

# Councillor Expenses Reimbursement and Administrative Support Policy



Collaboration



Communication



Integrity



Efficiency



Leadership

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## Table of Contents

1. Statement.....	3
2. Purpose and Principles.....	3
3. Strategic Plan Links .....	3
4. Regulatory Authority.....	3
5. Human Rights Commitment .....	3
6. Scope.....	4
7. Policy Exclusions .....	4
8. Legislative Responsibilities.....	4
9. Reimbursements.....	4
9.1 Council Business Expenses .....	4
9.2 Professional Development .....	4
9.3 Travel Expenses.....	5
9.3.1 Meals while undertaking domestic or international travel .....	5
9.3.2 Accommodation while undertaking domestic or international travel .....	6
10. Provision of Administrative Support and Resources .....	6
10.1 Transportation Allowance .....	6
10.2 Councillor Identification on Vehicle .....	7
10.3 Corporate Wear, Personal Protective Equipment and Name Badges.....	7
10.4 Communication and Technology Resources .....	7
10.5 Office Facilities.....	8
10.6.1 Office of the Mayor.....	8
10.6.2 Councillor Support .....	8
10.7 Personalised Stationery Items, Electronic Media and Other Items .....	8

10.8	Advertising and Sponsorship .....	9
11.	Assets Ownership.....	9
11.1	Facilities/Equipment.....	9
11.2	Official Gifts Received by a Councillor .....	9
12.	Asset Maintenance Costs.....	9
13.	Legal and Insurance Cover .....	10
14.	Related Documents.....	10
15.	Roles and Responsibilities.....	10
16.	Key Stakeholders.....	10
17.	Monitoring and Evaluation .....	10
18.	Definitions.....	10
19.	Policy Owner .....	11

## 1. Statement

The objectives of this policy are:

- a) to provide set guidelines for the reimbursement of legitimate business expenses incurred or to be incurred by a Councillor while carrying out their civic duties as elected representatives of their local communities;
- b) to provide set guidelines for the provision of administrative support to assist Councillors fulfil their professional role for the community at an appropriate standard.

## 2. Purpose and Principles

Councillors are elected representatives of the community who take on the role to set the strategic direction of the City. It is Council's responsibility to ensure that Councillors are not financially disadvantaged when carrying out the requirements of their role and are fairly and reasonably compensated. Council is also required to provide appropriate administrative support to allow the Councillors to fulfil the role and responsibilities of their position and to adequately represent the community.

The payment and/or reimbursement of expenses and provision of facilities for Councillors:

- a) is to be open and transparent, prudent, responsible, acceptable to the community and in accordance with statutory requirements;
- b) based on ensuring economy and efficiency; and
- c) subject to budget provisions.

Council's annual report must contain the particulars enacted by this policy and details of any expenses reimbursed under this policy.

## 3. Strategic Plan Links

This policy aligns with the following iFuture 2021-2026 Corporate Plan theme:

- A Trusted and Leading Organisation

## 4. Regulatory Authority

*Local Government Act 2009*

*Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*

Local Government Regulation 2012

## 5. Human Rights Commitment

Ipswich City Council (Council) has considered the human rights protected under the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* (the Act) when adopting and/or amending this policy. When applying this policy, Council will act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and give proper consideration to a human right relevant to the decision in accordance with the Act.

## 6. Scope

This policy sets out specific guidelines for the reimbursement of legitimate expenses incurred or to be incurred by a Councillor while carrying out Council business. It also deals with the provision of administrative support to enable Councillors to perform their duties with relative ease to discharge their duties and responsibilities as a Councillor.

This policy does not provide for salaries or any other form of remuneration to Councillors.

## 7. Policy Exclusions

- i. Spouses, partners and family members of Councillors are not entitled to reimbursement of expenses or to have access to facilities allocated to Councillors (This is not intended to exclude spousal attendance at events where it would be customary for the partner of the Mayor to attend or the Councillor deputising for the Mayor).
- ii. Council will not reimburse or provide funds, services or facilities solely or mainly for the purposes of advertising by, or the self-promotion of Councillors.
- iii. Councillors are not entitled to be reimbursed or provided with funds for the purchase of alcoholic beverages without the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer.
- iv. No reimbursement is to be provided for expenses incurred during travel to internal meetings, informal policy discussions, party or political meetings between Councillors.

## 8. Legislative Responsibilities

The *Local Government Regulation 2012*, s252 states that “a local government cannot resolve under section 275 that a meeting at which a proposed expenses reimbursement policy is discussed (including its adoption or amendment) be closed”.

