

Councillor Support, Expenses and Resources Policy

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Responsible Department	Corporate Governance

1 Introduction

The purpose of this Councillor Support and Resources Policy (Policy) is to establish the facilities, resources and support necessary or appropriate to provide to support Councillors in the performance of their duties as elected representatives.

This includes:

- Outlining Councillors' entitlements for reimbursement of reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred while performing the duties of a Councillor;
- Establishing Councillors' support, resources and equipment entitlements associated with performing the duties of a Councillor;
- Establishing Councillors' entitlements to paid professional development; and
- Providing guidelines on the process for Council to sell this Council supplied IT equipment to Councillors who leave office.
- The Policy also sets out the processes for ensuring that the costs of resourcing and supporting Councillors, and the value of any expenses reimbursed, are reported to the community quarterly to promote good governance, transparency and accountability.

Scope

The provision of facilities, resources and support to Councillors, and the expenses paid or reimbursed for Councillors, will be consistent with the following principles:

- The Councillor Conduct principles prescribed under sections 76B and 76BA of the Act and the *Councillor Code of Conduct*;
- Encouraging diversity in participation, equity and access;
- Accountability and transparency; and
- No disadvantage.

Mayor and Councillor allowances are provided separately to reimbursements of expenses and the costs of facilities/resources support.

Where duties performed are necessary or appropriate for the purposes of achieving the objectives of Council having regard to any relevant Act, Regulations, Ministerial Guidelines and Council policies, Councillors are entitled to access facilities, support and resources as described in this Policy and the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act).

The duties and activities considered to be necessary or appropriate for the purposes of achieving the objectives of a Council include, but are not limited to:

- Attending ordinary and special Council meetings, meetings of committees of Council, Councillor Briefing sessions organised by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate and civic or ceremonial functions convened by the Council, the Mayor or the Chief Executive Officer;
- Attending meetings or workshops scheduled by the Council, the Mayor or the Chief Executive Officer;
- Attending community meetings and Ward Councillor meetings;
- Participating in site inspections or meetings, or participating in delegations or deputations to which the Councillor has been duly appointed as a representative of Council or relevant to a matter which is, or is anticipated to be the subject of a decision of Council;
- Attending a meeting or function as the nominated representative of Council or the Mayor;
- Attending meetings of community groups, organisations and statutory authorities to which the Councillor has been appointed Council delegate or the nominated representative of Council;
- Attending discussions with officers or any person, on any matter relating to the City; and

- Attending seminars, training, conferences or professional development courses as an attendee, speaker or Council's nominated representative or delegate, which:
 - Contribute to the development of personal and professional skills or knowledge of the Councillor which are necessary for the performance of the duties of a Councillor;
 - Are consistent with Council's objectives;
 - Will cover or present material with application, importance or relevance to current or future issues faced by the Council;
 - Are within the Mayor and Councillors' approved annual budget for conferences and seminars.

Council's nominated representative for attendance at conferences, seminars, training or professional development, includes appointed 'Councillor Responsible for' to a related portfolio and/or appointed committee member if that appointment has been made by Council.

- Support or reimbursement will not be provided if the costs:
- Relate to a cost or expense (or portion thereof) which should reasonably be borne by another entity, or for which another entity is reasonably liable, is outside the scope of this Policy and shall not be paid or reimbursed by Council.
- Relate to expenses of a personal nature or which are not related to the business of Council.

2 Context

Under the Act:

- Councillors are entitled to resources and facilities support and reimbursements of expenses related to their duties as a Councillor; and
- A Council must adopt and maintain a policy in relation to the reimbursement of expenses for Councillors and members of Council committees.¹
 - The policy must be consistent with the prescribed types of expenses and the prescribed procedures to be followed in relation to the reimbursement of out of pocket expenses
- Council must make available the minimum resources and facilities prescribed. The prescribed Resources and Facilities to be made available are contained in the State Government's Policy Statement on Local Government Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and the accompanying information Guide for Mayor and Councillor Entitlements.

3 Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are to:

Ensure the transparent and responsible provision of resources and support required by a Councillor to undertake their duties as an elected representative by:

- Maximising the value of seminar, conference and/or course attendance;
- Providing the approval processes for all interstate and overseas travel by Councillors in an official capacity;
- Outlining the process of reimbursement of expenses associated with such travel;
- Providing resources and support in compliance with the Act; and
- Providing reporting mechanisms that are available to the community, including maintaining registers required by the Act or regulations.

¹ This Policy does not apply to members of Council committees as currently, no committee members claim or are granted, reimbursement of expenses.

4 Policy Details

The entitlement to the support, resources and expenses outlined in the Policy will be assessed in accordance with the Policy Scope, Context and Objectives and in line with the approval process outlined.

