travel that is reimbursed as Council business, Councillors will not accrue points from the airline's frequent flyer program. This is considered a private benefit.

Travel expenses not paid by Council

- 2.2.13 Council will not pay any traffic or parking fines or administrative charges for road toll accounts.

Accommodation and meals

- 2.2.14 In circumstances where it would introduce undue risk for a Councillor to travel to or from official business in the late evening or early morning, reimbursement of costs for accommodation and meals on the night before or after the meeting may be approved by the General Manager. This includes where a meeting finishes later than 9.00pm or starts earlier than 7.00am and the Councillor lives more than 50 kilometres from the meeting location.
- 2.2.15 Council will reimburse costs for accommodation and meals while Councillors are undertaking prior approved travel or professional development outside the Sydney Metropolitan Area. Council will not pay for accommodation within the Sydney Metropolitan Area.
- 2.2.16 Delegates will be accommodated in the hotel where the conference, seminar or training session is being held or the nearest hotel to the conference, seminar or training session of a similar session.
- 2.2.17 The daily limits for accommodation and meal expenses within Australia are to be consistent with those set out in Part B Monetary Rates of the NSW Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009, as adjusted annually.
- 2.2.18 The daily limits for accommodation and meal expenses outside Australia are to be determined in advance by the General Manager, being mindful of Clause 6.19 [2.2.19 or 2.2.31].
- 2.2.19 Councillors will not be reimbursed for alcoholic beverages.

Refreshments for Council related meetings

- 2.2.20 Appropriate refreshments will be available for Council meetings, Council committee meetings, Councillor briefings, approved meetings and engagements, and official Council functions as approved by the General Manager. No alcohol will be provided at any Council function apart from when external dignitaries are invited.
- 2.2.21 As an indicative guide for the standard of refreshments to be provided at Council related meetings, the General Manager must be mindful of Part B Monetary Rates of the NSW Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009, as adjusted annually.

Professional development

- 2.2.22 Council will set aside \$2,000 per Councillor annually in its budget to facilitate professional development of Councillors through programs, training, education courses and membership of professional bodies.
- 2.2.23 In the first year of a new Council term, Council will provide a comprehensive induction program for all Councillors which considers any guidelines issued by the Office of Local Government (OLG). The cost of the induction program will be in addition to the ongoing professional development funding.
- 2.2.24 Annual membership of professional bodies will only be covered where the membership is relevant to the exercise of the Councillor's civic duties, the Councillor actively participates in the body and the cost of membership is likely to be fully offset by savings from attending events as a member.
- 2.2.25 Approval for professional development activities is subject to a prior written request to the General Manager outlining the:
- details of the proposed professional development
 - relevance to Council priorities and business
 - relevance to the exercise of the Councillor's civic duties.
- 2.2.26 In assessing a Councillor request for a professional development activity, the General Manager must consider the factors set out in Clause 6.27 [2.2.27], as well as the cost of the professional development in relation to the Councillor's remaining budget.

Conferences and seminars

- 2.2.27 Council is committed to ensuring its Councillors are up to date with contemporary issues facing Council and the community, and local government in NSW.
- 2.2.28 Council will set aside a total amount of \$5,000 annually in its budget to facilitate Councillor attendance at conferences and seminars. This allocation is for all Councillors (i.e. \$5,000 per year). The General Manager will ensure that access to expenses relating to conferences and seminars is distributed equitably.
- 2.2.29 Approval to attend a conference or seminar is subject to a written request to the General Manager. In assessing a Councillor request, the General Manager must consider factors including the:
- relevance of the topics and presenters to current Council priorities and business and the exercise of the Councillor's civic duties
 - cost of the conference or seminar in relation to the total remaining budget.
- 2.2.30 Council will meet the reasonable cost of registration fees, transportation and accommodation associated with attendance at conferences approved by the General

Manager. Council will also meet the reasonable cost of meals when they are not included in the conference fees. Reimbursement for accommodation and meals not included in the conference fees will be subject to Clauses 6.18-6.21 [2.2.18-21].

