

## Council Expenses Policy

<b>Date adopted</b>	25 May 2026
<b>Adopted by</b>	Council
<b>Review due</b>	May 2029
<b>Responsible officer</b>	Head of Governance
<b>Records reference</b>	10404147

### 1. Purpose

The Council Expenses Policy (**Policy**) supports the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) in relation to payment of allowances and reimbursement of expenses for Councillors and Delegated Committee members. It also provides an overview of how Council provides resources to its Councillors and Delegated Committee members to support them to carry out their functions and duties.

This Policy is not intended to prescribe for every possible situation that may arise. Any matter not provided for in this Policy will be considered by the Mayor and / or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), or the Deputy Mayor if the matter pertains to the Mayor.

Under the Act, Council must reimburse a Councillor or Delegated Committee member for out-of-pocket expenses where the Council is satisfied that the expenses:

- Are bona fide expenses;
- Have been reasonably incurred in the performance of the role of Councillor or Delegated Committee member; and
- Are reasonably necessary for the Councillor or Delegated Committee member to perform that role.

### 2. Application and Scope

This Policy applies to all Councillors elected to the Melton City Council.

This Policy also applies to Delegated Committee members where specified under this Policy.

Expenditure must always be in the interests of the City of Melton community and is allocated from Council's annual budget.

Claims for any expenditure not included in this Policy will be subject to a Council resolution.

## 3. General Provisions

### 3.1. Overarching Principles

- Where possible, Council will book and pay for any expenses up front. Where this is not appropriate or practicable, Council will reimburse the Councillor for the out-of-pocket expense/s incurred, where those expenses comply with this Policy.
- Expense claims must be reasonable and proportionate. They must also include an explanation if the connection between the expense incurred, and the role of Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee is unclear.
- Unreasonable expenses will not be reimbursed. For example, Council will not reimburse the purchase of alcohol. The Head of Governance will determine whether expenses claimed are considered to be unreasonable or disproportionate in accordance with this Policy.
- Council will only reimburse expenses incurred by Councillors. Council will not pay for, or reimburse expenses for, partners or anyone else accompanying the Councillor on external Council-related business, unless the Councillor requires access and equity support in accordance with section 3.5 of this policy.
- Where a Delegated Committee is appointed by Council, relevant clauses from this Policy will be incorporated into the Terms of Reference and reimbursement of bona fide out-of-pocket expenses incurred by Delegated Committee members while performing their duties in those roles will be made in line with this Policy.
- Training in relation to this Policy will be provided to all Councillors during the initial Councillor Induction training and periodically to ensure they are aware of the protocols in relation to Councillor expenses.

### 3.2. Claiming Expenses

All claims for reimbursement of expenses must be submitted via the electronic Expenses Claim Form. Documentation, such as tax invoices, receipts etc, must be uploaded with the claim form to verify the expenditure.

Receipts must be provided for any expenses which are being claimed, unless otherwise specified in this Policy. Failure to produce a receipt may result in the expense not being reimbursed.

Receipts must be itemised and contain sufficient, relevant information about the expense incurred. Receipts with only a total price, without any explanation of what the expenditure relates to (such as EFTPOS receipts), will not be accepted.

The Head of Governance will review and authorise relevant claims in accordance with this Policy.

Reimbursement will occur as soon as practicable following the receipt of an accurately completed Council Expense Claim Form, and all required documentation, being received and authorised. Reimbursement will be paid via electronic funds transfer into the Councillor/Delegated Committee member's nominated bank account.

All reimbursements will be paid in arrears.

Requests for reimbursement should be received within 30 days of the cost being incurred. All claims for the previous financial year should be made by 7 July each year to ensure that they appear in the correct financial year.

### **3.3. Legal Costs**

#### **3.3.1. Responsibility**

Subject to 3.3.2 and Council's adopted Internal Resolution Procedure, other than by specific Council resolution any legal expenses incurred by a Councillor, or Delegated Committee member, shall be the responsibility of that Councillor or Delegated Committee member. A Councillor or Delegated Committee member shall not engage legal representation or seek legal advice where they will be seeking reimbursement from Council unless specifically authorised by Council before incurring the costs.