This Policy is not intended to prescribe for every possible situation that may arise.

Should a situation arise that is not adequately covered by this Policy, the matter will be referred to Council for determination by resolution.

Any expenses, facilities support or resources not specifically addressed in this Policy will be assessed by reference to the Act and any relevant Regulations.

The Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant Council policies adopted from time to time, including but not limited to, the *Councillor Code of Conduct* and specific policies regarding the use, security and maintenance and Council equipment, as adopted and or amended from time to time.

Unless otherwise specifically stated, where the Policy makes provision for Council to pay for a resource or expense, that resource or expense may be reimbursed as an out of pocket expense or, where the policy makes provision for reimbursement of an expense, that resource or expense may be paid by Council without the Councillor first incurring the expense. In both situations, the approval process outlined in Clause 5, or other relevant clause, will apply.

4.1 Resources and Facilities Support

4.1.1 Administrative Support

The Chief Executive Officer shall provide an appropriate level of administrative support for the Mayor and Councillors.

The level of administrative support shall be determined by the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Mayor.

Councillors are will be provided with a security card enabling appropriate access to Council venues.

4.1.2 Councillor Portal

- A Councillor Portal providing access to:
- Council business papers (Meeting Agendas and Minutes, Councillor Briefing Presentations);
- Correspondence directed to multiple Councillors or the Council;
- Information about projects and achievements of Council's operations;
- Policies and resource materials (including reference material and reports from other agencies or organisations);
- News items relevant to Council;
- Forms relevant for Councillors;
- Any other information considered relevant or necessary by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate will be made available to all Councillors; and
- This will be the primary resource portal for Council business papers and key information for Councillors.

4.1.3 *Equipment and stationery*

Council shall, upon request, provide Councillors with standard stationery, equipment and consumables held or obtained generally for the organisation's requirements, including, but not necessarily limited to, paper, writing implements, diaries, writing pads, printer cartridges, envelopes and the like. Council letterhead will only be provided for correspondence that has been approved by Council or for the Mayor to correspond as Council's official spokesperson.

Requests for stationery should be made to the Mayor and Councillor Support Officer.

Each Councillor will be provided with personalised business cards and a name badge for use while on Council business.

4.1.4 *Printing and copying*

The resources provided for Councillors to print and copy items are outlined in the IT Equipment and Mayor and Councillors' Offices sections in this policy.

Any requests for bulk copying or printing (more than 10 copies) must be determined by resolution of Council with consideration of the relevance to the Council Plan and Council's objectives. Printing to promote the activities of an individual Councillor or Ward Councillors may only be approved if it is part of the Communications Strategy or Communications unit workplan.

On request and subject to availability, Councillors will be provided with had copies of brochures, flyers or reports to distribute in the course of their duties, if these have been produced as part of Council's usual operations.

4.1.5 *IT Equipment*

Councillors are issued with IT equipment, meeting Council's IT standards, in order to facilitate Council-related communications between the community, Council staff and Councillors.

Councillors may choose to be supplied with the standard equipment or elect to purchase their own units (non-standard with limited IT Support) and be reimbursed up to the same value of the equivalent standard unit.

Equipment, software, service and facilities offered includes:

- mobile telephone and bluetooth wireless adaptor (for Councillors' private vehicles that do not support bluetooth);
- a hybrid tablet/laptop device;
- Windows 10 and MS Office (via Office365) amongst others will be installed on the hybrid device;
- Cloud-based data storage (Office365);
- multi-function unit for printing, photocopying and scanning documents;
- Mobile phone voicemail; and
- IT support from a local IT provider that will be available during and after business hours.

Mobile telephones and hybrid devices will all have wireless broadband capability and be Mobile internet enabled (e.g. 4G access).

4.1.5.1 Use of IT equipment

Council phones and mobile data enabled devices will be provided to support a Councillor to undertake their duties, however, it is recognised that for practical reasons, a Councillor may make a reasonable number of non-Council related calls. They may also make reasonable personal use of mobile devices, including mobile data.

Councillor expenses will be monitored by the Manager Corporate Governance and if a Councillor exceeds the capped amount per month for use of data or calls on their mobile devices, re-imburement of those costs will be sought from the Councillor.

If the amount exceeded relates to costs incurred as a result of higher than expected Council business, Councillors will be required to put this in writing to the Manager Corporate Governance to acquit this matter. If the costs incurred are for non-Council business use, the amount of non-Council business use must be reimbursed to Council. The Manager Corporate Governance will raise an invoice for the amount and the Councillor must pay this in line with Council's payment terms.

