

Council Expenses, Support and Accountability Policy

Policy Endorsement:	Endorsement required by Council		
Policy Superseded by this Policy:	Councillor Reimbursement, Support and Accountability Policy		
Directorate:	Corporate Services		
Responsible Officer:	Manager Governance		
Policy Type:	Legislative and Discretionary <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>		
File Number:	A6712267	Version No:	007
1 st Adopted by Council	29 June 2009 Minute No. 194	Last Adopted by Council:	24 August 2020 Minute No. 1561
Review Period:	Two years	Next Review:	July 2022

This page has been intentionally left blank.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	PURPOSE	4
2	BACKGROUND	5
3	SCOPE	6
4	DEFINITIONS	7
5	REFERENCES	8
6	COUNCIL POLICY	9
6.1	COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES	9
6.2	TRAVEL	9
6.3	CHILD AND FAMILY CARE	11
6.4	DINNERS AND OTHER NON-COUNCIL FUNCTIONS	12
6.5	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	12
6.6	CIVIC SUPPORT, EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES	14
6.7	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	16
6.8	OTHER SUPPORT	17
6.9	COMMUNITY FORUMS AND WARD MEETINGS	18
6.10	ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AND FACILITIES FOR THE MAYOR	18
6.11	REPORTING AND DISCLOSURE	19
6.12	LOST OR STOLEN PROPERTY	19
6.13	ACQUISITION AND RETURN OF EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES	20
6.14	COUNCILLORS REIMBURSING COUNCIL	20
6.15	CARETAKER PERIOD	20
6.16	EXCLUSIONS	20
6.17	PROCEDURE FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF GENERAL EXPENSES	21
6.18	COUNCILLOR MENTOR AND LEGAL SUPPORT	21
6.19	COUNCILLOR DISPUTE MEDIATORS	23
7	RESPONSIBILITIES	24
	APPENDICES	25

1 PURPOSE

This policy supports Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees to perform their roles, as defined under the *Local Government Act 2020*, by ensuring that expenses, reasonably incurred in the performance of those roles, are reimbursed.

This policy also outlines the provisions of the *Local Government Act 2020* in respect to Councillor allowances, expenses and support. It confirms the facilities and support that may be provided to Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees to assist them in performing or discharging their official functions and duties.

This policy is guided by the following principles:

- Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees should be supported in performing and discharging their council functions and duties without disadvantage;
- any reimbursements claimed by Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees must be for expenses actually and necessarily incurred in performing and discharging their official council functions and duties; and
- the payment of Councillor allowances and the reimbursement of expenses must be accountable and transparent to the community.

2 BACKGROUND

There is an emphasis placed on the provision of adequate support and training to assist Councillors in the performance of their official council functions and duties.

Under the *Local Government Act 2020* (LGA), sections 40, 41 and 42 outline how Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees are entitled to resources, support, reimbursement of expenses and child-care costs which are reasonably necessary to enable them to effectively perform their roles.

Section 40 of the *Local Government Act 2020* states:

1. A Council must reimburse a Councillor or a Member of a Delegated Committee for out-of-pocket expenses which the Council is satisfied:
 - (a) are bona fide expenses; and
 - (b) have been reasonably incurred in the performance of the role of Councillor or Member of a Delegated Committee; and
 - (c) are reasonably necessary for the Councillor or Member of a Delegated Committee to perform that role.
2. A Council must provide details of all reimbursements under this section to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Section 41 of the *Local Government Act 2020* states:

1. A Council must adopt and maintain an expenses policy in relation to the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees.
2. A policy adopted by a Council under this section must-
 - (a) specify procedures to be followed in applying for reimbursement and in reimbursing expenses; and
 - (b) comply with any requirements prescribed by the regulations in relation to the reimbursement of expenses; and
 - (c) provide for the reimbursement of child-care costs where the provision of child-care is reasonably required for a Councillor or Member of a Delegated Committee to perform their role; and
 - (d) have particular regard to expenses incurred by a Councillor who is a carer in a care relationship within the meaning of section 4 of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012*.
3. A Council must adopt the first expenses policy under this section on or before 1 September 2020.
4. Until a Council adopts a policy under this section, the policy adopted by the Council under section 75B of the *Local Government Act 1989* applies as if it had been adopted under this Act.

Section 42 of the *Local Government Act 2020* states:

1. A Council must make available to the Mayor and the Councillors the resources and facilities reasonably necessary to enable them to effectively perform their role.
2. Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), a Council must-
 - (a) consider the support that may be required by a Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Councillor because of a disability; and
 - (b) have particular regard to the support that may be required by a Councillor who is a carer in a care relationship within the meaning of section 4 of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012*.

3 SCOPE

This policy applies to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Councillors and Delegated Committee Members and is made in accordance with to Section 41 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

This policy indicates that payment of expenses and reimbursements to Councillors and Delegated Committee Members shall be limited to:

- traveling expenses including use of private vehicle for Council related activities;
- family care and child-care costs where appropriate; and
- costs paid by and for Councillors and Delegated Committee Members pertaining to the functions of their respective roles.

4 DEFINITIONS

Delegated Committee	is a Delegated Committee established by Council under section 63 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> , a Joint Delegated Committee established by two or more Councils under section 64 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> or a Committee, other than an Asset Committee, exercising any power of a Council under the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> or any other Act delegated to the Committee under the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> or any other Act.
Family Care	includes care provided by a carer in a care relationship within the meaning of section 4 of the <i>Carer's Recognition Act 2012</i> .

