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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to outline the ways in which Council can provide financial assistance and support to the Mayor and Councillors in carrying out their role and official duties as Councillors in accordance with Section 75 of the Local Government Act 1989 (The Act).

The Act states that Councillors may be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses they incur in the performance of their necessary duties as Councillors.

Out of pocket expenses are those expenses incurred while performing the duties of a Councillor, such as cost of travelling, car parking, home telephone costs, provision of childcare services and other incidental expenses.

When making claims for reimbursement of expenses, Councillors shall provide original receipts and documentation (Including tax invoices) to support a claim. In some circumstances, such as telephone accounts, the original receipt will be photocopied and returned to the Councillor. All claims for reimbursement of expenses should be made on the Councillors' Expenses Claim Form included as Appendix 1.

2. SCOPE

The policy covers the financial assistance and support to the Mayor and Councillors in the performance of their Civic duties.

Financial assistance and support to Special or Advisory Committee members are not covered by this policy. Financial assistance and support to Special Committee members is outlined within the Delegations and Guidelines for Special Committees. Terms of Reference for Advisory Committees outline the financial assistance and support, as appropriate, that will be provided to Advisory Committee members.

3. COUNCILLOR EXPENSES

Each Councillor has been elected by the residents and ratepayers within the five Wards to represent them and their interests within the Hepburn Shire Council.

To assist them in the performance of this role and to fulfil their responsibilities as Councillors, they will be provided with administrative support, resources and access to Council facilities. Councillors may also seek reimbursement for the expenses specified within this policy if those expenses were incurred while carrying out their official Council duties.

3.1 Conferences and Functions

3.1.1 Attending Conferences and Functions

Councillors will be given the opportunity to attend conferences and functions throughout their term in office. The selection of a conference or function should be based on its relevance to the Councillor, the need for Councillor Representation at events with Shire stakeholders and any professional development requirements of the Councillor. Attendance by Councillors at conferences, functions and seminars should be discussed with and approved at the discretion of the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

All travel within Victoria and Interstate needs to be approved by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

To obtain approval, Councillors should complete an Attendance Request Form - refer Appendix 2. Such requests will be managed by the CEO's Unit.

Payment of registration fees will generally be made through the Council's Purchase Order or Purchase Card System by the CEO Unit. Any registration payment made by a Councillor can be reimbursed by the completion of a Councillors' Expenses Claim Form – refer Appendix 1.

3.1.2 Accompanying Partners/Guests

A Partner or guest may accompany a Councillor to conferences and functions where other attendees are generally accompanied by partners.

The functions will generally involve luncheons and evening activities and be of a nature where other attendees will be accompanied by partners.

This is at each Councillor's discretion.

3.1.3 Presenter at a Conference

The Mayor and Councillors may receive invitations to speak at a conference in their capacity as a Councillor. It is the usual practice for conference organisers to pay registration fees and any travel and accommodation expenses of Councillors invited to be presenters.

Prior to agreeing to contribute as a presenter, any invitations should be referred to the Mayor, who will discuss the invitation with the Chief Executive Officer. Support can be provided from the Executive Team in the preparation of material to assist the Councillor.

If a Councillor is paid a presentation fee by a professional conference organiser, this fee must be paid to Council. Payment to Council can be arranged by liaison with the CEO's Unit.

3.1.4 Training and development

Council strongly supports the development and enhancement of skills required by Councillors to assist in fulfilling their responsibilities as elected representatives.

Councillors are offered the opportunity to participate in training and professional development courses, seminars and activities in a variety of areas of professional and personal development. The Council also offers Councillors the opportunity to participate in programs provided internally and by professional bodies, private organisations and educational institutions.

Councillors wishing to undertake any training and development courses should seek prior approval from the Mayor who will discuss the opportunity with the Chief Executive Officer.

4. TRAVEL

4.1 Travel (Local) General

In carrying out their duties, Councillors are required to attend numerous meetings, functions and events. The following list provides examples of the type of local travel Councillors may undertake in the course of carrying out their duties:

- To attend Council and committee meetings.
- To attend informal briefing sessions held by management or other Councillors.
- To attend civic or ceremonial occasions and functions convened by the Mayor.
- To attend a meeting or function, where the Councillor attends as a representative of Council.
- To attend meetings arising as a result of a Councillor being nominated or appointed by Council to an outside body or committee.
- To attend meetings with Council officers on any matter relating to the Council, including Committee responsibilities or the general duties of a Councillor.
- To attend, in the capacity of a Councillor, to inspect a site, property or area (or to discuss with any person) any matter affecting or affected by Council.
- To attend conferences, training sessions and functions in the capacity as a Councillor.
- To attend meetings, conferences and functions with other Councillors, Council officers and relevant stakeholder groups outside the municipality.