#### **3.3.2. Risk to Health and Safety**

Where the CEO believes that there would be a risk to health and safety for a Councillor or Delegated Committee member, and supporting legal advice from a qualified legal practitioner recommends the provision of Council funded legal advice in relation to a specific matter, the CEO may authorise expenditure for legal costs in relation to that specific matter, under delegation.

### **3.4. Child Care/Carer (Care) Expenses**

Council will reimburse the cost of necessary child care or carer services where the provision of care is reasonably required for a Councillor or Delegated Committee member to perform their role. Carer services will be eligible to be reimbursed when a Councillor is a carer in a care relationship within the meaning of section 4 of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012*.

A person who provides child/family care does not need to be a licenced or registered provider, however, must not be a family member (spouse or domestic partner, parent, sibling, grandparent, child, grandchild, step-parent, step-sibling, or step-child of the Councillor or Delegated Committee member) or any person who normally lives with the Councillor, Delegated Committee member, or child/family member, except where a live-in (professional) helper such as a nanny is required to work extra time at extra expense because of the Councillor or Delegated Committee member's duties

Care expenses must be claimed via a completed Council Expenses Claim Form and substantiated by documentation showing the dates and times care was provided. The Councillor or Delegated Committee member must also provide the description of Council work undertaken and details of child care / caring required for each occasion.

Care Expenses will be reimbursed for attendance at:

- Council Meetings, Briefings of Councillors, and Submission Hearings of the Council;
- Delegated Committee Meetings;
- Official Council functions;

- Meetings arising as a result of a Councillor being appointed by the Council to an external body or an Advisory Committee;
- Training or conferences the Councillor is attending which Council has paid for; and
- Other meetings, events, or occasions as agreed from time to time by the Mayor or Head of Governance, or by resolution of the Council, prior to the expense being incurred.

Care Expenses that may be reimbursed include:

- payment to an accredited child care/attendant care provider, or
- payment to a person providing care who does not:
  - have a familial relationship with the Councillor; or
  - reside either permanently or temporarily with the Councillor; or
  - have a relationship with the Councillor or the Councillor's partner such that it would be inappropriate for Council to reimburse monies paid to the care provider.

Fees are generally payable per hour or part thereof, subject to any minimum period which is part of the care provider's usual terms.

Fees that can be reimbursed are subject to a maximum hourly rate approved by the Chief Executive Officer (guided by industry rate).

### **3.5. Access and Inclusion**

Council commits to supporting any individual who requires particular support or equipment to be able to fulfil their role as a Councillor or Delegated Committee member.

The Head of Governance may assess and approve requests for support, beyond that specified in this policy, to allow a Councillor living with a disability (whether temporary or permanent) to perform their duties of office.

Councillors or Delegated Committee members requiring particular support or reasonable modifications to access Council's facilities or utilise Council's resources should contact the Head of Governance.

### **3.6. Councillor Welfare**

Councillors and Delegated Committee members may approach the CEO with regard to any specific guidance, counselling or coaching they may require to enhance their performance as a Councillor or Delegated Committee member.

Councillors or Delegated Committee members may seek counselling on a confidential basis through Council's Employee Assistance Program.

## 4. Councillor Allowances

Council will pay an allowance to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors in accordance with the relevant determination made by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal.

Payment will be made by electronic funds transfer into the Councillor's nominated bank account.

Allowances shall be paid in arrears, approximately fortnightly or monthly as nominated by the Councillor, and shall continue to be paid until such time that the Councillor ceases to hold the office of Councillor, or where the Councillor has elected to not receive their allowance in accordance with section 39(5) of the *Local Government Act 2020* and Council's 'Councillors as Candidates in State and Federal Elections Policy'.

Allowances will be withheld in the event that a Councillor is ordered to stand down in accordance with the Act.

## 5. Administrative Support

### 5.1. Meeting Rooms and Mayoral Office

The Mayor is provided with office accommodation at the Melton Civic Centre and Caroline Springs Library which may be used for Council business.

Council also provides a Councillor Lounge at the Melton Civic Centre which includes an office/lounge area and a meeting room which is available for all Councillors to use. Refreshments will be provided for Councillors in the Councillor Lounge.

