

POLICY LOCATION	Corporate and Organisational Performance	POLICY TITLE	Council Expenses
POLICY NUMBER	CA04	DATE ADOPTED	18 December 2024
REVISION NUMBER	5	REVISION DATE	June 2029

1. Purpose

1. This policy supports Councillors and members of delegated committees to perform their role, as defined under the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic), by ensuring that expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their role are reimbursed.
2. The objective of this policy is to define the:
 - the type and level of resources that shall be provided to Councillors and members of delegated committees to assist in the performance of their role;
 - the provision of a vehicle to the Mayor;
 - the expenses that Council shall reimburse a Councillor or a member of a delegated committee for;
 - transparency and accountability protocols that shall govern the provision of these resources; and
 - approval process for funding of Councillor attendance at events and training and development.

2. Scope

1. This policy applies to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors (Councillors) and Members of delegated committees and Council's Audit and Risk Committee (Members) when performing their role.
2. Councillor duties are those performed by a Councillor as a necessary part of their role, in achieving the objectives of Council. These duties may include but are not limited to:
 - attendance at meetings of Council and its Committees;
 - attendance at briefing sessions, workshops, civic events, or functions convened by Council;
 - attendance at conferences, workshops and training programs related to the role of Councillor, Mayor or Deputy Mayor;
 - attendance at meetings, events or functions representing Council;
 - duties in relation to constituents concerning Council business; and
 - Attendance at meetings with officers or any person, any matter relating to the Buloke Shire.

3. Members of delegated committees exercise powers of Councillors, under delegation. This policy also applies to Members when undertaking their role as delegated committee members and members of Council's Audit & Risk Committee.

3. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Act	<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>
Audit and Risk Committee	The Audit and Risk Committee established by the Council under section 53 of the Act
Carer	Has the same meaning as the definition under section 4 of the Carers Recognition Act 2012
Chief Executive Officer	The person occupying the office of Chief Executive Officer of the Council, and includes a person acting in that office
Council	The Buloke Shire Council comprising elected Councillors and led by the Mayor
Council Administration	Buloke Shire Council, led by the Chief Executive Officer
Councillor	An elected representative (Councillor) of the Buloke Shire Council
Council Meeting	A meeting of the Council convened in accordance with its Governance Rules
Delegated Committee	a delegated committee established by the Council under section 63 of the Act
Childcare recipient	A child up to and including the age of 16 years
Member/s	Term used to cover all members of a delegated committee and Council's Audit and Risk Committee.

4. Policy Statement

1. This policy acknowledges the demands and expectations placed on Councillors and members of Council's Delegated Committees and Risk and Audit Committee and where appropriate provides support and resourcing to them to successfully fulfil their roles.
2. Councillors and Members are entitled, under section 40 of the Act, to reimbursement of expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their duties.
3. This Policy ensures that the reimbursement of these expenses is in accordance with the Act and meets the Act's principles of public transparency; achieving the best outcomes for the Buloke Shire Community; and ensuring the ongoing financial viability of the Council.
4. Four key principles will guide Council's management of expenses and reimbursements relating for Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees. These are
 - Integrity;
 - Encouraging diversity in participation, equity and access;
 - Accountability and transparency; and
 - Reasonableness and appropriateness.
5. Councillors and Members will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses that are:
 - bona fide expenses; and
 - have been reasonably incurred in the performance of the role of Councillor; and
 - are reasonably necessary for the Councillor and member of a Delegated Committee to perform this role.
6. The following types of expenses may be considered for reimbursement subject to the test set out in *Clause 4 Policy Statement (5)* above:
 - car parking fees;
 - private vehicle use;
 - public transport;
 - private phone and data charges;
 - training and conferences;
 - meals;
 - accommodation;
 - local municipal events and functions;
 - civic functions.
7. The cost of allowances and expense reimbursements paid, and support provided to Councillors and Members are managed as part of Council's annual budget process.
8. Council will not provide reimbursement of costs incurred for family members, personal guests or associates of Councillors or members accompanying Councillor and members when performing their role.

5. Resources for Councillors

1. The Act (section 42) provides that Council must make available to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and the Councillors the resources and facilities reasonably necessary to enable them to effectively perform their role.
2. Council Resources should not be used for personal use.
3. On request Councillors will be provided with standard stationery, equipment and consumables held or obtained generally for the Council Administration's requirements, including, but not necessarily limited to, paper, writing implements, printer cartridges, envelopes and the like.
4. Council letterhead will only be provided for correspondence that has been approved by the Council or for the Mayor to correspond as the Council's official spokesperson.
5. Councillors will be provided with personalised business cards and name badges.
6. Councillors will be provided with IT equipment, meeting the Council's IT standards, in order to facilitate Council-related communications between Councillors, the community and the Council. This includes equipment and services that support mobile telephones, internet access, multifunction devices and tablet devices.
7. A reasonable arrangement of equipment and services will be approved by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate and be registered within Council's records management system.
8. All Council supplied equipment/facilities remain the property of Buloke Shire Council and must be returned at the end of a Councillor's term of office. Sale of the above equipment to Councillors, will be at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer and subject to Council's Assets Disposal Policy.