To ensure public accountability and transparency, Ipswich City Council will give public notice of any proposal to change the adopted Councillor Expenses Reimbursement and Administrative Support Policy.

## 9. Reimbursements

In making a determination as to the validity of a claim for reimbursement, Council must consider public perceptions to ensure that the process meets the community’s expectations concerning accountability and transparency. Councillors incurring expenses should not gain personal funds as a result of their role servicing the community. The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for determining the appropriateness of payment of any request for reimbursement.

### 9.1 Council Business Expenses

Requests for reimbursement of expenses will only be considered where it can be proven, by the provision of appropriate documentation, that the expense is a genuine council-related business expense incurred whilst undertaking official duties. Payment will be on the grounds that the incurring of this expense could not be avoided.

### 9.2 Professional Development

Councillors are encouraged to undertake relevant professional development and council will organise and pay for all associated business costs (including registration, travel,

accommodation, meals, etc) where the activity level is reasonable and the activity is associated with the councillor's portfolio or organised by a government agency or an industry body eg LGAQ, ALGWA. Any funds expended at the event on personal pursuits will be payable by the Councillor from private funds. Refer to 9.3 Travel Expenses below for a list of examples of what is considered a personal expenditure.

### 9.3 Travel Expenses

Requests by Councillors to attend conferences, seminars or training are to be made in writing to the Chief Executive Officer outlining the details of the event and the benefits to the City of Ipswich. All requests for travel are to be made in sufficient time to gain the required approval as outlined below as well as allowing Council to take advantage of travel discounts and deals. Council's "Representation of the City at Official Functions Policy" outlines Councillors specific obligations concerning reporting requirements following their attendance at conferences/seminars.

Approval required:

- i. Local and Interstate Travel – Chief Executive Officer approval
- ii. International – A resolution of Council

Economy class air travel is the standard and Councillors are required to travel by the most direct route. Where flight time exceeds five (5) hours, the Mayor is eligible for Business Class travel with all other councillors eligible for Premium Economy class in this circumstance.

Any costs incurred which are deemed to be of a personal nature are required to be paid for by the Councillor from private funds. Below is a list of examples of what is considered to be a personal expenditure. This list of examples is not exhaustive:

- i. Tourism related costs
- ii. Social events
- iii. In-flight and in-house movies
- iv. Mini bar purchases
- v. Airline club fees
- vi. Alcohol not consumed as part of a meal
- vii. Payment of costs associated with the return of personal items which have been left behind

#### 9.3.1 Meals while undertaking domestic or international travel

Councillors will be reimbursed for the actual cost of meals, associated with official business, when:

- i. the councillor incurs the cost personally;
- ii. the meal was not provided within the registration costs of the approved activity/event/travel;
- iii. the councillor can produce original documents sufficient to verify the actual meal cost;
- iv. the expenses are reasonable;
- v. Reimbursement will be limited to a maximum of the Australian Taxation Office guidelines for meal allowance except for in exceptional circumstances (E.g. entertaining in an

unusually expensive location outside the city) where approved by the Chief Executive Officer and the Mayor.

#### 9.3.2 Accommodation while undertaking domestic or international travel

Where practical, Council will book accommodation offered as part of a conference package. In all other circumstances, Councillors are entitled to stay in accommodation to a standard of 4 stars or equivalent when undertaking professional development or other council business where it is not reasonable for the Councillor to return home for the night in accordance with the following conditions:

- i. Council will book and pay for all accommodation under this policy;
- ii. where a Councillor chooses to stay with friends or family, no accommodation expenses will be paid.

Councillors may be reimbursed for reasonable incidentals in accordance with this policy (up to a maximum of the Australian Taxation Office guidelines).

### 10. Provision of Administrative Support and Resources

Council is responsible for the provision of appropriate administrative support and resources to ensure that a Councillor is able to undertake their civic duties with relative ease and at a standard appropriate to fulfil their professional role for the community. The provision of facilities and resources is for the sole use of councillors in undertaking their duties and should be used responsibly and appropriately.

#### 10.1 Transportation Allowance

A transport allowance will be provided to Councillors for the costs of transport while undertaking the duties of a Councillor.

##### **Option A – Vehicle Allowance**

A vehicle allowance of \$19,500 p.a. (by advance weekly payment) will be automatically provided to cover the costs of procuring, maintaining and running (including but not limited to fuel, registration, insurance, repairs, depreciation, finance costs etc.) a vehicle.