Councillors may request to use other meeting rooms owned and controlled by Council for meetings where the primary purpose is to allow the Councillor to discharge their Council duties. The Councillor must be in attendance and bookings must be made in advance through the Mayor and Councillor Support Team. Costs associated with booking the meeting room will be included in Council's operational budget. Councillors will be required to reimburse any costs incurred outside this Policy.

### 5.2. Professional Memberships

Council will pay a Councillor's membership of a professional association where the qualification for the membership was gained via a previously approved Councillor Professional Development program or event..

### 5.3. Communication Technology

Due to the significant environmental impact associated with printing Council's business papers, it is Council's preference that all Council and Committee papers, Councillor communications and correspondence are distributed electronically.

Councillors will be provided with a mobile phone, laptop computer and a multi-functional printer/scanner/photocopier to assist with the conduct of Council business. Councillors will also be provided with a Council email address and mobile phone number. Any equipment and service provided is to be used for official Council business only.

Council will pay all costs associated with the provision of this equipment and services including paper for printing, printer cartridges, connection fees, rental charges and all Council business call and data charges. These costs will be reported in the quarterly Councillor expenses report.

It is acknowledged that there will be some incidental private use of mobile communications equipment, such as occasional standard phone calls and text messages within Australia.

Use of council equipment overseas is not permitted.

Councillors must adhere to Council's Privacy Policy and the Model Councillor Code of Conduct in using any IT resources provided by Council. Council equipment and electronic communications system must be used in accordance with policies and legislation. Council-provided technology such as mobile phones and laptops will be replaced for each new Council term and in accordance with Council's policies.

#### **5.4. Administrative Support**

The Mayor and Councillor Support Team will provide administrative support to Councillors to assist them, such as with responding to correspondence, enquiries, requests for service, registrations for attendance at approved conferences, reservations for accommodation and meeting rooms as part of their official duties as a Councillor.

The Mayor and Councillor Support Team will provide diary management support for Councillors relating to their official delegate appointments, official invites and events that are included in the Council Calendar.

#### **5.5. Inwards Correspondence & Invitations**

All hardcopy mail received by Council is deemed to be Council business and will be opened by Information Management staff. Private mail should not be sent via, or to, the Council address.

The Mayor and Councillor Support Team will advise Councillor/s of any relevant correspondence or invitations received.

#### **5.6. Apparel and Stationery**

Council's official letterhead is only to be used for official Council correspondence signed by either the Mayor or an authorised member of Council staff.

Each Councillor, on request, may be provided with the following Melton City Council corporate apparel which is to be returned when the Councillor ceases to hold the office of Councillor:

- one suit jacket
- one winter jacket/soft shell jacket
- one pair of pants or skirt/dress
- 2 shirts/tops

Replacement of worn out or damaged items of Melton City Council corporate apparel can be requested once per Council term, via the Mayor and Councillor Support Team. The relevant item must be returned to Council at the time of the request for a replacement.

Councillors will be provided with protective clothing to meet safety requirements in carrying out the duties of office (for example, high visibility vests and helmets for site visits), as required.

### **5.7. Return of Resources**

All resources provided to Councillors are provided for use by the Councillor in the conduct of their duties of office. All equipment provided and items purchased, including representational corporate apparel bearing the Melton City Council logo, shall be returned to the Mayor and Councillor Support Team within seven days of the Councillor ceasing to hold the office of Councillor, unless specified elsewhere in this Policy.

## **6. Travel and Vehicle Expenses**

Council encourages a range of travel options conducive to the environment. Reasonable transport expenses incurred by Councillors or Members of Delegated Committees in the course of their official duties in their role will be reimbursed.

Where travel is required, any additional stops or arrangements necessary to accommodate physical or medical requirements may be approved by the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Mayor.

Expenses will be reimbursed to Councillors following receipt of a completed Expense Claim Form which includes all required information and supporting documentation.

### **6.1. Private vehicle use**

Council will reimburse travel costs associated with the use of a private vehicle, including tolls and car parking fees, reasonably incurred when attending meetings and functions (within Victoria) which are related to their duties as a Councillor or Member of a Delegated Committee.

Travel expenses claimed in relation to events must be supported by documentation which demonstrates the event was related to their duties as a Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee.

The allowance payable for reimbursement of private vehicle use will be in accordance with the rates determined by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) 'cents per kilometre' method calculation.