5 REFERENCES

- Originally Adopted at the Ordinary Council Meeting on 29 June 2009 – re-adopted with changes 28 June 2010 ,14 May 2012, 28 October 2013, 10 August 2015 and 8 July 2019
- *Carer's Recognition Act 2012*
- Department of Planning and Community Development – *Mayor and Councillors Entitlements Information Guide*, November 2008
- Greater Dandenong City Council Catering and Civic Support Policy
- Greater Dandenong City Council Code of Conduct – Councillors
- Greater Dandenong City Council Fraud Prevention and Control Policy
- Greater Dandenong City Council Guidelines for Community Forums
- Greater Dandenong City Council Guidelines for Ward Meetings
- City of Greater Dandenong Public Transparency Policy
- Greater Dandenong City Council Travel Policy
- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019*
- *Victorian Local Authorities Award 2015*

Related Documents

- Mobile Phone Account Memo (Internal)
- Appendix 1 - General Expenses Claim Form
- Appendix 2 - Travel Claim Form
- Appendix 3 - Child/Family Care Claim Form
- Appendix 4 – Councillor Annual Statement Sign Off

6 COUNCIL POLICY

Council's facilities and support services, as detailed in this policy, are available to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Councillors and Delegated Committee Members while performing or discharging their official duties. These facilities and services are not available for use by members of a Councillor's family unless the use is directly related to the Councillor's or Member's official roles.

Recognising the special role of the Office of Mayor, this policy also provides for expenses, facilities and support services specific to that office.

Councillors are personally responsible for any expenditure that does not fall within the criteria set out in this policy. The Manager Governance is available to assist Councillors and ensure they understand their entitlements and responsibilities.

6.1 COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES

Section 39 of the *Local Government Act 2020* provides for Councillor and Mayoral (including the Deputy Mayor position) allowances to be set by determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal. Current arrangements made under the *Local Government Act 1989* will remain in place until the first determination made by the Tribunal comes into effect.

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillor allowances are noted in November each year at the Council Meeting for the Election of the Mayor.

Payment Procedure

Payments for Councillor Allowances will be made through Council's electronic payroll system, either on a fortnightly or monthly basis at the agreement of individual Councillors. Deductions to the Australian Taxation Office will only occur following a written request to the Payroll Office from individual Councillors.

Payment in Advance

Where a Councillor is required to undertake interstate or overseas travel as part of their civic duties, that Councillor may request payment of their allowance in advance in anticipation of expenses that will be incurred during the course of the travel.

Corporate Credit Card

Each Councillor will be issued with a corporate credit card that can be used in conjunction with the performance of their role at civic functions, conferences and events when other forms of payment are not available. A receipt must be signed (by the Councillor) and provided to the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant for every corporate credit card purchase. If the receipt is lost or not available, then a *Claim for General Expenses Form* must be completed and signed by the Councillor (see Appendix 1). The Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant will allocate an account code to each transaction and attach the receipt in Council's transaction platform and the Chief Executive Officer will approve or refuse each transaction made under this clause.

6.2 TRAVEL

Where travel costs are borne by Council, it is expected that, where practicable, all travel be by the most direct route, and vehicles are shared where more than one Councillor attends the same function.

Use of Private Vehicles

Reimbursement of expenses is available for Councillors and Delegated Committee Members who use their own private vehicle and shall be in accordance with the Victorian Local Authorities Award 2015 (or the current Enterprise Bargaining Agreement if applicable to Members of Delegated Committees who are staff) as varied from time to time and as set out below. (For further details contact Organisational Development).

The reimbursement is payable for the use of a private vehicle for:

- attendance at Meetings of Council, Council Advisory, Reference Group or Delegated Committee Meetings, Ordinary, Committee or Sub-Committee Meetings of State, regional or local organisations where the Councillor has been elected as a Council's representative or liaison by Council resolution or the person has been nominated as a Delegated Committee Member;
- attendance at conferences and seminars where such attendance by a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member has been approved by Council, the Mayor, the Chief Executive Officer or such other authorised Committee designated by Council;
- attendance at inspections, meetings and functions within or outside the City relative to the duties of office as a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member;
- to and from the airport, rail or bus station, or other point from where travel to conferences and seminars commences; and
- attendance at official Council functions.

Where a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member uses his/her car to attend an approved interstate meeting, conference, seminar or engagement the total claim for use of a vehicle shall not exceed the cost of economy class air travel and transfers to the relevant destination.

Reimbursement Procedure for Private Vehicle Usage

- All claims for reimbursement of travel shall be made on a monthly basis (within 30 days from end of month).
- Details of kilometers and purpose of travel must be recorded by the relevant Councillor or Delegated Committee Member.
- Councillors and Delegated Committee Members must complete a *Claim for Travelling Expenses Form* (Appendix 2) and submit it to the Manager, Governance for authorisation.
- Payments will be made through Council's Electronic Payroll System or such other electronic payment method as required.
- It is the responsibility of Councillors or Delegated Committee Members to ensure that claims for reimbursement occur within the monthly time frame. Claims not submitted in a timely manner may be refused reimbursement at the discretion of the Mayor and/or Chief Executive Officer.
- All payments will be paid in arrears.

Cabcharge

Each Councillor or Delegated Committee Member may request a "Cab-Charge" voucher from Council for the payment of taxi service for events and activities as listed above. Cabcharge vouchers are available from the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant.

Council Vehicles

Where practicable, and by prior arrangement through the Chief Executive Officer, a Council vehicle may be made available to Councillors for travel outside the City where use of private vehicles or other means of transport is not available or convenient. The use of a Council vehicle is limited to 24 hours continuous use and the vehicle must be driven by the Councillor at all times.

Public Transport

Councillors or Delegated Committee Members may use public transport to travel to Council business related events, or to assist them to carry out their duties.