International calls will not be considered reasonable use unless a Councillor is conducting Council business (such as making arrangements for a conference/tour that has been approved by a resolution of Council). Telephone calls to information service providers which incur a significant per minute charge will normally not be considered reasonable use.

App store purchases will not be covered by Council and must be reimbursed by Councillors.

Global roaming

Councillors can request that global roaming be activated on their Councillor provided equipment, when travelling overseas, however Councillors will be invoiced for all costs incurred for this period, unless travelling for Council business with the approval of Council via a Council resolution.

4.1.5.2 Damaged equipment

Equipment provided to a Councillor should last the full Council term. If equipment is damaged any more than twice the equipment will be replaced at the Councillor's cost.

4.1.5.3 Lost equipment

If the equipment is lost during the Council term, it will be replaced at the Councillor's cost.

4.1.5.4 Return of equipment

If a Councillor is suspended in accordance with s66A of the Act, the Councillor must return all Council equipment and materials to the Council at the beginning of the term of suspension.

If a Councillor is required to take leave in accordance with s66B of the Act - a Councillor must return all Council equipment and materials to the Council for the period of leave if the Council requires. This also applies to the Mayor.

In the case that a Councillor seeks a leave of absence for any other reason, they will not be required to return their Council provided equipment, unless specifically requested by a vote of Council, where the reason for the leave meets the definition of a conflict of interest with that person's role as Councillor.

4.1.5.5 End of Council term or resignation/retirement of a Councillor

Councillors who leave office and who wish to retain the IT equipment provided by Council may do so by purchasing the equipment, otherwise all equipment must be returned to Council.

Equipment (standard or non-standard) will be sold to retiring Councillors on the basis of the value of the equipment at that time. The valuation will be arranged by the Chief Information Officer (CIO).

A retiring Councillor who does not wish to purchase the equipment but wishes to maintain the same mobile telephone number may have this number ported to a personal mobile phone account at no cost.

Council provided IT support will cease to Councillors from the time of going out of office. Former Councillors may engage the local IT support provider at their own cost if they choose.

Subscription services will also cease such as Microsoft Office (O365) at the time of a Councillor's resignation or retirement from office. If Councillors do not intend to maintain an O365 account (Microsoft Office and online storage) then arrangements should be made with the IT support provider to transfer data to another storage provider or locally on the device.

4.1.6 Website

Each Councillor will be provided with a page on Council's website, the content of which may include a photograph, contact details, ward map, personal statements, hobbies and interests, Councillor assignments (areas of responsibility or appointments by Council to Committees), academic qualifications and professional memberships.

This information will be limited during the caretaker period leading up to the Council election.

Additional information may be included on the Councillor's webpage at the Councillor's request, subject to the content being approved for publication by the Chief Executive Officer.

4.1.7 Mayor's office, Councillors' office and meeting room

A suitably equipped Mayoral office shall be provided within the Council offices.

A Councillors' office and meeting room will be provided for use by Councillors within the Council offices, suitably equipped for computer access, office work, photocopying, reading, research, and meetings. The meeting room may be booked by Council staff, however will be vacated for any Councillor meeting.

The space and equipment provided for the Mayoral Office and Councillors' office and meeting room provided shall be at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer.

4.1.8 Parking

Car parking will be available at the Civic Centre, subject to parking restrictions.

Councillors are eligible for a 'staff' parking permit, which allows permit holders to park in designated areas:

- the signed areas of the Moreland Civic Centre car park;
- David Street Brunswick carpark behind the Mechanics Institute, and
- Belair Avenue Glenroy car park.

When parking in a staff parking area, Councillors must clearly display a current permit in the bottom left hand corner of the windscreen and only park in a designated staff parking permit area.

Infringements may be issued if a current permit is not displayed, not clearly visible, or if parked in an incorrect permit area. Parking permits do not exempt a Councillor from all other road (parking) rules.

4.1.9 *Meals and Refreshments*

Where Council meetings, functions or events are held at times that extend through normal meal times, Council will provide suitable meals for Councillors.

4.1.10 *Meetings arranged by Councillors*

4.1.10.1 *Meeting Rooms*

Subject to availability, and in accordance with relevant policy, Council meeting/function rooms owned and controlled by Council may be booked by Councillors for use free of charge for meetings and other functions, provided the Councillor is in attendance and the use is necessary or appropriate for performing the duties of a Councillor or the conduct of Council business. Councillors must make these bookings via booking form.

Any non-Council venue booked directly by a Councillors for any purpose, must be done at their own cost and will not be reimbursed.

Ward or Councillor meetings should be held in Council owned venues to avoid hall hire costs. Officer support is provided to Councillors for their meetings in regard to booking the venue, and scheduling dates in the Councillors diary. The Mayor and Councillor Support Officer will also organise a catering pack, on request.