As travelling costs can be significant, the Council offers the following arrangements to assist Councillors.

4.1.2 Car Parking Fees

Car parking fees incurred while conducting Council business will be reimbursed on the basis of original receipts and relevant details regarding the purpose, date and time of the meeting or function. Claims for reimbursement must be made on the Councillors' Expenses Claim Form (refer Appendix 1).

4.1.3 Public Transport Fees

Councillors shall be reimbursed any costs associated with the use of public transport while conducting Council business. To seek reimbursement, Councillors should complete a Councillors' Expenses Claim Form (refer Appendix 1).

4.1.4 Use of Taxis

Councillors shall be reimbursed costs associated with taxi services when travelling on Council related business.

To seek reimbursement, Councillors should complete a Councillors' Expenses Claim Form (refer Appendix 1).

4.1.5 Use of Private Vehicles

Costs relating to private vehicle use will be reimbursed where it is a necessary Councillor expense incurred while performing duties as a Councillor. The allowance travel rate will be as set by the Australian Taxation Office.

A record of private vehicle use must be maintained by the Councillor and submitted on a monthly basis using the designated form included as Appendix 3. The record shall contain details of Council business, date, destination and number of kilometres and any tolls.

It is expected that Councillors make themselves familiar with and adhere to Council's Policy 03 (O) - Motor Vehicle Policy.

4.1.6 Tolls

While travelling on Council business in metropolitan Melbourne, Councillors may incur tolls. Councillors may seek reimbursement of costs associated with tolls.

Council will not pay any fines incurred as a result of use of tolls.

4.1.7 Mayoral Vehicle

Council will provide the Mayor with a fully maintained vehicle to the standard specified by the Council at the time and in accordance with Council Policy 03 (O) - Motor Vehicle Policy.

The Mayoral vehicle is to be returned prior to the Statutory Meeting for the Election of the Mayor in November and presented in a condition that will enable a smooth handover to the next Mayor elect without a need for further maintenance or cleaning services. If the vehicle requires a professional clean or repairs prior to the day of the Statutory Meeting, it is the responsibility of the sitting Mayor to arrange these services in advance.

4.1.8 Accommodation and Incidentals

When travelling on Council business throughout Victoria, Councillors may require accommodation. Councillors can stay in reasonable accommodation appropriate to the area travelled to and the nature of the visit. As a guide, appropriate accommodation is considered to be a private room with an ensuite or bathroom but not 5-star.

Bookings for accommodation should be made through the CEO's Unit. Prior to making the booking, the authorisation of the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer must be obtained. All reasonable meal and incidental costs associated with the travel will be met by the Council. Councillors can seek reimbursement by submitting a Councillors' Expenses Claim Form (refer Appendix 1).

4.2 Travel (Interstate and International)

4.2.1 Introduction

As part of his/her duties, the Mayor and Councillors may be required to undertake interstate and international travel on behalf of the Council. The purpose of the travel will be tightly aligned to the Strategic Objectives described in the Council Plan.

4.2.2 General

Interstate travel by Councillors on behalf of Hepburn Shire Council must be approved by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

International travel is required to be endorsed by Council prior to any commitment or booking being made.

The process and procedures applicable to interstate and international travel for the Mayor and Councillors is outlined in full detail within the following items 3.2.3 – 3.2.9.

For reporting purposes, interstate and international travel expenses incurred by Councillors will be identified in separate categories.

4.2.3 Reporting Framework

Proposal to Travel:

Councillors seeking to travel interstate or internationally must first provide a report to the Mayor and CEO outlining their proposal.

The report must contain the following elements:

- State the travel location, reason for travel and period of travel;
- Provide details of the travel including;
 - Any external funding
 - The objectives of the travel together with the potential benefits to the Hepburn Shire Council and its stakeholders;
 - Accompanying staff and their role.
 - Identify the relationship between the proposed travel and the Strategic Objectives in the Council Plan and any other Council policy, strategy or program;
- Provide the estimated cost including
 - Airfares, including class of travel, accommodation, fees and other expenses such as day to day incidental costs;
 - The cost associated with any accompanying Council staff member;
- A statement confirming that the costs relating to the proposed travel will be met from an existing budget allocation;
- Contain a recommendation to Council to approve the proposal.

Assessment of each application will be made on the merits of the proposal and the alignment of the request with the Council Plan or other interests of the Hepburn Shire Council.

Councillors seeking to travel internationally must prepare and present a report to an Ordinary Meeting of Council which contains the elements outlined above.