Reimbursement Procedure for Public Transport

For reimbursement of travel expenses incurred from use of public transport, Councillors or Delegated Committee Members must complete a *Claim for General Expenses Form* (Appendix 1) and submit it the Manager Governance for authorisation and processing. All payments will be made in arrears.

6.3 CHILD AND FAMILY CARE

Council will reimburse child and family care expenses when the care is necessary to allow the Councillor or Delegated Committee Members to attend:

- Meetings of Council, Council Advisory, Reference Group or Delegated Committee Meetings, Ordinary, Committee or Sub-Committee Meetings of State, regional or local organisations where the Councillor has been elected as a Council's representative or liaison by Council resolution or the person has been nominated as a Delegated Committee Member;
- inspections, meetings, Councillor Briefing Sessions, civic ceremonies and functions, conferences and training within or outside the City relative to the duties of office as a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member; and
- a meeting or function or other official role when deputising for, or representing, the Mayor.

Child-care and family carer expenses may consist of hourly fees, agency booking fees and/or reasonable traveling expenses. Fees are payable per hour or part of an hour subject to any minimum period, which is part of the provider's usual terms.

A receipt from the care provider (including their ABN) is required for the direct reimbursement of any expenses claimed.

Reimbursement will not be made to a person who:

- has a familial or similar relationship with the Councillor or Delegated Committee Member; or
- resides either permanently or temporarily with the Councillor or Delegated Committee Member; or
- has any financial or pecuniary interest with the Councillor or Delegated Committee Member, or
- has a relationship with the Councillor or Delegated Committee Member or their partner such that it would be inappropriate for Council to reimburse monies paid to the care provider.

Reimbursement Procedure for Child or Family Care

- All claims for reimbursement of child or family care shall be made on a monthly basis (within 30 days from end of month).
- Councillors or Delegated Committee Members must complete a *Claim for Child/Family Care Form* (Appendix 3) and submit it to the Manager Governance for authorisation and processing.
- It is the responsibility of Councillors or Delegated Committee Members to ensure that claims for reimbursement occur within the monthly time frame.
- Payments will be made through the Finance Unit.
- All payments will be made in arrears.

Variation to care – extenuating circumstances

A Councillor or Delegated Committee Member may make a written request to the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer, on the basis of extenuating circumstances (including unique familial care knowledge and experience) that the basis of any care be varied and thereby reimbursed.

Appeals

A Councillor or Delegated Committee Member is entitled to make a complaint or appeal in writing to the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer against any decision regarding a reimbursement.

6.4 DINNERS AND OTHER NON-COUNCIL FUNCTIONS

Attendance at Dinners and Other Non-Council Functions

Council will meet the cost of a Councillor's or Delegated Committee Member's attendance at non-Council functions to which they have been invited where they are attending in their role as Councillors or Delegated Committee Members and where topics pertain to matters concerning local government or where local government representation is relevant to Council.

If an invitation to a relevant non-Council function was not received and a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member wishes to attend, it will be at the Mayor's discretion and Mayoral approval will be sought via the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant.

Invitations outside of these parameters must be paid for by individual Councillors or Delegated Committee Members attending.

Council will meet the cost of the Mayor/Councillor's partner attending a non-Council function or dinner. Costs associated with either a Councillor's or Delegated Committee Member's partner attending functions will be monitored by the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant and will be reported on the Mayoral and Councillors Expenses Spreadsheet (see Expenses Reporting).

Local Fundraising and Charitable Events

Council will cover the cost of ticketed events for Councillors or Members of Delegated Committees invited by written invitation to attend Local Fundraiser/Charitable Events, where the event benefits the City of Greater Dandenong.

The Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Mayor, will determine appropriate events for Council to purchase 'a table', if invited to do so. A table will only be purchased if 50% or more Councillors are able to attend. Councillor attendance must have a demonstrated benefit to the local community.

All ticketed events must be paid for in advance of the event. Payment can be arranged by contacting the Manager Governance.

6.5 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

In January 2020, Council made a declaration of a climate and ecological emergency and committed the Greater Dandenong City Council to emergency action on climate change. Council is committed to reducing its carbon emissions and the impacts of the exposure of a climate change crisis. Councillors are encouraged to avoid the generation and use of hard copy paper-based products whenever possible.

To this end, Councillors will be provided with a range of hardware and software products and associated infrastructure to provide them with the information technology tools necessary to perform their role without the need to use hard-copy paper-based products. With the exception of a mobile phone and email, these products are all optional and vary according to the individual needs of each Councillor. They include, but are not necessarily limited to:

Mobile Phone

Council will provide a mobile telephone, which is compatible with Council's network, to all Councillors to facilitate communication for official purposes. Council will pay all connection, service and rental charges and will provide a maximum call charge (usage) allowance of \$100 per month for those on the Optus Corporate Plan and \$135 per month for those on the Telstra Corporate Plan.

The maximum limit per month provided within this policy is a reasonable usage allowance that provides Councillors with the ability to fulfill their official civic duties and for an incidental level of personal use.

Any call charges that exceed this usage limit will be deemed as beyond reasonable use and the amount will need to be reimbursed to Council, unless supporting evidentiary documentation is provided that verifies the amount as being relevant to a Councillor performing their official functions and civic duties. Usage over the limit and not reimbursed to Council will be reported on the Mayoral and Councillors Expenses Spreadsheet (see Expenses Reporting).

Where unique circumstance exist that prevent a Councillor from performing their official civic duties within the \$100 or \$135 per month usage limit, the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer can authorise an increase to this limit. Authorisation of an increase to the usage limit will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Councillors attending approved overseas travel may have their coverage upgraded to include international roaming for the duration of the trip in accordance with Council's Travel Policy. In this instance, reasonable usage will be determined by the Chief Executive Officer based on the destination and duration of the trip.