- 2.2.31 Council will not meet registration fees for a partner accompanying a delegate on conferences, training sessions or seminars. The Councillor, including any expenses incurred in an accompanying person's program, will meet all expenses.

Information and communications technology

ICT Devices

- 2.2.32 Council will provide Councillors with appropriate ICT devices and services up to a limit of \$3,000 for each Councillor, at the commencement of each term. This may include tablets, mobile phones and a notebook / laptop (including appropriate software). The determination as to what equipment will be provided will be made by the General Manger based upon Council's general ICT program and identifiable business needs. Council will replace or update equipment where required and as appropriate.

ICT Expenses

In addition to the above allocation, Council will allocate \$1,500 per year per Councillor for ICT expenses to assist them in their civic responsibilities. This includes the purchase of a printer.

- 2.2.33 Council may from time to time provide Councillors with upgraded equipment of new facilities where doing so will result in efficiencies and aligns with Council's general ICT program.
- 2.2.34 Council will reimburse to the limit of \$220 per month for Council related communication expenses such as phone, data or internet charges for Councillors (including Mayor and Deputy Mayor).
- 2.2.35 Reimbursements will be made only for communications devices and services used for Councillors to undertake their civic duties, such as:
- receiving and reading Council business papers
 - relevant phone calls and correspondence
 - diary and appointment management.
- 2.2.36 To claim reimbursement, the Councillor must:
- make his/her contact details available to the public to ensure that he/she is accessible to the residents and ratepayers of Strathfield Local Government Area
 - identify the calls and uses associated with his/her duties as Councillor and meet the cost of any private usage (eg calls not relating to official functions of Council)
 - reimburse Council for any charges in excess of \$220 per month (including GST) within 30 days of request.

- ensure claims for reimbursement are accompanied by sufficient documentation (eg copy of account or charges etc) to clearly support the claim for reimbursement.
- claims for calls on non-Council allocated phones or internet connections must provide documentation which clearly indicates the costs which are Council-related eg phone bill in the name of the Councillor.

2.2.37 Councillors may seek reimbursement for applications on their mobile electronic communication device that are directly related to their duties as a Councillor, within the maximum limit.

2.2.38 International roaming on Council provided communication devices will be disabled by default. To enable roaming services, a Councillor must make a written request to Council.

If an overseas trip is approved in accordance with this policy for Councillors, use of any available free wireless internet services is encouraged. Council will cover the cost of the provision of international roaming services and Council business related calls to a limit of \$50 per day. Councillors will be required to identify business and personal calls and reimburse Council for any personal use.

If a Councillor travels overseas on personal business and takes their Council provided communications devices with them, then the Councillor must reimburse Council for all international roaming charges, internet access and call costs.

2.2.39 Councillors may purchase their own SIM card to place in their Council provided communications devices for the time they are away and cover all costs associated with or incurred on this personal SIM card during their travel.

2.2.40 All equipment provided to Councillors by Council shall remain in the possession of the Councillor during their term of office, and shall remain the property of Council and be returned in good operational order and condition upon ceasing to be an elected member of Strathfield Council.

Special requirement and carer expenses

2.2.41 Council encourages wide participation and interest in civic office. It will seek to ensure Council premises and associated facilities are accessible, including provision for sight or hearing impaired Councillors and those with other disabilities.

2.2.42 Transportation provisions outlined in this policy will also assist Councillors who may be unable to drive a vehicle.

2.2.43 In addition to the provisions above, the General Manager may authorise the provision of reasonable additional facilities and expenses in order to allow a Councillor with a disability to perform their civic duties.