6. Mayoral Vehicle

1. The Mayor will have access to a fully maintained vehicle (including servicing, fuel and insurance). The make and model of the vehicle will be in accordance with Council policy or at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer and in consultation with the Mayor.
2. The vehicle will be available for use by the Mayor in the discharge of their duties and for reasonable private use during the Mayoral term.
3. A Council supplied e-tag will be included with the Mayors vehicle.
4. The mayoral vehicle will be traded in accordance with the Council's normal vehicle replacement policy.

7. Administrative Support for Councillors

1. The Chief Executive Officer shall provide an appropriate level of administrative support for the Mayor and Councillors.
2. Administrative support may include, but not be limited to, responding to invitations, media releases, maintaining the Mayoral diary and constituent/community contact activities, booking meeting rooms, organising meetings and refreshments (if required).
3. Assistance is always available in respect to access and use of any equipment including IT systems via the Chief Executive Officers' Executive Assistant.
4. The level of administrative support shall be determined by the Chief Executive Officer within organisational constraints.

8. Carer and dependent-related expenses

1. Council will provide reimbursement of costs where the provision of childcare is reasonably required for a Councillor or Member to perform their role. This applies to the care of a dependent, while the Councillor or Member is undertaking their official duties; and may include expenses such as hourly fees and booking fees, if applicable.
2. Council will provide reimbursement of costs where the provision of carer services is reasonably required when a Councillor or Member who is a carer incurs reasonable expenses in the performance of their duties.
3. Payments for carer and childcare services will not be made to a person who resides with the Councillor or Member; has any financial or pecuniary interest with the Councillor or member; or has a relationship with the Councillor, Member or their partner. The exception to this is where a live-in (professional) helper, such as a nanny, is required to work extra time at extra expense because of the Councillor's or Member's duties.
4. Claims must be accompanied by a receipt from the care provider showing the date and time care was provided and detail the reason care was needed on each occasion.

9. Conferences, Seminars and Professional Development for Councillors and Members

1. Councillors and Members shall have the opportunity to have paid by Council, or reimbursed, the cost of attending conferences, seminars, training and professional development courses within the scope of this policy including:
 - registration fees;
 - accommodation costs and expenses; and
 - reasonable costs and expenses for meals and refreshments

2. Approval for professional development expenditure will be tested against the following criteria:
 - Must be directly relevant to the individual's role at Council;
 - Takes place and is able to be utilised during the individuals' term of engagement with Council;
 - Is in the interest of the community;
 - Meets the budget determined by Council;
 - Clearly offers and promotes public benefit as distinguished from private benefit.
3. Attendance at a conference, seminar or professional development course is authorised by either:
 - the Chief Executive Officer or delegate; or
 - a Council resolution.
4. The Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Mayor will determine approved training for Councillors. No resolution from Council will be required if the training is within Victoria or online and within the parameters of the adopted Annual Budget.
5. The Chief Executive Officer will determine approved training for Members. No resolution from Council will be required if the training is within Victoria or online and within the parameters of the adopted Annual Budget.
6. A Council resolution is required to approve interstate training, conferences or professional development.
7. Councillors who attend paid professional training and development must provide a report (verbal or otherwise) to Council at the next Council Meeting following the event or training, in accordance with Council's Governance Rules.
8. Members who attend paid professional training and development must provide a report (verbal or otherwise) to the Committee at the next Meeting following the event or training, in accordance with Council's Governance Rules.

10. Professional Membership and Subscriptions Councillors

1. Council is a member of various peak body groups which provide opportunity for professional development however individual membership by Councillors may be appropriate where no corporate membership exists.
2. Council will reimburse Councillors or directly pay approved membership and subscription fees to bodies and organisations whose activities are relevant to the role of a Councillor.
3. In seeking membership or subscription, a Councillor must identify how the membership or subscription meets one or more of the criteria set out in 7 (2). The Chief Executive Officer in

consultation with the Mayor will determine approval for Councillor memberships and subscriptions within the parameters of the Adopted Annual Budget.