For the Mayor, a vehicle allowance of \$22,500 p.a. (by advance weekly payment) will be provided in recognition of the additional civic duties and responsibilities that this role is required to undertake.

Councillors will have access to Council's preferred salary packaging provider.

##### **OR**

##### **Option B – Alternative Arrangement**

A maximum allowance of \$19,500p.a. (\$22,500p.a. for the Mayor) will be available to cover the cost of other transport options including taxis, ride share, public transport and active transport equipment.

The allowance will be automatically provided by advance weekly payment at 50% of the maximum rate (\$9,750p.a. or \$11,275 for the Mayor) except where actual costs incurred exceed the full advance amount. Where proof of expense incurred is provided above the full

advance payment amount, further reimbursements of expenses incurred can be claimed up to the maximum allowance amount.

Councillors are required to provide written advice to the CEO of the option chosen upon commencement of this policy or their term as a councillor and should seek their own independent financial advice regarding this allowance and any potential taxation implications.

## 10.2 Councillor Identification on Vehicle

Two (2) magnetic vehicle door decals, displaying the Councillor's name and the Ipswich City Council logo will be provided to each Councillor.

## 10.3 Corporate Wear, Personal Protective Equipment and Name Badges

Ipswich City Council has a non-compulsory uniform policy and Councillors will be considered eligible to participate in this corporate scheme under the same conditions that apply to general employees. No provision will be made for Council meeting the cost of any alterations to the garments if required. These costs will be met from the Councillor's private funds.

Councillors will be provided with all necessary safety equipment and are expected to observe the appropriate Workplace, Health and Safety requirements as outlined in Council's Workplace, Health and Safety Policy.

Councillors will be provided with a name badge displaying their name and the Ipswich City Council logo.

## 10.4 Communication and Technology Resources

- i. One (1) mobile telephone will be provided at the beginning of the Council term for the purposes of conducting council business. The model provided will be in accordance with the standard device made available for Council Managers. At the end of the term, the mobile device is to be returned to Council in fair condition. Limited personal usage is accepted in line with the provisions available to Council Officers. Any use deemed inappropriate will be required to be reimbursed.
- ii. One (1) laptop computer will be provided at the beginning of the Council terms for the purposes of conducting council business. The model provided will be in accordance with the standard device made available to Council Officers. At the end of the term, the laptop computer is to be returned to Council in fair condition.
- iii. One (1) iPad will be provided at the beginning of the Council terms for the purposes of conducting council business. The model provided will be in accordance with the standard device made available to Council Officers. At the end of the term, the iPad is to be returned to Council in fair condition.
- iv. A docking station, monitor and A4 printer will be provided to assist Councillors work from home. All items are to be returned to Council at the end of term. Items must be in a fair condition.
- v. A mobile internet connection for iPad and laptop will be provided.

## 10.5 Office Facilities

- i. A separate office for the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor will be provided in the Council Administration Building.
- ii. Shared office facilities, located within the Council Administration Building, will be provided for the other Councillors. Dedicated multipurpose office and meeting space will be provided at suitable Council Customer Service Centres and library facilities.
- iii. Access to dedicated Councillor meeting rooms will be provided within the Council Administration Building. In addition, access to dedicated multipurpose office and meeting space will be available at Council's Customer Service Centres and library facilities.

## 10.6 Administrative Support

Council is responsible for the provision of access to appropriate administrative support and resources to ensure that Councillors are able to undertake their civic duties and meet the responsibilities of their roles.

Administrative support will be provided in accordance with the Councillor Administrative Support Guidelines as set by the Chief Executive Officer. Requests made by Councillors for administrative support will be sought in accordance with the provisions of the guidelines.

All support staff will be employees of Ipswich City Council and will be employed under guidelines set for employment by Council's People and Culture Branch based on substantial previous experience to ensure that the best level of service is provided to Councillors. Recommendations received from Councillors which may be construed as a political appointment will not be considered.

Administrative support and resources are provided to Councillors for the sole purpose of the conduct of legitimate Council business, and should be used responsibly and appropriately.

### 10.6.1 Office of the Mayor

The Mayor will be provided with the following support staff:

- i. Chief of Staff\*
- ii. Senior Policy and Communications Officer
- iii. Personal Assistant to the Mayor
- iv. Policy and Communications Officer
- v. Diary and Correspondence Coordinator

\*Contract position, aligned with term of the Mayor

### 10.6.2 Councillor Support

Councillors will be provided with the following support staff:

- i. Senior Policy and Communications Officer
- ii. Four(4) Council Liaison Officers
- iii. Four(4) Executive Support and Research Officers

## 10.7 Personalised Stationery Items, Electronic Media and Other Items

The following items will be made available to Councillors:

- i. Personalised Electronic Letterhead for Council business using a standard design format;



- ii. Council email address
- iii. Councillor Facebook account
- iv. Business cards (English language only)
- v. Digital newspaper subscriptions relevant to the Ipswich Region
- vi. Digital Council Christmas Card for Council business use using a standard design format.