- 2.2.44 Councillors who are the principal carer of a child or other elderly, disabled and/or sick immediate family member will be entitled to reimbursement of carer's expenses up to a maximum of \$2,000 per Councillor, per annum for attendance at official business, plus reasonable travel from the principal place of residence.
- 2.2.45 Child care expenses may be claimed for children up to and including the age of 16 years where the carer is not a relative.
- 2.2.46 In the event of caring for an adult person, Councillors will need to provide suitable evidence to the General Manager that reimbursement is applicable. This may take the form of advice from a medical practitioner.

Home office expenses

- 2.2.47 Each Councillor may be reimbursed up to \$1,500 per financial year for costs associated with the maintenance of a home office for the following items only:
- Desk
 - Cabinet
 - Ergonomic office chair
 - Stationery such as printer ink cartridges, pens, A4 paper, erasers, paper clips etc.

2.3 Insurances

- 2.3.1 In accordance with Section 382 of the *Local Government Act*, Council is insured against public liability and professional indemnity claims. Councillors are included as a named insured on this Policy.
- 2.3.2 Insurance protection is only provided if a claim arises out of or in connection with the Councillor's performance of his or her civic duties, or exercise of his or her functions as a Councillor. All insurances are subject to any limitations or conditions set out in the policies of insurance.
- 2.3.3 Council shall pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim accepted by Council's insurers, whether defended or not.
- 2.3.4 Appropriate travel insurances will be provided for any Councillors travelling on approved interstate and overseas travel on Council business.

2.4 Legal Assistance

- 2.4.1 Council may, if requested, indemnify or reimburse the reasonable legal expenses of:
- a Councillor defending an action arising from the performance in good faith of a function under the *Local Government Act 1993* provided that the outcome of the legal proceedings is favourable to the Councillor

- a Councillor defending an action in defamation, provided the statements complained of were made in good faith in the course of exercising a function under the Act and the outcome of the legal proceedings is favourable to the Councillor
- a Councillor for proceedings before an appropriate investigative or review body, provided the subject of the proceedings arises from the performance in good faith of a function under the Act and the matter has proceeded past any initial assessment phase to a formal investigation or review and the investigative or review body makes a finding substantially favourable to the Councillor.

2.4.2 In the case of a code of conduct complaint made against a Councillor, legal costs will only be made available where the matter has been referred by the General Manager to a conduct reviewer and the conduct reviewer has commenced a formal investigation of the matter and makes a finding substantially favourable to the Councillor.

2.4.3 Legal expenses incurred in relation to proceedings arising out of the performance by a Councillor of his or her functions under the Act are distinguished from expenses incurred in relation to proceedings arising merely from something that a Councillor has done during his or her term in office. For example, expenses arising from an investigation as to whether a Councillor acted corruptly would not be covered by this section.

2.4.4 Council will not meet the legal costs:

- of legal proceedings initiated by a Councillor under any circumstances
- of a Councillor seeking advice in respect of possible defamation, or in seeking a non- litigious remedy for possible defamation
- for legal proceedings that do not involve a Councillor performing their role as a Councillor.

2.4.5 Reimbursement of expenses for reasonable legal expenses must have Council approval by way of a resolution at a Council meeting prior to costs being incurred.

3.0 Facilities

3.1 General Facilities for all Councillors

Facilities

3.1.1 Council will provide the following facilities to Councillors to assist them to effectively discharge their civic duties:

- a Councillor common room appropriately furnished including a printer, pigeon holes and appropriate refreshments (excluding alcohol)
- Parking for Councillors is available in the Council staff parking area at Council's office after 6pm and at times when Council and Committee meetings or official events are scheduled.
- personal protective equipment for use during site visits
- a name badge which may be worn at official functions, indicating that the wearer

holds the office of a Councillor and/or mayor or deputy mayor.

- 3.1.2 Councillors may book meeting rooms for official business in a specified Council building at no cost. Rooms may be booked through the Office Manager, Office of the General Manager and Mayor. Use of Council Chambers is restricted to Civic occasions only (hosted by the Mayor or the Mayor's representative), or as otherwise authorised by the General Manager.
- 3.1.3 The provision of facilities will be of a standard deemed by the General Manager as appropriate for the purpose.