Payment Procedures for Private Use of Mobile Phones

If the usage level exceeds \$100 (Optus) or \$135 (Telstra), the Councillor involved will be provided with a copy of their monthly mobile phone account attached to a *Mobile Phone Account Memo*. Any personal calls considered beyond reasonable usage must be highlighted and reimbursed to Council within 30 days of receipt of the memo.

Any discrepancies found on mobile phone accounts must be brought to the attention of the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant immediately. A Councillor can request an itemised bill at any time, if they wish to reimburse any personal calls regardless of the above.

See also section 5.14 Councillors Reimbursing Council.

Computer (optional)

Councillors will be provided with a lap top computer and docking station with the current Greater Dandenong City Council software configuration to allow access to Council's network and the Internet. Support services to maintain functionality and access to the Greater Dandenong City Council network can be accessed in accordance with the following hours of operation:

Business Hours: Phone ITSERVICEDESK on 9239 5102
After Hours: 6.00pm – 10pm Monday to Friday
 9.00am – 5.00pm Saturday & Sunday
 Phone On-Call IT Support on 8571 5137

An IT Support officer will call and discuss any issues and the various options that can remedy the situation. This may include an on-site visit if the problem is critical and prevents a Councillor from carrying out Council duties. Council will provide the necessary maintenance and consumable products required for the operation of the equipment, upon request to the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant.

Email and Internet Usage

Use of email and internet is to be in accordance with the Greater Dandenong City Council Code of Conduct – Councillors and as outlined in this document.

The email address supplied to Councillors is owned by the Greater Dandenong City Council and will cease to exist at the end of a Councillor's term in office.

Facsimile/Telephone Equipment (optional)

Council will provide at either the residence of a Councillor or other designated location a multifunctional device for landline (optional), printing, scanning, copying as well as sending and receiving facsimiles (optional) to facilitate the transmission of information relating to the Councillor's duties of office. Council will provide the necessary maintenance and consumable products required for the operation of this device upon request to the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant.

Council will arrange for the installation of the necessary telephone lines and associated equipment and meet all connection costs including, where necessary, power supply. The equipment will remain at all times at the residence of the Councillor, or such other designated location, during their term of office.

Ipad (optional)

Council will provide an Ipad with Wifi and 4G access to all Councillors to facilitate communication and document management for official Council purposes. Council is currently not charged for connection or usage fees for this resource however, if individual Councillor usage exceeds (1) terabyte per month (equivalent to one million megabytes per month), then usage charges will apply. Councillors will be alerted if their usage looks like exceeding this amount in any month.

Other Communication Sources

Where a councillor has chosen not to take up the offer of a Council provided mobile telephone they may choose to use a portion of the mobile phone allowance on other associated communication media ie. This could include home delivery of the Age and/or Herald Sun but must be approved by the Director Corporate Services.

Communication and Information Technology Expenses Reporting

All expenses relating to communication and information will be reported on the Mayoral and Councillor Expenses Spreadsheet on Council's website. This spreadsheet will detail all costs associated with mobile telephone usage over the designated amount per month. Generic costs applicable to all Councillors for the provision of services such as installation, NBN and line rental will not be listed on this spreadsheet. The spreadsheet will be updated on a monthly basis.

See also section 5.11 Reporting and Disclosure

6.6 CIVIC SUPPORT, EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

Council will provide the following support, equipment and facilities to assist Councillors in carrying out their duties of office. All equipment provided shall remain the property of Council and shall be returned within two weeks of retirement or termination of office

Stationery and Office Equipment

Each Councillor will be provided with a supply of the following stationery and office equipment that can be replenished/obtained upon request by contacting the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant.

- A4 'Councillor Office' letterhead and plain A4 paper (Note: Councillors are encouraged to avoid the use and generation of hard copy paper products whenever possible)
- corporate business cards
- name badge
- filing cabinet
- shredder (small model)
- diary, planner or equivalent
- minor stationery items.

In addition, Councillors are entitled to claim reimbursement for the acquisition of a desk/chair/bookcase to the combined value of \$1000 in any one Council term. Councillors should note that these items remain the property of Council during the term(s) of the Councillor. Upon retiring or leaving Council, Councillors may opt to purchase this equipment back from Council.

Reimbursement/Payment of Stationery and Office Equipment

For reimbursement of expenses incurred from the direct purchase of equipment, Councillors must;

- complete the 'Claim for General Expenses' form (Appendix 1); or
- contact the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant to arrange a purchase order.

See also section 5.17 Procedures for Councillor Reimbursement of Expenses.

Administrative Assistance

Administrative assistance will be made available to Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees for work directly related to the performance of their respective roles. All such work will be coordinated through the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant.

Mail

Each Councillor or Delegated Committee Member may leave standard mail items of Council designated business for postage through the external mail system. Such mail shall be contained within Council envelopes and coordinated through the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant.

Mail posted directly via Australia Post will require stamps to be affixed and will be at the Councillor's or Delegated Committee Member's own cost. Councillors and Delegated Committee Members will not be reimbursed for this expenditure.

Courier Service

Council will provide a courier service for delivery of the Council agenda and other papers to Councillors on a weekly basis or as required. Items delivered will be contained within a satchel and Councillors will be expected to return these satchels at the next Councillor Briefing Session.

Council will, upon request, provide specific mailboxes at a Councillor's place of residence, or other location nominated by Councillors, for secure delivery of such documents.