The Councillor will need to set up the venue, organise any catering and pick up the keys to the venue as required. IT support or equipment and/or copying of materials is not available for meetings arranged by Councillors.

Councillors must not permit or provide access to community members to secure (office) parts of Council offices unless a Council officer is present.

4.1.10.2 *Ward meetings*

A Ward meeting is a meeting called by one or more Ward Councillor(s) to provide an opportunity for constituents to come and talk to their Councillor(s) about a range of Ward based and municipality-based issues. A Ward meeting is held in the Ward that the Councillor(s) represent and will usually have an open or broad invitation.

It is the Councillor's decision as to the format, date and location of the meeting.

Issues arising from ward meetings should be communicated in writing by Ward Councillors to the Team Leader Civic Protocols. These items will be raised and processed as customer requests/complaints (CRSs) in the Customer Request System.

Ward meetings can be held by individual Councillors or as multi-member Ward meetings at the discretion of the relevant Ward Councillors.

Ward meetings will be advertised in the City News Page of the *Moreland Leader* newspaper and on North-West FM, on Council's Website and through Council's standard communication/social media channels (e.g. Facebook post).

Individual Councillor Ward meetings will be advertised as 'Councillor ____'s Ward meeting'. Other Ward Councillors will be made aware of the date and time of the Ward meeting.

4.1.10.3 *Councillor Meetings*

A Councillor Meeting is a meeting called by a Councillor(s), that may be ward related, but is in relation to a specific topic with specific invitees. Councillor Meetings are not supported by Council officers, other than bookings of Council facilities which may be made by Mayor and Councillor support staff. A catering pack may also be made available. No IT support is available.

It is the Councillor's decision as to the format, date and location of the meeting. Councillor meetings will not be advertised as they have specific invitees. (duplication).

4.1.10.4 *Meet the Mayor meetings*

Meet the Mayor meetings can be held in any ward in the municipality.

4.2 Travel

4.2.1 *Approval to Travel*

It is recommended that a maximum of two Councillors attend the same event for any interstate or overseas conference, workshop, seminar etc. Approval must be obtained as detailed below.

Interstate

Must obtain approval in advance:

- by resolution of the Council; or
- where this is not possible, from the Chief Executive Officer, after consultation with the Mayor.

Overseas

Must obtain approval in advance by resolution of the Council.

4.2.2 *Approval in Advance*

Approval for all interstate and overseas travel by a Councillor/s should be by resolution of the Council via a Council report. The Council report must identify the following:

- background;
- the purpose of the travel;
- how the travel meets Council's objectives in line with the Council Plan;
- the benefits to Council and/or Moreland;
- proposed costs (airfare, accommodation, conference fees, meals, etc); and
- nomination of the Councillor/s that should undertake such travel.

In the event that timeframes do not permit approval in advance (such as arrangements for a deputation to a member of parliament) by formal resolution of Council, approval for interstate travel must be sought from the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Mayor.

If a Councillor goes overseas, of their own accord, they are not to represent Council in any official way, without prior approval via a Council resolution.

4.2.3 *Air Travel*

Flights are to be economy class flights utilising non-flexible fares where possible (when travel times can be assured). When selecting flights, consideration should be made to adjusting schedules to take advantage of cheaper options. Staff will attempt to source the best price and conditions when booking flights, irrespective of a Councillor's frequent flyer memberships.

Travel to conferences must be made directly from Melbourne.

4.2.4 *Accommodation*

Where Councillors attend a conference, event or function that is held over more than one day, accommodation will be provided on conference nights. For example, should a conference, event or function commence on a Friday afternoon and finish on Sunday at 12 noon, accommodation will be provided for the Friday and Saturday nights only. Furthermore, accommodation will be provided for the night before the commencement of the conference providing the conference commences prior to 12 noon. Where the conference, event or function commences after 12 noon it is expected that staff and Councillors will travel on the morning of the intended conference, event or function.

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 or in-house movies shall be borne by Councillors.

4.2.5 *Other travel related expenses*

Taxis

Taxis or rideshare schemes should only be used where they are the most efficient means of transport available. Receipts are required in all cases. Charges will be reimbursed by Council.

Public transport

Where appropriate, public transport should be used if cheaper than taxi or hire car, subject to business needs being met effectively. In all cases, tickets or receipts must be kept for expense reimbursement purposes.

Food and drinks

The majority of meals will be covered in the conference or event fee. Any other meals for example: dinners not included in the conference fee, are to be at the cost of Councillors. Council will not reimburse the purchase of coffee, alcohol, snacks or other items of food or drink.