Stationery

- 3.1.4 Council will provide the following stationery to Councillors each year:
- Electronic letterhead, to be used only for correspondence associated with civic duties
 - 500 Councillor business cards replenish yearly in accordance with Council's corporate standards. The content of business cards must not contain political statements or advertising.
 - Council will pay for postage of official correspondence provided that all mail is directed through Council's mailing system and a copy of correspondence is maintained on relevant Council records.
- 3.1.5 As per Section 1.6, postage shall only be provided to support a Councillor's civic duties.

Administrative support

- 3.1.6 Council will provide administrative support to Councillors to assist them with their civic duties only. Administrative support may be provided by staff in the mayor's office or by a member of Council's administrative staff as arranged by the General Manager or their delegate.
- 3.1.7 As per Section 1.6, Council staff are expected to assist Councillors with civic duties only, and not assist with matters of personal or political interest, including campaigning.

3.2 Additional Facilities for the Mayor

- 3.2.1 Use of ceremonial clothing such as the Mayoral robes and Mayor Chains for official, civic or ceremonial use.
- 3.2.2 Council will provide the mayor with a furnished office incorporating a computer configured to Council's standard operating environment, telephone and meeting space. The above key remains the property of the Council and must be returned to Council upon the person ceasing to hold office.

- 3.2.3 1,000 mayor business cards replenish yearly in accordance with Council's corporate standards. The content of business cards must not contain political statements or advertising.
- 3.2.4 In performing his or her civic duties, the mayor will be assisted by a small number of staff providing administrative and secretarial support, as determined by the General Manager, will not exceed one full time equivalents.
- 3.2.5 As per Section 1.6, staff in the Mayor and General Manager's Office are expected to work on official business only, and not for matters of personal or political interest, including campaigning.
- 3.2.6 Council will allocate a fully maintained vehicle from Council's motor vehicle fleet for use of the Mayor for official business. The vehicle type and model may change from time to time as vehicles are changed over in accordance with Council's motor vehicle policies and procedures. The estimated maximum operating cost of a fully maintained vehicle (including insurance, registration and fuel) is \$10,000 (including GST).

The vehicle is for the use of the Mayor attending official business of the Council, which includes driving the vehicle to the Mayor's home or place of work. In the event that the vehicle is used for private purposes, reimbursement of costs associated with private use will be the responsibility of the Mayor (refer to Private Use of Facilities clause).

The upper cost of Council's fleet vehicles is limited by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) luxury car determination.

The Mayor and authorised Council staff members are entitled to drive the Mayoral vehicle.

Council will meet the cost of parking fees and road tolls for the Mayoral vehicle associated with business use of the vehicle. However, the driver of the vehicle is personally responsible for all traffic or parking fines incurred while travelling in private or Council vehicles on Council business.

The Mayoral vehicle will be allocated a dedicated parking space at Council's offices.

4.0 Processes

4.1 Approval, Payment and Reimbursement Arrangements

- 4.1.1 Expenses should only be incurred by Councillors in accordance with the provisions of this policy.
- 4.1.2 Approval for incurring expenses, or for the reimbursement of such expenses, should be obtained before the expense is incurred.

- 4.1.3 Up to the maximum limits specified in this policy, approval for the following may be sought after the expense is incurred:
- local travel relating to the conduct of official business
 - carer costs
- 4.1.4 Final approval for payments made under this policy will be granted by the General Manager or their delegate.
- 4.1.5 All Councillors are to be paid superannuation contribution payments as per section 254B of the *Local Government Act 1993* from 1 July 2022. The contribution is on top of Councillor annual fees. Councillors who wish to opt out receiving payments must do so by requesting in writing.

Direct payment

- 4.1.6 Council may approve and directly pay expenses. Requests for direct payment must be submitted to the Manager Governance and Procurement for assessment against this policy using the prescribed form, with sufficient information and time to allow for the claim to be assessed and processed.