Councillor's Work Area

Councillors will be provided with a furnished office on a shared basis at Council's Civic Centre in Dandenong. This will incorporate access to Council's IT network, the internet, printer, furniture, photocopier and telephone and facilitate the following activities:

- letter writing;
- interviewing;
- small meetings;
- reading and research; and
- other business activities relating directly to civic office.

At times, Members of Delegated Committees may also use the Councillor area at the Civic Centre in Dandenong which will be coordinated through the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant.

Meeting Rooms

Councillors can book a meeting room at Council's offices to facilitate meetings by contacting the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant.

After business hours access to general office areas other than designated Councillors work areas is only permitted subject to the approval of the responsible Director or Chief Executive Officer.

Building Access and Car Parking

Each Councillor and Delegated Committee Member will receive a swipe card allowing appropriate access to the councillor offices and chambers at the Civic Centre.

Limited parking spaces are available for Councillors at the Civic Centre offices (car identification permits are required). Permits will be made available by contacting the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant.

Website

Each Councillor will be provided with a page on Council's web site – containing a Councillor photo, Councillor profile, contact details, and ward map.

Meals/Refreshments

Where Council or Committee meetings are held at times which extend through normal mealtimes, Council will provide suitable meals served on the premises in accordance with Council's Catering and Civic Support Policy

Tea/Coffee facilities and refreshments are available to Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees undertaking their duties at Council offices.

Memberships

Council will arrange and pay for collective Council/Councillor membership to peak Australian Local Government industry bodies as follows:

- Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
- Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA)
- Australian Local Government Association (ALGA)
- Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA)

Publications

Councillors will be entitled to subscribe to relevant publications subject to the approval of the Manager Governance.

Councillors will also be supplied, upon request, with appropriate links to the *Local Government Act 2020*, *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and any other legislation as requested.

6.7 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Training and Education

Wherever possible Councillors will be provided with training in main competency areas such as, but not limited to:

- Federal, state and local government relationships;
- Councillors' statutory roles;
- Financial management;
- Councillor and staff relationships;
- Community representation;
- Meetings procedures for Council and committees;
- Councillors' performance;
- Media training; and
- Ongoing projects and major issues within the City and surrounding municipalities.

Upon request, Councillors will be provided with any necessary training/education/resources that will assist them in the use of equipment/software supplied by Council or the acquisition of information necessary in undertaking their duties as a Councillor.

Seminars and Conferences

Council will provide the following, or reimbursement for the following, to Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees attending conferences or seminars which have been authorised by Council, other Committees designated by Council, the Mayor or the CEO as set out in Council's Travel Policy:

- Registration fees for attendance at conferences and seminars;
- Conference dinner/meals within reasonable limits for the duration of the conferences/seminar;
- Accommodation where a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member requires an overnight stay for the purpose of attendance;
- Transportation to, from and during conferences and seminars. Councillors or Delegated Committee Members may choose the mode of transport which is most appropriate to their particular circumstances and in accordance with Council's Travel Policy;
- Incidentals that may occur during the duration of the conference/seminar; and
- Carparking fees such as airport or hotel parking.

Note that under section 6.1 of this policy, corporate credit cards are issued to Councillors for the purposes of paying for incidental costs as per the above-listed items that may occur during the attendance and duration of a conference/seminar which has been authorised by Council, the Mayor or the CEO as set out in Council's Travel Policy.

6.8 OTHER SUPPORT

Expenses and Facilities for Councillors or Members of a Delegated Committee with Disabilities

For any Councillor or a Delegated Committee Member with a disability or particular needs, Council will provide reasonable additional facilities and associated expenses in order to allow that Councillor or Delegated Committee Member to perform their respective roles.

Diversity and Equity

The City of Greater Dandenong is home to many different cultures and faiths. Council acknowledges and actively cultivates and promotes its cultural diversity. Council also promotes equality and equity between men, women and those identifying as LGBTIQ+. Councillors or Members of Delegated Committees with specific cultural or personal needs will be accommodated to the best of Council's ability and understanding under this policy.

Insurance

Section 43 of the *Local Government Act 2020* of the states that Council must take out insurance cover for Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees.

Councillors and Delegated Committee Members are covered by the following Council Insurance Policies on a 24-hour basis while performing their respective roles including attendance at meetings of external bodies as Council's representatives.

- Personal accident insurance;
- Public liability insurance;
- Professional indemnity insurance; and
- Councillors, Delegated Committee Members and Council officers liability insurance.

Council will pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim made against a Councillor or Member of a Delegated Committee arising from Council business where any claim is accepted by Council's Insurers, or admitted under Council's self-insurance program, whether defended or not.

The Mayor's partner will be covered under these insurance policies whilst carrying out the duties associated with the civic and ceremonial role of the Mayor.

Further details as to the extent of cover and conditions in respect to any of the above cover can be obtained from Council's Team Leader, Risk Management and OHS.

6.9 COMMUNITY FORUMS AND WARD MEETINGS

Council may hold community forums or ward meetings in different locations throughout the year if an issue of significant interest to a particular suburb would benefit from a discussion time with Council in the local area (determined by Councillors). The Guidelines for Community Forums and Ward Meetings are available on Council's website.

The Mayor of the Day will determine how and when they can make themselves available to meet with members of the community. As a general guide, appointments are best arranged through the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant. The availability of the Mayor will be dependent on their respective commitments.

6.10 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AND FACILITIES FOR THE MAYOR

The Office of the Mayor operates to facilitate and enable the Mayor to represent the views and directions of Council in performing various roles and duties best carried out by the Mayor.

Mayoral Vehicle (optional)

Council will provide, at its expense, a fully registered, insured, maintained and fueled vehicle for use by the Mayor for official duties and for private use. Council will also meet the cost of cleaning the Mayoral vehicle.