## 10.8 Advertising and Sponsorship

All advertising undertaken which solely or mainly contains the Councillor's image and name is deemed to be for electioneering purposes and the costs involved will not be paid by Council under any circumstances.

Where any Ipswich City Council events, programs or services be required to carry an acknowledgement of Councillor involvement, the standard wording will be:

Proudly supported by the Mayor and Councillors of Ipswich City Council

## 11. Assets Ownership

### 11.1 Facilities/Equipment

All facilities/equipment provided to Councillors to undertake their duties as a Councillor remain the property of Ipswich City Council and must be accounted for during Council's equipment audits. Councillors are expected to responsibly look after all publicly funded facilities and assets provided to them.

All facilities/equipment must be returned to Council either;

- a) Prior to the completion of the Councillor's term in accordance with Section 160 of the Local Government Act 2009 at a date and time agreed with by the Chief Executive Officer or;
- b) No later than close of business the day following the end of a Councillor's term in accordance with Section 160 of the Local Government Act 2009 or;
- c) Immediately if a Councillor is suspended under Section 182A of the Local Government Act 2009.

### 11.2 Official Gifts Received by a Councillor

As part of a Councillor's civic duties, there will be occasions where official gifts will be presented or exchanged. All such gifts are the property of Council, not the individual, and are to be handed to the Chief Executive Officer as soon as possible after the receipt of the item. Low value personal items can be retained following declaration and approval by both the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

The specific requirements, and supporting documents which need to be completed, are contained in Council's Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy. Councillors are to make themselves familiar with all the requirements of the Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy.

## 12. Asset Maintenance Costs

Council will cover all ongoing maintenance costs associated with Council owned equipment to ensure it is operating for optimal professional use (subject to proper usage and standards of care).

### 13. Legal and Insurance Cover

Council will pay the excess (deductible) on all insurance claims, made in accordance with any policy of insurance.

In relation to Inappropriate Conduct complaints, Council may recover from the Subject Councillor any excess (deductible) which has been paid by Council, where:

- i. A claim was made by the Subject Councillor, under any of Council's policies of insurance for legal representation, in relation to an Inappropriate Conduct complaint; and
- ii. A finding is made at any Council meeting, by Council, that the Subject Councillor has committed Inappropriate Conduct.

Any costs incurred by Council, as a result of indemnity being granted (under a Council policy of insurance) to a Subject Councillor in inappropriate conduct complaints, may be recovered from the Subject Councillor, as part of any order sought by Council in accordance with s150AH (1) (Vii) of the *Local Government Act 2009*.

### 14. Related Documents

Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy  
 Councillor – Staff interaction Policy  
 Representation of the City at Official Functions Policy  
 Councillor Handbook  
 Councillor Administrative Support Guidelines  
 Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland

### 15. Roles and Responsibilities

This policy applies to all Councillors and any Council employee who either performs a support role for the Councillors or processes any of the requirements of this policy.

### 16. Key Stakeholders

The following will be consulted during the review process:

Mayor and Councillors  
 Chief Executive Officer  
 Executive Leadership Team  
 Manager, Executive Services (Coordination and Performance Department)

### 17. Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy will be reflected in the Councillors of the City of Ipswich ability to fulfil their professional role as elected representatives to the high standards of good governance and transparency expected by the community, without being financially disadvantaged as a result.

Quarterly reports of Councillor Expenses and Reimbursements will be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee and published in the Annual Report at the end of the financial year.

### 18. Definitions

Elected Representatives	Mayor and Councillors
Councillors	Mayor and Councillors

Domestic Travel	Travel undertaken in an official capacity outside of the boundaries of the City of Ipswich
Inappropriate Conduct	Conduct as defined under s150K of the Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)
Political Appointment	A person who has worked closely with a candidate on their campaign for election or who has a close affiliation through membership to the same political party which would be considered to align the person to the Councillor rather than to Council.
Subject Councillor	A Councillor who is subject to any allegations of inappropriate conduct

## 19. Policy Owner

The Executive Services Branch (Office of the CEO) is the policy owner and Manager, Executive Services is responsible for authoring and reviewing this policy.