Reimbursement

- 4.1.7 All claims for reimbursement of expenses incurred must be made no later than three weeks after the expense was incurred. Each claim must be made on the prescribed form, supported by appropriate receipts and/or tax invoices and be submitted to the Manager Governance and Procurement. Reimbursement of travelling expenses shall state the following:
- Time and place of departure
 - Time and place of arrival
 - Distance travelled
 - Fares and parking fees paid, attaching receipts where possible
 - Number of days and hours occupied in travelling to and from the conference/seminar/training courses and attending Council meetings or on the authorised business of Council
 - Total amount of claim.

Advance payment

- 4.1.8 Council may pay a cash advance for Councillors attending approved conferences, seminars or professional development. Requests for advance payment must be submitted to the Manager Governance and Procurement for assessment against this policy using the prescribed form with sufficient information and time to allow for the claim to be assessed and processed.

- 4.1.9 Councillors must fully reconcile all expenses against the cost of the advance within one month of incurring the cost and/or returning home. This includes providing to Council:
- a full reconciliation of all expenses including appropriate receipts and/or tax invoices
 - reimbursement of any amount of the advance payment not spent in attending to official business or professional development.

Notification

- 4.1.10 If a claim is approved, Council will make payment directly or reimburse the Councillor through accounts payable.
- 4.1.11 If a claim is refused, Council will inform the Councillor in writing that the claim has been refused and the reason for the refusal.

Reimbursement to Council

- 4.1.12 If Council has incurred an expense on behalf of a Councillor that exceeds a maximum limit, exceeds reasonable incidental private use or is not provided for in this policy:
- Council will invoice the Councillor for the expense
 - the Councillor will reimburse Council for that expense within 14 days of the invoice date.
- 4.1.13 If the Councillor cannot reimburse Council within 14 days of the invoice date, they are to submit a written explanation to the General Manager. The General Manager may elect to deduct the amount from the Councillor's allowance.

Timeframe for reimbursement

- 4.1.14 Unless otherwise specified in this policy, Councillors must provide all claims for reimbursement within one month of an expense being incurred. Claims made after this time cannot be approved.

4.2 Disputes

- 4.2.6 If a Councillor disputes a determination under this policy, the Councillor should discuss the matter with the General Manager.
- 4.2.7 If the Councillor and the General Manager cannot resolve the dispute, the Councillor may submit a notice of motion to a Council meeting seeking to have the dispute resolved.

4.3 Return or Retention of Facilities

- 4.3.6 All unexpended facilities or equipment supplied under this policy are to be relinquished immediately upon a Councillor or Mayor ceasing to hold office or at the cessation of their civic duties.
- 4.3.7 Should a Councillor desire to keep any equipment allocated by Council, then this policy enables the Councillor to make application to the General Manager to purchase any such equipment. The General Manager will determine an agreed fair market price or written down value for the item of equipment.
- 4.3.8 The prices for all equipment purchased by Councillors will be recorded in Council's annual report.

4.4 Publication

- 4.4.6 This policy will be published on Council's website.

4.5 Reporting

- 4.5.6 Council will report on the provision of expenses and facilities to Councillors as required in the Act and Regulations.
- 4.5.7 Detailed reports on the provision of expenses and facilities to Councillors will be publicly tabled at a Council meeting every six months and published in full on Council's website.

These reports will include expenditure summarised by individual Councillor and as a total for all Councillors.

4.6 Auditing

- 4.6.6 The operation of this policy, including claims made under the policy, will be included in Council's audit program and an audit undertaken at least every two years.

4.7 Breaches

- 4.7.6 Suspected breaches of this policy are to be reported to the General Manager.
- 4.7.7 Alleged breaches of this policy shall be dealt with by following the processes outlined for breaches of the Code of Conduct, as detailed in the Code and in the Procedures for the Administration of the Code.