Unless approved by Council, the mayoral vehicle shall be driven by the Mayor or by the Mayor's spouse/family member, a Councillor or a council officer on the Mayor's behalf while the Mayor is in the vehicle.

Council will also provide an allotted parking space for the Mayor's vehicle at its municipal offices.

Office Facilities

Council will provide the following Mayoral office facilities:

- private office at Council's Civic Centre in Dandenong suitably equipped with computer and printer; with the current Greater Dandenong City Council configuration to allow access to Council's network and the Internet, furniture and shelving, including desk and meeting table; digital telephone connected to the Council's phone system with direct in-dial and direct line facilities; and
- Executive Assistance and Administrative Support during normal office hours and at other times by arrangement with the Manager Governance.

Other Facilities

The Mayor may be provided with other necessary assistance to enable them to carry out the duties of civic office. Such assistance may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a corporate credit card made available to the Mayor for use while carrying out the duties and functions of the office;
- for the purpose of civic functions/ceremonies, ceremonial clothing including Mayoral robes and chains of office.

6.11 REPORTING AND DISCLOSURE

Under the provisions of sections 57 and 58 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council must maintain a Public Transparency Policy and specifically follow the public transparency principles.

In the interests of transparency and accountability, the following documents and registers relating to Councillors duties will be made available for public inspection:

- Councillor Expenses, Support and Accountability Policy;
- Details of current allowances fixed for the Mayor and Councillors; and
- Council's Travel Register.

In accordance with the above, the following details of Councillor expenditure will be published on Council's website as soon as practicable after the information is available:

- Mobile phone usage charges in excess of \$100 (Optus plan) and \$135 (Telstra plan) per month;
- Training and conferences attended;
- Travel expenses;
- Accommodation and meals;
- Child and family care reimbursements;
- Car mileage claimed;
- Functions and events attended; and
- Any other associated costs reimbursed.

Councillors will be required to sign off on an annual statement, confirming that the individual Councillor expenses as published on Council's website during the corresponding financial year are true and correct (Appendix 4) within 90 days following the end of each financial year.

Further, Section 40 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that all details of reimbursements made to Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees be reported to the Audit and Risk Committee. A report will be made to this Committee biannually.

Accounting Standard AAS22 requires the disclosure of the names and remuneration paid to the directors of an entity. Councillors are required to adhere to this Standard which also requires the disclosure of certain types of transactions. Broadly, these transactions are those that could be perceived as affecting the independence of the elected member. The disclosure required is a listing of transactions and any other beneficial interests between Council and individual Councillors and their related businesses and parties. It is each Councillor's responsibility to ensure that details of such related party transactions are supplied to the Director Corporate Services for reporting purposes.

Councillors should also note that details of any expenses which are reimbursed can be further subject to public scrutiny via any Freedom of Information requests received by Council.

6.12 LOST OR STOLEN PROPERTY

Lost items will be replaced by Council upon receipt of a Statutory Declaration from the Councillor by the Manager Governance. Where items are lost or destroyed more than once per year, Councillors may be required to personally fund the replacement. All decisions to replace lost or stolen property will be made at the discretion of the Manager Governance.

Stolen items should also be reported to the police and the Manager Governance provided with a copy of the Victorian Police incident report. Replacement of the stolen council property will be made following receipt of a copy of the official police report.

Faulty items will be replaced as soon as practicable.

6.13 ACQUISITION AND RETURN OF EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

The equipment remains the property of Council and is recorded on Council's Assets Register.

Upon completion of a Councillor term in office, extended leave of absence or at the cessation of civic duties, all equipment and facilities must be returned to Council within two weeks. Arrangements are to be made through the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant.

Councillors who complete their term in office will be given the opportunity to purchase equipment previously allocated to them at an agreed fair market price.

6.14 COUNCILLORS REIMBURSING COUNCIL

A Councillor can only reimburse Council for personal expenses paid for by Council via:

- A written authorisation to deduct the amount from their next Councillor allowance payment (notification via e-mail is acceptable); or
- Direct payment to Council's cashiering service (Customer Service). A copy of the receipt must be forwarded to the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant for recording purposes.

Councillors reimbursing Council for personal telephone calls must complete the 'Mobile Phone Account Memo' which is forwarded to them with a copy of their account and sign off on its accuracy.

6.15 CARETAKER PERIOD

Special conditions for expenses, facilities and resources for Councillors apply during the caretaker period prior to an election. The caretaker period is defined in the *Local Government Act 2020* as the period that starts at the time that nominations close on nomination day and ends at 6.00pm on Election Day.

It is an established democratic principle that public resources must not be used in a way that would influence the way people vote in elections, except to support the actual election process. Council therefore commits to the principle that it will ensure that resources are not used inappropriately during a Council election as outlined in the Greater Dandenong City Council Code of Conduct – Councillors, Council's Election Period (Caretaker) Policy, Council's Governance Rules and Section 304 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Caretaker period applies to all Councillors whether they are seeking re-election or not.

Nothing in this policy shall preclude a Councillor from performing their job as a Councillor during the designated caretaker period or inhibit them from representing the interests of the city

Councillors may not use Council offices or property for any election related purposes.

6.16 EXCLUSIONS

Any expenses arising from a breach of road, traffic, parking or other regulations or laws will not be reimbursed or funded by Council in any way.

Any expenses for a Councillor's spouse or partner not expressly included within this policy or the Travel Policy will not be reimbursed or funded in any way.

Any expenses incurred by third parties cannot be claimed.

6.17 PROCEDURE FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF GENERAL EXPENSES

Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees must provide all relevant documentation as set out in this policy, including detailed original receipts, for all expense claims. Corporate credit card receipts or statements alone are not sufficient. In the case of any internet-online purchases, a copy of the confirmation must be attached to the claim. If a receipt cannot be produced, Councillors or Delegated Committee Members may be required to provide a Statutory Declaration.