Where the proposal is supported by Council it will be approved and:

- Nominate the Councillor(s) to undertake the travel;
- Recommend an amount to cover the travel costs relating to airfare, accommodation, fees, expenses and incidentals;
- Identify a maximum estimated amount for “incidentals” covering costs not pre-paid by Council;
- Note that the Councillor will prepare a post travel report within 14 days of their return from approved travel.

Any proposal in relation to overseas travel to be undertaken by the Mayor will follow the same format. During the consideration of any travel proposal relating to the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor or other Councillor will take the Chair.

Councillors should await the decision of the Mayor and CEO for interstate travel, or Council for international travel, which will be evidenced in writing, prior to making any bookings or incurring any costs associated with the proposed travel arrangement.

4.2.4 Post Travel Report

Each Councillor will provide to the Council a post travel report detailing the travel approved by Council, the outcomes and benefits of the travel undertaken, the cost and any other relevant details. The Report will be prepared within 14 days of their return from approved travel and will be placed on the next relevant agenda for consideration by Council.

4.2.5 Timing of Travel Arrangements

Travel and accommodation arrangements should generally not be made in anticipation of approval. However, it is recognised that in some circumstances, tentative arrangements may need to be made. In rare circumstances, approval for Councillor to travel may be required in advance of consideration of a travel proposal by the Council. In this instance, approval may be sought direct from the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer. (These circumstances will generally involve situations where an urgent travel requirement arises and a meeting of the Council is not scheduled in advance of the proposed departure date.)

All travel and accommodation reservations should be booked and confirmed prior to departure through the CEO's Unit, or alternatively, directly with airlines, hotels, conference or delegation organisers. Any alternative booking arrangements must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer. Payments for travel must be made through Council's Purchase Order system, unless otherwise authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

4.3 Travel Expenses

4.3.1 Reconciliation of travel expenses

Councillors must submit any claims for reimbursement within 30 days of return.

Councillors will be required to complete and sign a Councillor Interstate and Overseas Travel Expense Statement. All claims must be supported by accounts and other receipts.

For international travel expenses, the exchange rate to be applied by Councillors when making claims shall be the rate identified by a banking institution or credit card company as being the closing rate on the day of transaction.

4.3.2 Excess Expenditure

Reports submitted in relation to proposed travel will include the estimated costs of the trip to be incurred by Council.

The post travel report must include a statement detailing the reason for any variance in the costs and the details of the additional expenditure and request approval in relation to the variance.

4.3.3 Receipts

Every effort should be made to obtain receipts for all expenditure to enable claims for reimbursement to be accurately assessed. Where receipts cannot be provided, an explanation should be provided as to the reason why, the reimbursement request is to be considered without the supporting evidence required. Receipts should be attached when submitting each Councillors' Expenses Claim Form (Appendix 1).

4.3.4 Travel Expenses Reporting Requirements

The Local Government Regulations require the maintenance of a travel register containing the details of overseas or interstate travel (with the exception of interstate travel by land for less than three days) undertaken in an official capacity by Councillors or any member of Council staff in the previous 12 months. The register must include names, the date, destination, purpose and total cost of the overseas or interstate travel. At the conclusion of approved interstate or international travel, a copy of the post travel

report shall be provided to the Governance Officer for the purposes of maintaining the public register.

5. COMMUNICATION

5.1 Local Communication

5.1.1 General

In the performance of their duties as elected representatives of the community, Councillors need to remain accessible while conducting Council business locally. This category comprises costs associated with the use of mobile phones, home phones and internet at places of accommodation or access points while on Council business.

To assist Councillors in the performance of their official duties, the following equipment may be provided for each Councillor:

- Laptop
- Wireless Broadband connection
- Mobile Phone
- Tablet Device
- Desktop Printer

The Council will pay all connection fees, rental charges and all Council business call charges associated with the above devices.

Training and IT support is available to Councillors on the use of these devices upon request.

Council will make printing services available to all Councillors who require it, with print outs being available for collection at one of Council's offices.

Where a Councillors place of residence/office is not serviced by wireless broadband for the purpose of Council business, the Council shall fund reasonable installation and operation costs for an additional line. The additional line may be required for phone or internet services.

The following general principles apply to operation costs associated with a line for the communication services outlined above and further detailed in the following sections of the Policy:

- If the line is installed after taking office as a Councillor and for the purpose of Council business, operation costs will be borne by the Council. However, Councillors will be provided the opportunity of reimbursing the Council for any non-Council related portions of those accounts.
- If the line is pre-existing at the time of taking office, Councillors will be provided the opportunity of seeking reimbursement for Council usage.