4.2.6 *Non-Allowable Expenditure*

Council will not reimburse expenditure in relation to the following items:

- Alcohol;
- Snacks;
- Any costs associated with accommodation that are outside room and breakfast (e.g. mini bar, laundry, tips and gratuities);
- Airline club fees;
- Excess baggage claims;
- Toiletries;
- Any items lost or stolen;
- Hair stylist or barber;
- Tourism related costs (e.g.: day trips, excursions, activities, hire of bikes or boats etc);
- Reading materials (including newspapers, magazines, books etc);
- Traffic, parking or speeding fines;
- Travel costs not associated with the conference or event;
- In-flight or in-house movies or entertainment costs;
- Personal gifts, goods, services or souvenirs purchased; and
- Costs incurred for family or other persons travelling with Councillors (including meals, travel, incidentals etc).

4.3 Transport

4.3.1 *Public Transport, taxis and rideshare schemes*

Councillors may use public transport, taxis or rideshare schemes to undertake their duties as a Councillor.

On request, a Councillor will be provided with a Myki card for use. Any personal use must be reimbursed to Council.

If a Councillor uses their own Myki card, they will be reimbursed for any use related to undertaking office on the provision of a Myki statement highlighting the relevant trip(s) for reimbursement and the reasons for the trip(s) in accordance with the reimbursement process at Clause 5.3.

Council provides each Councillor with a Cab Charge Card for Council business use.

Taxis should only to be used if they are the most efficient means of transport available.

A Councillor may choose to use a rideshare scheme to undertake their duties. Councillors may submit receipts for reimbursements for these trips in accordance with the reimbursement process at Clause 5.3.

4.3.2 *Mayoral vehicle*

The Mayor will have access to a fully maintained vehicle (including servicing, fuel and insurance) or bicycle in accordance with the Light Vehicle Policy.

The vehicle will be available for use by the Mayor in the discharge of his or her duties as the Mayor and a Councillor, and for reasonable private use during the Mayoral term.

If the Mayor chooses the option of a bicycle, including an electric bicycle, instead of a motor vehicle:

- The make and model of the bicycle will be determined in consultation with the Director City Development; and
- If requested, a membership to a car sharing scheme, will be provided for the period they are Mayor, with all costs associated with the membership paid by Council.

4.4 Professional development

Professional development programs/courses are available to all Councillors.

Upon the commencement of each electoral term, a purpose designed induction program will be provided to all Councillors. Any costs relating to this program will not be attributed to any individual Councillor expenses however will be reported as required in the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework annually.

Individual professional development expenditure should be tested against the following criteria:

- is it in the interest of the Moreland community;
- does it meet the budget determined by Council;
- does it clearly offer and promote public benefit, as distinguished from private benefit;
- is it directly relevant to the Councillor's role; and
- does it take place and is it able to be utilised during the Councillor's term of office.

Council will also provide access to the following professional development programs/initiatives:

- meeting procedures;
- chairing of meetings;
- media training;
- governance training e.g. Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) courses;
- financial training;
- team building and interpersonal skills; and
- MAV/VLGA Councillor Development programs.

4.4.1 Professional memberships and subscriptions

Council is a member of:

- The Municipal Association of Victoria;
- The Victorian Local Governance Association; and
- The Australian Local Government Women's Association.

Individual memberships, professional associations or subscriptions which are considered demonstrably beneficial to Council or the performance of the duties of a Councillor may be reimbursed subject to a resolution of Council.

Professional membership is not allowed for the Australian Institute of Company Directors, unless the membership is part of the course. The membership be deleted from the list of professional membership for the subsequent years after completing the course.

4.5 Community participation

4.5.1 Event roles

The Mayor is the primary Council representative for events. If the Mayor is unavailable to attend an event, the Deputy Mayor (if any) will become the primary representative. If the Deputy Mayor is not available, the Mayor may delegate the role to a Councillor.

Where there is a significant event link to a Councillor as a committee representative or area of responsibility (i.e. Councillor Responsible For), the Mayor may choose to delegate their role to the appropriate Councillor, ahead of the Deputy Mayor.

Speech support is only provided for Councillors who wish to speak at functions in an official role as Moreland representative (i.e. Mayor's delegate).

The Mayor, or delegated Councillor representing Council at an event is be entitled to have paid by Council, or reimbursed, reasonable bona fide costs associated with representing Council at the event.

Should any other Councillor wish to attend the event then the costs associated with attending the event will be borne by the Councillor.

The Mayor will undertake any official role at Council events or may delegate the role to the Deputy Mayor or other Councillor with related responsibilities. The Chief Executive Officer or (Chief Executive Officer 's delegate) will usually act as master of ceremonies (MC) if required.