If a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member does not claim a particular expense or use a particular facility within the specified time, they cannot be offset against a claim for another amount for some other expense or facility, unless otherwise stipulated in this policy.

Expenses must be charged to the financial year in which they occurred. Expenses cannot be carried forwarded to different years.

Councillors should not obtain private benefit from the provision of equipment and facilities, however it is acknowledged that incidental use of council equipment and facilities may occur from time to time.

Claims for facilities and expenses other than those included in this document will be subject to Council resolution.

Councillors must sign off all receipts with original signatures. Stamps or electronic signatures will not be accepted.

Procedure for Reimbursement of General Expenses

All claims for reimbursement of expenditure shall be made on a monthly basis (within 30 days from end of month):

- Councillors and Members of a Delegated Committee must obtain a receipt for any expenditure for which they wish to claim a reimbursement from Council;
- Complete a 'Claim for General Expenses' form (Appendix 1);
- Attach the relevant receipt/invoice to the form and forward it to the Manager Governance via the Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant;
- The claim, if in accordance with this policy, will be authorised by the Manager Governance for reimbursement. It is the responsibility of Councillors to ensure that claims for reimbursement occur within the monthly time frame (30 days, from end of month);
- Payments under \$50 may be reimbursed through Petty Cash. Payments over \$50 will be processed through Council's Finance Department and a cheque forwarded to the relevant Councillor or via Payroll.

6.18 COUNCILLOR MENTOR AND LEGAL SUPPORT

Support will be provided for Councillors or Delegated Committee Members which encompasses both mentoring and legal support if their conduct as a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member is called into question. It is important to note that Councillors, Delegated Committee Members and staff are treated equally in this respect. (There are policies and provisions for staff that are already in place which reflect the support they would be given in different situations that occur within the workplace.) This policy aims to reflect the different levels of support afforded to Councillors and Delegated Committee Members in different situations and while general principles will apply, each situation will be considered on its own merits. The general principles applying to Councillor and Delegated Committee Member mentor and legal support are as follows:

1. Where a Councillor or Member of a Delegated Committee is prosecuted by an **external** individual in respect of matters/actions/behaviours that were undertaken in the course of performing their role, then they will be afforded legal and mentor support from Council unless or until it is clearly evident that the Councillor or Delegated Committee Member has acted in breach of the *Local Government Act 1989* or *Local Government Act 2020*.

2. Where the **Councillor or Delegated Committee Member is the litigant** and not the defendant then no legal or mentor support would be provided – unless by resolution of Council, where it is determined that such support is in Council's interest.
3. Where the matter relates to **action undertaken by Council** (as the organisation as distinct to an individual Councillor or Delegated Committee Member) against a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member, then support is provided to the Councillor or Delegated Committee Member in the form of limited hour mentor support.
4. Where the action is undertaken by Local Government Victoria, Ombudsman Victoria or the Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC), mentor support is provided during the investigation period only. No legal support is provided unless Council resolves to do so.

Some examples are provided below which indicate a base line response as to whether a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member is entitled to legal or mentoring support that is paid for by Council. As stated, it is not always clear when a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member is entitled to paid legal support and each case that arises should be considered on its merits. In any instance of uncertainty or sustained required support, Council would resolve on whether to use public funds to support the actions of a Councillor or Delegated Committee Member. Councillors also have the right to submit Notices of Motions to Council Meeting Agendas for consideration by Council provided they meet the requirements of Council's current Meeting Procedure Local Law.

Example Scenario	Responsible for Investigation	Mechanism/Support
A Councillor or Delegated Committee Member is civilly (independently) sued by any person for defamation. i.e. the 'plaintiff' is using their own resources to sue the Councillor (it is understood that the Councillor was not negligent in their actions).	External sources	Under this policy, legal support would be provided to the Councillor or Delegated Committee Member. Councillor or Delegated Committee Member has access to limited hour mentor support.
A Councillor or Delegated Committee Member physically abuses another Councillor or Delegated Committee Member in a public meeting.	Mayor	Under this Policy, no legal support would be provided to the Councillor Delegated Committee Member as litigant during investigation. Legal support provided to Councillor or Delegated Committee Member as defendant. Councillor or Delegated Committee Member as litigant is in breach of Code of Conduct. Legal support provided to Council as organisation if required. Both Councillors and Delegated Committee Members have access to limited hour mentor support.
A staff member makes a complaint to their Manager about a Councillor's or Delegated Committee Member's behaviour towards them. The Manager must advise their Director who must advise the CEO immediately.	CEO will investigate allegation internally and discuss with the Mayor as to what action to be taken if allegation is found to be true.	Mayor to handle internally. Under this policy, no legal support would be provided to Councillor or Delegated Committee Member, however they would have access to limited hour mentor support.
A Councillor or Delegated Committee Member sues Council (as an organisation) or takes Council to VCAT or another authority, where Council, or the CEO, acting on Council's behalf, is the defendant.		Under this policy, legal support would be provided to Council as an organisation. No legal support would be provided to the Councillor or Delegated Committee Member, however they would have access to limited hour mentor support.
An investigation is initiated by the Mayor, acting on Council's behalf, into the behaviour and conduct of a particular Councillor(s) Delegated Committee Member(s).	Mayor	Code of Conduct – Conflict/Dispute resolution process as provided. Councillor/s Delegated Committee Member(s) have access to limited hour mentor support.
Councillor or Delegated Committee Member has initiated a complaint regarding a staff member. (That complaint must be made to the CEO.)	CEO investigates and takes action as appropriate and within boundaries permitted under EBA and legislation.	Any staff related matter will be handled by the CEO as legislated by the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .

Example Scenario	Responsible for Investigation	Mechanism/Support
	CEO will report back to Mayor and Councillor or Delegated Committee Member.	Staff will be afforded the right to representation from a support person. If Councillor(s) or Delegated Committee Member(s) are not happy with the outcome, then they are able to raise those matters with the CEO directly through ongoing performance management processes.

A current listed panel of practitioners who can provide mentor support to Councillors will be maintained by the Governance Business Unit in consultation with the Mayor and Councillors.

Limited hour mentor support equates to ten hourly sessions per year. If a qualified mentor considers that more support time is required for a particular Councillor's wellbeing, then this will be further considered by Council.

6.19 COUNCILLOR DISPUTE MEDIATORS

The Code of Conduct – Councillors provides a dispute resolution process for the possibility of a dispute or conflict arising between two individual Councillors, between one Councillor and a group of Councillors, between two or more different groups of Councillors or between a Councillor and a staff member.

7 RESPONSIBILITIES

Councillors and Members of Delegated Committees are responsible for:

- the general care of all equipment and furniture provided by the Council or purchased with Council funds;
- complying with all aspects of this policy in conjunction with Council's Travel Policy;
- ensuring that completed party transactions are supplied to the Director Corporate Services for reporting purposes;
- providing true and correct information when completing reimbursement forms as referenced in this policy; and
- seeking their own financial and taxation advice.

Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

- authorising expenditure on Councillors' corporate credit cards;
- authorising reimbursement of expenses claimed outside of the monthly time frames;
- approving the use of a council vehicle for travel outside the municipality;
- consideration of requests for a variation of care reimbursement;
- accepting written appeals or complaints in relation to any reimbursement decisions;
- authorising an increase in monthly usage limits permitted for mobile phones; and
- approving after hours access to general office areas.

Director Corporate Services is responsible for:

- approving the provision of other communication tools (outside the standard issue) for individual Councillors; and
- receiving completed annual related party transaction forms from Councillors as required under Accounting Standard AAS22.

Manager Governance is responsible for:

- approving reimbursement claim forms submitted by Councillors;
- advising Councillors if any claim appears to breach this policy or is inappropriate,
- assisting Councillors in understanding their entitlements;
- ensuring a copy of this policy and Council's Travel Register are available for public inspection when requested; and
- review of this policy.

Mayor and Councillors Executive Assistant is responsible for:

- providing administrative support to the Mayor and Councillors in accordance with this policy;
- processing Councillor requests for reimbursement of expenses; and
- relevant bookings on behalf of Councillors ie. meeting rooms, conferences.

APPENDICES

**Appendix 1 - Members of Council
Claim for General Expenses**



Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Name:	
All requests for reimbursement must include original itemized receipt/invoice identifying date of purchase, goods/service purchased and cost. Corporate credit card receipts or statements are not acceptable as support for any expenditure. Requests for reimbursement without support proof will be paid upon the completion of a Statutory Declaration.	
Vendor/Supplier Name & Address:	
Description of Expenses: <p style="text-align: center;">Affix receipt in this area if possible otherwise staple to back of form</p>	
Amount to be reimbursed: _____	
Reimbursement Instructions: <input type="checkbox"/> Petty Cash <input type="checkbox"/> Cheque <input type="checkbox"/> Via Payroll	
Reason for Expense: _____ _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Constituents Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Training <input type="checkbox"/> Travel <input type="checkbox"/> Civic Function	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
I declare that the expenses detailed in this document were incurred whilst discharging my duties as a Councillor/Delegated Committee Member for the Greater Dandenong City Council and that this reimbursement claim is in accordance with the Council Expenses Support & Accountability Policy as adopted by the Greater Dandenong City Council.	
Councillor/Member Signature:	Date:
Approved by the Manager Governance	
Signature:	Date:

**Appendix 3 - Members of Council
Claim for Child/Family Care**



Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Name:
All requests for reimbursement must include original invoice identifying date of service and fees payable. Request for reimbursement without supporting proof will be paid upon the completion of a Statutory Declaration.
Service Provider Name & Address:
<p>Description of Expenses:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Affix a copy of the invoice in this area if possible otherwise staple to back of form</p>
<p>Amount to be reimbursed: _____</p> <p>Reimbursement Instructions: <input type="checkbox"/> Petty Cash <input type="checkbox"/> Cheque <input type="checkbox"/> Via Payroll</p>
<p>Type of care provided:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/> Family</p>
<p>I declare that the expenses detailed in this document were incurred whilst discharging my duties as a Councillor/Delegated Committee Member for the Greater Dandenong City Council and that this reimbursement claim is in accordance with the Council Expenses, Support, & Accountability Policy as adopted by the Greater Dandenong City Council.</p>
<p>Councillor/Member Signature: _____ Date: _____</p>
<p>Acknowledged by the Manager Governance</p>
<p>Signature: _____ Date: _____</p>

Appendix 4

Annual Statement of Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Expenses for the year ending 30 June 20**



Councillor/Member Name: _____

Type of Expense	Amount Claimed
Mobile Phone	
Training & Conferences	
Airfares	
Taxi/Train Fares	
Accommodation & Meals	
Family Care	
Vehicle Mileage	
Stationery	
Equipment	
Functions	
Other	
Total	

I declare that the above statement of expenses were incurred whilst discharging my duties as a Councillor/Delegated Committee Member for the Greater Dandenong City Council and that the information provided is true and correct and in accordance with the Greater Dandenong City Council's Council Expenses, Support & Accountability Policy.

Signature: _____ Date: _____