Councillors can also seek reimbursement for pre-approved use of a taxi, uber or like service provider for the cost of travel directly related to their duties, noting that the use of public transport or private transport is the preferred method of transport where practical. In determining practicality the following matters will be considered:

- Proximity to a train station
- The time of the event / meeting/ Council business the Councillor is attending

- Relevant safety considerations
- Proximity of the event / meeting / Council business to a car park
- Accessibility requirements

## **6.2. Interstate travel**

Council will cover costs associated with Councillors travelling interstate on Council business that is approved by the CEO in consultation with the Mayor and is within the limits of the budget approved by Council. This comprises airfares, accommodation, car hire, taxis, and ride-sharing fares.

All Councillor travel will be booked by the Mayor and Councillor Support Team and will utilise the most direct route and the most practical and economical mode of transport. Air travel up to and including 5 hours duration will be in economy class. Air travel expected to be greater than 5 hours duration will be premium economy class. To ensure value for money, all requests for airline bookings and accommodation must be advised as soon possible.

Travel claims will be for travel to and from the Councillor's notified place of normal residence.

## **6.3. Overseas travel**

Council will cover costs associated with Councillors travelling overseas on Council business as approved by Council resolution within the limits of the budget approved by Council. This comprises airfares, accommodation, visas, passports, car hire, taxis, ride-sharing fares, and any other genuine expenses.

All Councillor travel will be booked by the Mayor and Councillor Support Team and will utilise the most direct route and the most practical and economical mode of transport. Air travel up to and including 5 hours duration will be in economy class. Air travel expected to be greater than 5 hours duration will be premium economy class. To ensure value for money, all requests for airline bookings and accommodation must be advised as soon as the travel is approved by Council.

Travel claims will be for travel to and from the Councillor's notified place of normal residence.

## **6.4. Mayoral Vehicle**

The Mayor is expected to perform a range of additional duties throughout their mayoral term. Council will support the Mayor of the day, through the provision of a fully maintained Council vehicle, commensurate with the role and duties, in accordance with Council's Motor Vehicle Policy and in consultation with the Mayor.

The Mayoral vehicle will include a fleet card for fuel purchases.

## **6.5. Council Pool Vehicles**

A Council fleet vehicle may be provided for use by Councillors for Council related business, should a vehicle be available. Any use of a Council fleet vehicle will be reported as a Councillor expense in the quarterly report in accordance with the Australian Taxation Office cents per kilometre rate.

## 6.6. Fines and Infringements

Any costs arising from a breach of road, traffic parking or other regulations or laws or for damage or loss of a vehicle is the responsibility of the person travelling and will not be reimbursed or funded by Council.

## 7. Events and Functions

Provision of resources, or reimbursement of expenses, to a Councillor to attend a function or event will only be provided:

- Where the Mayor has been invited to represent Council at an event;
- Where a benefit to Melton City Council can be demonstrated e.g., attendance will contribute towards a commitment under the Council Plan;
- Where, if an invitation has been received by the individual, they have been invited in their capacity as a Councillor;
- Following all supporting documentation, such as invitations / emails etc., being presented with any claims resulting from the attendance.
- Where a Councillor is unable to attend an event or function – an apology should be provided either directly to the organiser or via the Councillor Support Team as soon as practicable.
- Where a cost has been incurred by Council for a Councillor to attend an event or function – failure to attend an event without an apology may result in the Councillor being asked to reimburse Council for the cost of attendance. This decision will be made by the CEO in consultation with the Mayor, taking into consideration any special circumstances that may have occurred. Evidence of these circumstances may be requested.

Invitations to events that are unrelated to their role as Councillor may give rise to conflict of interest concerns and Councillors should consider the Councillor Gift Policy when considering these invitations.

Where acceptance of the invitation could be perceived as a conflict of interest or create an impression of compromised impartiality, the invitation should be politely declined.

Council does not support political parties, financially or by any other means. Where a Councillor attends a political party event in a personal capacity the cost is to be borne by the individual Councillor and no reimbursement will be provided. This does not apply to official functions the Councillor is attending in their role of Councillor which are also attended by members of political parties.