Invitations for Council events will be issued from the Mayor. All Councillors will receive an invitation to Council organised or sponsored events.

4.5.2 *Local community events*

Attendance at local events and functions is a key part of a Councillor's representative role.

Councillors will carefully consider if their attendance at an event or function truly relates to the duties of office, and whether community resources should be used to pay for their attendance.

Councillors will avoid conflicts of interest (or perceptions of) that may arise as a result of their attendance at events and functions, including the applicable gifts threshold.

Under Section 78C(1)(a) of the Act, an indirect interest because of receipt of an applicable gift does not include (a) reasonable hospitality received by the person at an event or function the person attended in an official capacity as the Mayor, or a Councillor.

Hospitality is a gift where a Councillor attends an event or function:

- From free tickets the Councillor received and there are NO official duties to perform, or
- With free membership, or
- Where the hospitality is generous e.g. a two or three course meal with alcohol at an event or function.

Councillors will act in accordance with the Gift and Hospitality Policy.

4.5.2.1 *Paid community events*

Councillors will be supported to attend paid events that:

- Are Council-organised or Council-sponsored; or
- Are held by groups or organisations based in the City of Moreland, have a 'demonstrable benefit' to the local community and are directly related to a Councillor's area of responsibility or committee membership as appointed by Council; or
- Melbourne-based events hosted by key community partners/stakeholder organisations, where an official invitation is received, the Councillor has been invited in an official capacity and attendance has been approved by resolution of Council; and
- Are not incongruent with any Council policies or resolutions, for example, gambling, and attendance can reasonably be seen to support the achievement of Council's objectives.

The cost of a Councillor's partner or guest will not be covered by Council and may constitute an applicable gift (or contribute to an applicable gift) under the Act for the Councillor if accepted free of charge.

Ticketed events with a value of \$100 or more per ticket will only be paid with approval by resolution of Council.

4.6 Attendance by Spouse/Partner at Seminars, Conferences and Civic Functions

Attendance at any seminar, conference or civic function by a Councillor's spouse/partner shall be at the expense of the Councillor except where:

- Prior approval has been given by Council;
- Attendance by a Councillor's spouse/partner is considered to be necessary or appropriate to support the business or representational needs of Council; and
- Sufficient provision exists in the approved annual budget for conferences and seminars.

Where Council has approved a Councillor's spouse/partner to attend a seminar, conference or civic function, Councillors are entitled to have paid by Council, or reimbursed, their spouse or partner's:

- Registration fees (for a Civic Function, but not a seminar or conference);
- Reasonable costs for meals and refreshments;
- Attendance at one primary conference dinner, when held, for each interstate conference attended.

Other than this, all additional costs incurred for the attendance of a spouse/partner will be at the expense of the Councillor.

Councillors are entitled to have paid by Council, or reimbursed, the reasonable costs and expenses of their spouse or partner attending:

- Functions held by Council;
- Functions held by other Victorian municipalities or local government peak bodies; and
- Where there is an agreed expectation of partners attending, i.e. spouse/partner of the Councillor is specified on the invitation.

The above is subject to funds being available within the annual budget, and on the basis of equity amongst all Councillors. Costs will be met from the Mayor and Councillors conferences and seminars budget.

4.7 Insurance and indemnity (combined sections)

Section 76 of the Act provides:

A Council must indemnify and keep indemnified each Councillor, member of a Council committee, member of Council staff and any person exercising any function or power on behalf of a Council against all actions or claims (whether arising during or after the term of office or employment of that Councillor or member) in respect of any act or thing done or omitted to be done in good faith in the exercise or purported exercise of any function or power conferred on the Council or Council committee or any Councillor, member of the Council committee or member of Council staff by or under this or any other Act.

Councillors are covered under the following Council insurance policies while discharging, in good faith, the duties of civic office including attendance at meetings of external bodies as Council representatives:

- Public liability;
- Professional indemnity;
- Councillors' and officers' liability; and
- Corporate Travel (approved accompanying partners are also covered).

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.

4.8 Health and Wellbeing

In line with Moreland's commitment to promoting a healthy working environment, Councillors are able to access (where required) Council's appointed confidential professional counselling service (EAP) to help resolve both personal and Council related problems or concerns that may impact on their capacity to effectively undertake their role as a Councillor.

4.9 Apparel

The Council shall, upon request, lend Councillors protective clothing. This clothing is to be returned promptly upon the completion of the activity/duty for which the articles were required.

This clothing shall be limited to wet weather pants and pullover, gumboots, winter jacket and/or hat, or other such clothing to meet the organisation's requirements, unless otherwise resolved by Council for a specific item(s).