Communication equipment provided to Councillors is to be used for Council business and in accordance with Council's IT Acceptable Use Policy.

5.1.2 Mobile Telephones

All Councillors shall be provided with a Council mobile phone. While mobile phones are provided for Council business use, it is recognised that for practical reasons, Councillors may make a reasonable number of non-Council business related calls. The Council recognises that the individual level of usage of Council supplied mobile phones by Councillors may differ according to individual circumstances, the nature of their role and level of activity.

5.1.3 Interstate and International

Communication costs may be incurred in ensuring that Councillors are accessible and able to communicate while travelling interstate or internationally on Council business. This category comprises costs associated with use of telephone and internet services at places of accommodation or access points while on interstate Council business. The onus shall be on the Councillor to determine what constitutes a reasonable level of private telephone calls.

6. CARER EXPENSES

6.1 Expenses incurred in the provision of care services

The Council will reimburse the cost of necessary care expenses incurred by Councillors in the course of carrying out their duties, for example:

- To attend Council and Committee meetings
- To attend Councillor Briefing sessions
- To attend civic or ceremonial occasions convened by the Council or Mayor where the expectation is that the Councillor attends.

Reimbursement of care costs will be available for immediate family only, i.e. where the Councillor or domestic partner is the primary care giver.

Care costs are not eligible for reimbursement if paid to a person who normally or regularly lives with the Councillor, except where a live-in (professional) helper such as a nanny is required to work extra time at extra expense because of the Councillor's duties.

Claims must be accompanied by a receipt from the care provider showing the date and time care was provided and detail the reason care was needed on each occasion.

To seek reimbursement of care expenses, Councillors must complete a Councillors' Expenses Claim Form (refer Appendix 1) and return it to the CEO Unit for authorisation.

7. PAYMENT OF EXPENSES AND OPERATING COSTS

Details of procedures relating to expenses and operating costs shall be maintained as part of office manuals for the Mayor and Councillors. These methods and procedures should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

7.1 Payment Cycle

7.1.1 Methods of incurring expenses and operating costs

The expenses and operating costs relating to the provision of services, facilities and resources will be processed and managed via one of the methods outlined below. All expenditure incurred will be captured through the Council's finance system.

Council's purchasing system

Through completion of a Council Purchase Order by the CEO's Unit and authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

Reimbursement Claim

Through the completion of a Reimbursement Claim form by a Councillor.

Councillors are required to complete all sections of the forms and attach original receipts and supporting documentation including a tax invoice. Councillors should ensure that claims for reimbursement are submitted within 30 days of incurring an expense. Where expenses are incurred toward the end of the financial year, Councillors are encouraged to submit claims as soon as possible to ensure timely and accurate processing by Council at this busy time.

Councillors shall be reimbursed within 14 working days of making a successful claim. A copy of the Councillors' Expenses Claim Form is included within this Policy at Appendix 1.

7.1.2 Authorisation levels

Claims by Councillors for reimbursement for out of pocket expenses can only be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer (or delegated officer) following the completion of a Councillors' Expenses Claim Form.

7.1.3 Monitoring mechanisms

The Chief Executive Officer will be provided with monthly management reports identifying the quantum of Councillor expenses incurred in relation to each expense type.

The Chief Executive Officer will regularly monitor and review transaction processes to ensure accurate allocation of costs.

7.2 Use of Facilities

7.2.1 General

To support Councillors in meeting the demands and expectations of conducting Council business, the following internal catering arrangements shall be offered to all Councillors:

- Reasonable refreshments during meetings on Council business. The type of refreshments shall depend on the nature of the meeting, timing and attendees.
- Reasonable meals served during evenings of Council and other key meetings.
- Provision of refreshments in the Mayor's Room.

Refreshments are also provided in the Mayor's Room for use by Councillors and their guests.

7.2.2 Office of Mayor

The Mayor receives a high volume of invitations for functions, luncheons and dinners.

The budget allocation to the Office of Mayor should enable its core activity of facilitating the political, economic, social and cultural advancement of the Hepburn Shire Council strategies and policies.

The budget allocation is considered as part of the annual budget determination process.

7.2.3 Office of Councillors

As a general operating principle, in circumstances where individual Councillors, in pursuing an issue or project, believe it is beneficial to arrange a function involving a large number of people this should be arranged in consultation with the appropriate operational area. Such functions should be funded by the relevant area, therefore ensuring attribution of the cost to the project or issue. Where the cost cannot be attributed to a project or issue and the matter relates to Council business, the function shall be funded out of the Civic Activities budget.