### 7.1. Charity fundraising events

Council may meet the cost of the Mayor or, if the Mayor is unable to attend, their representative, to attend charity fundraising events within the City of Melton where the work of the charity benefits the Melton community. If the Mayor or their representative wishes to make a financial contribution to the charity (e.g., a donation or purchase of an auction item) they will be required to make this contribution personally.

Council is sometimes asked to support a charity or fund-raising event by purchasing tickets or groups of tickets (such as “tables”). Requests of this nature will be approved by the CEO. The CEO, in consultation with the Mayor, , will also determine how the tickets will be allocated and whether the recipients will be required to purchase the tickets or contribute towards their cost.

## **8. Accompanying Partners/Guests**

Any additional attendance fees, airfares accommodation costs, meal costs, ticket or any other costs incurred as a result of the attendance of partners and/or children shall be borne by the Councillor. Council will not provide administration assistance to undertake travel arrangements for any person other than the Councillor(s) attending, unless specific exemption is granted for circumstances where the Councillor has carer responsibilities or requires carer assistance.

## **9. Accommodation & Meals**

Where overnight accommodation is required, accommodation will be selected based on what is reasonable given the location and event being attended.

Accommodation will be arranged to achieve the best value for Council, with breakfast and parking being included wherever possible. Accommodation is to be based at the training/conference venue, or at close proximity. The Mayor and Councillor Support Team will book the accommodation upon receipt of an approved Councillor Application to Attend Training or Conference Form, which will be approved by the Head of Governance.

Should Councillors elect to stay at accommodation that is more expensive than the above rates the Councillor will be responsible for paying the difference.

Council will not cover or reimburse the purchase of alcohol.

### **9.1. Other accommodation costs**

In-room movie charges and dry-cleaning/laundry costs will not be reimbursed to a Councillor or paid for by Council.

### **9.2. Meals**

When a Councillor is attending training and conferences in person, Council will pay for meals that are not included in the training or conference package or included with the accommodation arrangements. Meal allowances will also be paid when a Councillor is attending official Council meetings or functions of an extended duration in person that occur during a standard meal period and where a meal is not provided at the meeting or function.

Meal allowances will be paid in accordance with the reasonable meal allowance amounts published by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), as updated from time to time. Applicable limits will be based on the most current ATO rates in effect at the time the expense is incurred. Current rates for the 2025-26 year are as follows:

Breakfast -	\$34.75
Lunch -	\$39.10
Dinner -	\$66.65

Should Councillors elect to purchase a meal that is more expensive than the allowances above, the Councillor will be responsible for paying the difference.

Incidental costs such as coffee or alcohol will not be reimbursed by Council.

Mini bar expenses of \$15 per day may be reimbursed to Councillors, noting however, this excludes alcohol and should be utilised only where no other options are available. All other mini bar item accounts are the responsibility of the Councillor.

## 10. Reporting

The CEO shall ensure that any reporting in relation to Councillor expenses and/or travel required by the Act or the relevant regulations is completed.

Full details of all reimbursements made in accordance with this Policy will be provided quarterly to the Audit and Risk Committee.

In the interests of transparency and good governance, details of reimbursements to Councillors and Delegated Committee members will also be published in Council's Annual Report and quarterly on Council's website.

## 11. Definitions

Term	Definition
The Act	means the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>
Consumer Price Index (CPI)	Means the food and non-alcoholic beverage Consumer Price Index in Melbourne, Australia or if this index is discontinued or suspended, such other index that represents the change in the cost of living in Melbourne
Official Council Functions	means functions arranged by Council where Councillors have been invited to attend in their capacity as Councillor
Official Council Business	means business undertaken in the performance of the role of Councillor

## 12. Related Documents

Name	Location
<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>	<a href="https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020">https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020</a>
Model Councillor Code of Conduct	<a href="#">Documents   Reports   Strategies Melton City Council</a>
Councillor Professional Development Policy	<a href="#">Documents   Reports   Strategies Melton City Council</a>

Name	Location
Public Transparency Policy	<a href="#">Documents   Reports   Strategies Melton City Council</a>
Motor Vehicle Policy	Melton City Council Intranet
Credit Card Policy	<a href="#">Documents   Reports   Strategies Melton City Council</a>
Councillor Gift Policy	<a href="#">Documents   Reports   Strategies Melton City Council</a>

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