4.10 Childcare/family care

Councillors are entitled to have paid by Council, or reimbursed, the cost of childcare/family care expenses for immediate family members, necessarily incurred by Councillors whilst discharging their duties as a Councillor within the scope of this Policy, subject to the following conditions:

- The maximum hourly rate a Councillor will be reimbursed for child care/family care expenses is twenty one dollars (\$21) per hour indexed annually to CPI at the commencement of each Mayoral term;
- Childcare/family care costs must be substantiated by a receipt from the caregiver showing the dates and times care was provided, and the Councillor shall show why the care was needed on each occasion; and
- Child care/family care costs are not eligible to be paid by Council or reimbursed if the caregiver is a part of the Councillor's immediate family (e.g. partner, mother/father, sister/brother, grandmother/grandfather or sister-in-law/brother-in-law) or who normally or regularly lives with the Councillor.

For the purposes of this Policy, a child shall be defined as up to, but not including 16 years of age.

5 Approval Process

5.1 Available Budget

An annual budget is provided in the Mayor and Councillor budget for attendance at seminars, conferences and training and community events. This budget will allow Councillors to access up to a maximum of \$5,000 for relevant professional development and initiatives (as listed above) over the course of a Councillor's elected period (4 years), with an additional \$1,000 per year for any further seminars, conferences and training and community events. Any further expenditure requested will be presented to Council for approval.

- If a Councillor elects to attend the AICD Company Directors course and has approval to attend by a resolution of Council, the cost of attendance will not contribute to, or affect the Councillors base allocation of \$5,000 for their attendance at seminars, conferences and training and community events.

The available budget for telecommunications (mobile phone and data), and other support expenses will be determined annually, based on the organisational target budget process.

5.2 Council paid items (in advance/directly invoiced)

A Councillor seeking Council payment to register for a community event or function, conference, seminar or training/development program that does not require a Council resolution, will submit the details for approval by the Manager Corporate Governance (or delegate).

Prior to approving the registration, the Manager Corporate Governance will consider:

- the alignment of the request with this Policy; and
- the available budget for that Councillor.

If attendance is aligned with the Policy and within the available budget, the MCSO or EAMC will make arrangements for payment and registration.

If attendance is not aligned with the Policy or the available budget has been exceeded, the Manager Corporate Governance will advise the Councillor of the options to either seek a Council resolution to approve attendance or pay for attendance themselves.

For equipment that meets Council's IT standards (and hence is supported by Council), Council will meet the purchase, initial installation, maintenance costs, connection fees, rental charges and the operating costs of that equipment incurred by Councillors in the undertaking of their Councillor duties including all Council business call charges.

5.3 Claims for Reimbursement

Where a request is made for reimbursement of expenses incurred under this clause, Council may reimburse an amount less than the amount claimed where the actual expense incurred is considered unreasonable, taking into account the estimated costs to Council to purchase similar goods.

5.3.1 *Form of claims*

Claims are to be submitted on the prescribed form to the Manager Corporate Governance.

Claims should be accompanied by original receipts/tax invoices for any expenses claimed which clearly identify the name of the payee and ABN where applicable.

If receipts cannot be produced, Councillors may be required to provide a statutory declaration.

Claims must include sufficient detail to demonstrate, in accordance with the Act that the expense for which reimbursement is claimed is a reasonable out-of-pocket expense incurred while performing the duties of a Councillor.

5.4 Timeframe for submission of claims

Councillors are required to submit claims in a timely manner to ensure transparency and timely accountability.

Claims for reimbursement of expenses in the September, December and March quarters must be submitted by the close of business of the following month to allow for accurate and timely recording of Councillor expenses on Council's website.

Claims for reimbursement of expenses in the June quarter must be submitted within 14 working days of the end of financial year.

Claims for reimbursement of expenses incurred in a particular financial year cannot be accepted once the accounts for that year have been closed.

Reimbursements will be paid by electronic funds transfer within 21 days of a compliant claim form being submitted.

5.5 Assessment of claims

The Manager Corporate Governance or a delegated officer will process all claims.

If the Manager Corporate Governance has a question about a claim, he/she will, in the first instance, discuss this matter with the relevant Councillor.

If required, the Manager Corporate Governance will seek guidance/intervention from the Chief Executive Officer.

If required, the Chief Executive Officer will refer claims to a Council meeting for determination.

5.6 Form of claims

Claims are to be submitted on the prescribed form to the Manager Corporate Governance.

Claims should be accompanied by original receipts/tax invoices for any expenses claimed which clearly identify the name of the payee and ABN where applicable.

If receipts cannot be produced, Councillors may be required to provide a statutory declaration.

Claims must include sufficient detail to demonstrate, in accordance with the Act that the expense for which reimbursement is claimed is a reasonable out-of-pocket expense incurred while performing the duties of a Councillor.