Councillors proposing to host a function shall first liaise with the Mayor who will further discuss with the Chief Executive Officer. In seeking approval, Councillors shall specify the type and nature of the event and how the function aims to promote the initiatives, strategies and policies of the Hepburn Shire Council.

Councillors participate in some of the functions organised by the Office of Mayor. Invitations to all Councillors shall be extended for major functions and events such as Civic receptions.

Any additional functions or events outside the existing budget will need to be identified and resources allocated as part of the budget process.

7.2.4 Name badge and uniform

Each Councillor will be provided with a name badge for use on Council business.

A jacket bearing the Hepburn Shire Council logo may be ordered upon request.

The Council shall provide or lend Councillors the protective clothing required to assist in carrying out the duties of office. Where lent, this clothing is to be returned promptly upon the completion of the activity/duty for which the articles were required.

This clothing shall be limited to Occupational Health and Safety equipment, as may be held in store to meet the organisation's requirements, unless otherwise resolved by Council for the specific item(s).

7.2.5 Stationery and Administrative Support

Administrative support will be made available by the CEO Unit to assist Councillors with diary management and in responding to correspondence, enquiries and requests for services as part of their official duties as a Councillor.

The CEO Unit shall, upon request, provide Councillors with standard stationery.

The stationery may include, but not necessarily be limited to, paper, business cards, writing implements, diaries, writing pad/books, envelopes and the like.

7.2.6 Building Access

Access to the Hepburn Shire Council Municipal Offices will be available within normal office hours.

7.2.7 Information Technology Support

Each Councillor will receive support as required from Council's Information Technology department with regards to Council supplied equipment such as laptops, mobile phones and Council computer software.

Councillors can access IT Support during office hours only. No after hours support will be provided.

7.3 Gifts

In fulfilling their civic and ceremonial roles and responsibilities, Councillors will meet local, national and international delegates and officials.

In circumstances where the exchange of gifts between the host and visitor is considered courteous and expected as part of Council business, the gifts shall be organised and paid for by the Council.

The provision of corporate gifts by Councillors shall be authorised by the Mayor in discussion with the Chief Executive Officer and shall be of a standard considered appropriate for the event.

As mentioned in the Councillors Code of Conduct, Councillors:

'... will not accept gifts either in our role as councillors or where it could be perceived to influence councillors except:

Where the gift would generally be regarded as only having a token value and could not be perceived to influence our actions.

Where refusal of the gift may cause offence or embarrassment, in which case the gift may be accepted on behalf of the Council and becomes the property of Council.'

7.4 Goods and Services Tax

When the Council buys goods or services, it will pay GST to the supplier. The Council must receive a tax invoice from its suppliers to enable the Council to claim GST input tax credits. The Council can also claim input tax credits for business expenses incurred by Councillors.

The person who claims reimbursement must ensure that the Council has received an appropriate Tax Invoice that will enable the Council to claim GST input tax credits.

It is therefore each Councillor's responsibility to provide tax invoices with each expense claim.

When requested, suppliers must issue a tax invoice within 28 days of the supply of the goods or service.

8. APPENDIX 1 – COUNCILLORS’ EXPENSES CLAIM FORM

Councillors’ Expenses Claim Form

Date:

Name: Councillor/Mayor

Address:

I wish to claim the following expenses that were incurred in the performance of my duties as a Councillor/Mayor of Hepburn Shire Council:

Date	Description	Amount (\$)	GST Inc (Y/N)	Tax Invoice/Receipt Attached (Y/N)
Total Reimbursement (\$)				
Ledger Number:				

Bank Details for EFT Payment:

Bank Name:

Account Name:

BSB:

Account Number:

Signed by Councillor/Mayor:	Authorised by Chief Executive Officer:
Date:	Date:

9. APPENDIX 2 – ATTENDANCE REQUEST FORM – CONFERENCES AND FUNCTIONS

Application by Councillor to Attend Conferences or Functions

Please complete the following prior to attending training:

Councillor Name		
Date of Conference / Function		
Name of Conference / Function		
Cost of Training		
Signature of Applicant		Date:
Authorised by Chief Executive Officer		Date:

Please attach all relevant literature on or about the event.

This form will be filed on your personnel file.

10. APPENDIX 3 – USE OF PRIVATE VEHICLE FORM

Use of Private Vehicle Form

Name: _____

Please tick: 4 cylinder 6 cylinder other, please specify

Details of travel

Date	Kilometres Travelled	Description
Total		

Details of tolls

Date	Road Toll Incurred On	Cost
Total Cost		

Signed:

Authorised:

(Chief Executive Officer)

Date:

Please attach all relevant receipts and tax invoices that support your claim.