11. Travel and Accommodation Expenses – Councillors and Members

1. In addition to eligible travel reimbursements for undertaking Council duties as set out in this Policy under *Scope 2 (2)*, Councillors and Members may claim a remote area travel allowance at the rate of \$45.90 per day (or as may be amended from time to time by a determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal) to attend Council meetings, or municipal or community functions where that Councillor resides more than 50 kilometres from the specified meeting centre, to a maximum of \$5,000 in any one year.
2. Councillors shall have access to a Council supplied Myki card to enable travel on trains, trams, buses and light rail journeys. Councillors with personal Myki cards may submit a claim for specific trips undertaken on Council business.
3. Access will be provided, wherever possible, to Council fleet vehicles for use when attending Council related activities.
4. Reimbursements relating to use of a private vehicle shall be paid at the rates set out in the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 as determined by the Commissioner for Taxation and reviewed annually.
5. A record of private vehicle use must be maintained by the Councillor or Member and shall contain details of Council business, date, destination and number of kilometres and any tolls.
6. Councillors and Members may incur tolls including those associated with the use of CityLink and EastLink while conducting Council business. Councillors and Members may seek reimbursement of costs associated with tolls, including the use of day passes or those transactions incurred as part of existing personal e-tag accounts.
7. Interstate travel and overseas travel will be the subject of a prior Council approval except:
 - where the matter is approved by the Chief Executive Officer after consultation with the Mayor; and
 - the matter is urgent and imperative to Council business; and
 - there is no opportunity to refer the matter to a Council meeting for resolution.
8. When travelling on Council business, Councillors and Members may require accommodation. Councillors and Members may stay in reasonable accommodation appropriate to the area travelled to and the nature of the visit.
9. Bookings for accommodation will be made through the Chief Executive Officer's Executive Assistant. Prior to making the booking, the authorisation of the Chief Executive Officer must be obtained.
10. All reasonable sustenance and incidental costs associated with approved travel will be met by the Council.

12. Claiming for Out-of-Pocket Expenses

1. Claims are to be submitted on the prescribed form to the Chief Executive Officers' Executive Assistant each month.
2. For a claim to be eligible for reimbursement;
 - it must be submitted within 60 days of expenses being incurred, or within two weeks after 30 June annually (whichever is the earlier); and
 - Evidence of the expense and payment must be provided in the form of:
 - a receipt for payment; or
 - for expenses of \$82.50 incl GST and over, a tax invoice.
3. Credit card receipts will not be accepted.
4. Claims will not be reimbursed for the purchase / payment of:
 - gratuities/tips;
 - alcohol;
 - entertainment;
 - any costs associated with accommodation that are outside room and breakfast (e.g., mini bar, laundry, tips and gratuities);
 - any other expenses not directly related to a Councillor or member of delegated committees' roles and responsibilities; or
 - expenses associated with interstate travel or interstate accommodation to attend meetings for Members who reside outside of Victoria.
5. Claims by a Councillor for a previous Council term must be finalised within one month of a Buloke Shire Council election or by-election. After this time, the entitlement of the Councillor to claim the expense ceases.
6. Reimbursements will be paid monthly by electronic funds transfer.

13. Insurance and Indemnity

14. Councillors and Members are covered by a range of insurance policies while discharging, in good faith, the duties of civic office including:
 - public liability;
 - Councillors' and Officers' liability;
 - personal accident (accompanying spouses, partners and carers are also covered);
 - corporate travel; and
 - workers' compensation, as section 46 of the LGA 2020 refers to Councillors as "deemed workers" pursuant to the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013.

15. Council will pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim made arising from Council business where any claim is accepted by the Council's insurers, whether defended or not.

16. Monitoring and reporting

1. Each quarter, a report of Councillor and member expenses and reimbursements will be reported:
 - by inclusion of the details on the Council website each quarter;
 - to the Audit and Risk Committee – in accordance with section 40(2) of the Act;
 - Council's Annual Report of Operations in accordance with the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020; and
 - in a public register of overseas and interstate travel (other than interstate travel by land for less than three days.)
2. Details of the reimbursements paid in the Councillor and Member reimbursements report must be categorised separately as:
 - travel expenses; and
 - car mileage expenses; and
 - childcare and carer expenses; and
 - information and communication technology expenses; and
 - conference and training expenses.

Human Rights

This policy has considered and complies with the Human Rights and Responsibilities contained in the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Gender Impact Statement

In accordance with the Gender Equality Act 2020, a Gender Impact Assessment was not required in relation to the subject matter of this Policy.

17. References

- Local Government Inspectorate report; Councillor expenses and allowances: equitable treatment and enhanced integrity.
- Councillor and Delegated Committee Support and Expenses Policy
- Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal under the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019.
- Local Government (Councillor Remuneration Review) Panel Report Recognition and Support.
- The Victorian Government's Policy Statement on Local Government Mayoral, Councillor Allowances and Resources – April 2008.

Related Policies:

- Code of Conduct
- Buloke Shire Council Fleet Management policy
- Buloke Shire Council Audit and Risk Committee Charter
- Election Period policy
- Assets Disposal Policy
- Procurement Policy

Related Legislation

- Local Government Act 2020 (LGA 2020)
- Local Government Amendment (Governance and Integrity) Act 2024 (LGAA 2024)
- Local Government (General) Regulations 2015

18. Review

This Policy will be reviewed within six months of every general election or earlier where an operational or legislative issue exists or by resolution of the Council.

19. Policy Amendments

Amendments to the Policy may be made by Chief Executive Officer to reflect legislative or organisational changes who will notify the Councillors of any such amendments.