5.7 Reimbursement by Councillor

5.7.1 *Mobile and data costs*

Councillor expenses will be monitored by the Manager Corporate Governance and if a Councillor exceeds the capped amount per month for use of data or calls on their mobile devices, reimbursement of those costs will be sought from the Councillor.

If the amount exceeded relates to costs incurred as a result of higher than expected Council business, Councillors will be required to put this in writing to the Manager Corporate Governance to acquit this matter. If the costs incurred are for non-Council business use, the amount of non-Council business use must be reimbursed to Council. The Manager Corporate Governance will raise an invoice for the amount and the Councillor must pay this in line with Council's payment terms.

5.7.2 *Other costs*

Where Council provides a Myki, subscription to a rideshare scheme, cab charge or any access to any other service that directly invoices Council, these invoices will be compared to Councillor diary entries to identify correlations to Councillor duties. Where there is no apparent connection, the Councillor will be required to acquit for the use of the service in connection with their duties as a Councillor or reimburse the amount not related to Council business.

5.8 Injury or Illness preventing attendance at a paid event or conference

Councillors who suffer from an injury or illness preventing them from attending a course, conference or workshop, particularly where travel is involved, should notify the Manager Corporate Governance preferably with enough notice for Council to either substitute an alternative Councillor or to cancel the intended travel and accommodation arrangements and any associated fees

Failure to inform Council of non-attendance may result in Council seeking reimbursement.

6 Mayor and Councillor Allowances

Council shall review and set Mayoral and Councillors allowances in accordance with the Act and will adjust the allowances in accordance with any adjustment factor gazetted by the Minister for Local Government each year, as required under the Act.

Any personal taxation implications from the receipt of allowances are the responsibility of individual Councillors.

7 Sponsorship and Donations

Any sponsorship or donations made by a Councillor will be made on their own behalf and not on behalf of Council, except in accordance with a prior resolution of Council.

Councillor sponsorship and donations not in accordance with a prior resolution of Council (in accordance with the *Sponsorship and Donations Guidelines*) will not be reimbursed by Council.

8 Reporting

The cost of Councillor support and resource expenses is to be reported to the community by inclusion of the details on the Council website. This will be reported quarterly.

Councillors are required to sign an agreement for the use of Council equipment (Attachment 1).

Councillors are provided with this equipment to conduct Council business and the equipment must be used for this purpose only.

In addition, the *Local Government (General) Regulations 2015* (The Regulations) require Council to maintain and have available for public inspection, a register of overseas and interstate travel (other than interstate travel by land for less than three days) by Council staff and Councillors.

Councillors who have travelled interstate or overseas in an official capacity shall within seven working days of returning, provide details of their travel on the 'Interstate/Overseas Travel Report Form (A1808648) and lodge the form with the Manager Corporate Governance for inclusion in the Register.

Councillors attending any approved activity must provide Council with a verbal or written report on their attendance. The report must be submitted to a Council meeting as soon as practicable. (A report template is shown in Attachment 1).

9 Roles and Responsibilities

Party/parties	Roles and responsibilities	Timelines
Chief Executive Officer	Determines exceptions to this policy	Where there is not enough time available to seek a resolution of Council.
Director Business Transformation	Is consulted by the Manager Corporate Governance or Unit Manager Governance and administers this Policy in their absence.	As required
Manager Corporate Governance	Administers this Policy	Ongoing

Unit Manager Governance	Administers this Policy Maintain the Interstate and Overseas Travel Register Arranges for Council report when required Ensure legislative requirements are met, research; coordinate consultation, review and update of the Policy.	Ongoing
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10 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The cost of Councillor support and resources will be monitored and reviewed by the Manager Corporate Governance to ensure that ongoing expenses can be accommodated within the Mayor and Councillors budget. Expenses will be reported quarterly via the website.

The Policy will be reviewed at least once each Council term to ensure the required support and resources are being provided to enable Councillors to fulfil their duties as elected representatives.

11 Definitions

Term	Definition
Personal Expense	Where pre-approved expenses are incurred by Councillors and meet the requirements of the Policy for reimbursement. <i>They must be accompanied by an official tax receipt.</i>

12 Associated Documents

- *Councillor Code of Conduct*
- *Light Vehicle Policy*

13 References

- Recognition and Support, the Victorian Government's Policy Statement on Local Government Mayoral and Councillor Allowances and Resources April 2008 (Recognition and Support)
- Victorian Government's Information Guide on Mayor and Councillor Entitlements – Reimbursement of Expenses and Provision of Resources and Facilities Support for Victorian Mayors and Councillors November 2008.