

1. PURPOSE

To provide Councillors and Delegated Committee members with a framework and guidance for the reimbursement of expenses to enable them to undertake their role in the community without disadvantage.

2. INTRODUCTION

Under Section 40 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Councillors and members of Delegated Committees are entitled to reimbursement of expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their duties.

Councillor duties are those performed by a Councillor as a necessary part of their role in achieving the objectives of Council. These duties may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Attendance at meetings of Council and its committees
- (b) Attendance at Council briefing meetings, workshops, civic events or functions convened by Council
- (c) Attendance at conferences, workshops and training programs relating to the role of Councillor or Mayor
- (d) Attendance at meetings, events or functions representing Council
- (e) Duties in relation to constituents concerning Council business.

Members of Delegated Committees exercise the powers of Councillors under delegation.

This policy ensures that reimbursement of expenses for Councillors and Delegated Committee members is in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and meets the principles of public transparency, achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, and ensuring the ongoing financial viability of Council.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to Councillors and members of Delegated Committees of Horsham Rural City Council.

4. PRINCIPLES

4.1 General Matters

- 4.1.1 Councillors and members of Delegated Committees will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses that:
 - (a) Are bona fide expenses and
 - (b) Have been reasonably incurred in the performance of their role and
 - (c) Are reasonably necessary to perform their role.
- 4.1.2 Councillors and members of Delegated Committees will be provided with the necessary resources and facilities so that they can serve, engage and act in the community's best interests. Wherever possible, all associated expenses and arrangements (travel, accommodation, registration fees, etc) should be confirmed, finalised and authorised by the Chief Executive Officer or relevant Director (for Delegated Committee members) beforehand.
- 4.1.3 Council facilities and services will not be made available for use by members of a Councillor or Delegated Committee member's family, unless:
 - (a) The use directly relates to attendance at a civic function or another aspect of the Councillor or Delegated Committee member's civic duties;
 - (b) The use results in no additional expense for Council (for example, a partner/family member accompanies a Councillor or Delegated Committee member in a vehicle or accommodation provided for their use;
 - (c) The Chief Executive Officer authorises the arrangements.
- 4.1.4 Councillors must ensure that the benefits outlined in this policy are not used as part of any election

campaign.

- 4.1.5 If a Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee does not claim a particular expense or use a particular facility, it cannot be offset against a claim for an additional amount of another expense or facility.
- 4.1.6 Claims for facilities and expenses by a Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee other than those expressly listed in this policy must be subject to a Council resolution.

4.2 Claims for reimbursement

All claims for reimbursement of bona fide out of pocket expenses incurred by a Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee must be submitted to the CEO (Councillors) or relevant Director (member of Delegated Committee) within 14 days of the end of the month in which the expense was incurred. Following the end of the financial year, all expenses incurred in the month of June must be submitted within 7 days (i.e. by COB 7 July).

Claims not lodged within the specified timeframes will not be considered for reimbursement unless there are circumstances which are accepted and approved by the CEO.

To enable Council to process a reimbursement a Councillor or Delegated Committee member must:

- Complete the approved Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Expense Reimbursement Claim Form F04/112.
- Complete the approved Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Travel Reimbursement Claim Form F04/111 for travel expenses.
- Attach itemised tax invoice/itemised tax receipt to support the claim along with any other relevant supporting documentation, for example travel log, record of Carer expenses.
 - Where an itemised tax receipt cannot be obtained a declaration must be completed describing the expense incurred.
- On the relevant claim form, the claimant must detail the purpose of the expense, how it relates to the duties of a Councillor and an explanation of how it is a benefit to the community.
- Claim forms are available on the Councillor Portal, Councillor Room, or from the EA to CEO and Councillors for Councillors or via the respective Director where the claim relates to a Delegated Committee member.
- An expense claim which complies with this Policy and the Local Government Act 2020 is submitted to the CEO (Councillors) or relevant Director (Delegated Committee member) for processing.
- An expense claim that does not comply with this policy or the Local Government Act 2020 will be returned to the Councillor or Delegated Committee member with an explanation of why the request is not compliant in order for further information/explanation to be provided.
- Where a claim is lodged and the necessary documentation or detail of explanation is still not provided, or the amount of reimbursement is considered to be unreasonable, the CEO may refuse the claim.
- If a claim is refused, the claimant will be informed in writing that the claim has been refused and the reason for the refusal.
- Expenses incurred from the purchase and consumption of any alcoholic product will not be paid. Any reimbursement for claims containing expenses for alcoholic products will be reduced by the amount incurred in relation to the alcoholic product.

4.3 Tax Invoices and receipts

Reimbursement of eligible out-of-pocket expenses will be provided where tax invoices and original receipts are submitted along with any other relevant supporting documentation and a completed reimbursement form. Credit card receipts will not be accepted.

Costs associated with travel are recorded and are available for public inspection in accordance with *Local Government Act 2020* and Council's Public Transparency Policy.

4.4 Payment of reimbursements

Approved claims will be forwarded to the Finance Department who will deposit reimbursements into a nominated bank account by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) at the next fortnightly pay run. EFT Payment details must be provided on the relevant claim form.

4.5 Carer and Dependent-Related Expenses

Council will provide reimbursement of costs where the provision of childcare is reasonably required for a Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee to perform their role [*Local Government Act 2020* s41(2)(c)].

This applies to the care of a dependent, while the Councillor or Delegated Committee member is undertaking their official duties and may include expenses such as hourly fees and booking fees, if applicable.

Council will provide reimbursement of costs where the provision of carer services is reasonably required when a Councillor or Delegated Committee member who is a carer (*Carers Recognition Act 2012*, s4) incurs reasonable expenses in the performance of their duties [*Local Government Act 2020* s41(2)(d)].

Payments for carer and childcare services will not be made to a person:

- (a) Who resides with the Councillor or Delegated Committee member
- (b) Has any financial or pecuniary interest with the Councillor or Delegated Committee member
- (c) Has a relationship with the Councillor, Delegated Committee member or their partner.

Councillors and Delegated Committee members seeking reimbursement for carer and dependent-related costs, should complete and submit the Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Expense Reimbursement Claim Form, together with all receipts/tax invoices, including documentation showing the dates and times care was provided to the Chief Executive Officer (Councillors) or relevant Director (Delegated Committee member) for processing.

4.6 Private Vehicle Usage

Councillors and members of Delegated Committees should seek to utilise a Council-owned vehicle before use of a private vehicle for Council purposes, particularly for travel outside the municipal district. This should be arranged through the Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer and Councillors.

Councillors and members of Delegated Committees are entitled to reimbursement for expenses incurred in the use of their own private vehicle for Council purposes for travel outside the Horsham urban area, and for travel to Council meetings from outside the urban area. 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.

Council will not reimburse or fund any expense arising from a breach of road, traffic, parking or other regulations or laws, or for damage or loss of a private vehicle.

Reimbursement will not be provided in circumstances where a Councillor or Delegated Committee member chooses to attend a function or event, but they are not the nominated Council representative.

Where more than one Councillor or Delegated Committee member attends the same event outside the municipal boundary a vehicle should be shared.

Any proportion of the travel expenses that relate to activities other than the Councillors or Delegated Committee members official duties and functions will be excluded from the calculation of expenses to be paid.

Acceptable private vehicle travel reimbursements:

- Attendance at Ordinary or Special Meetings of Council and Briefing sessions.
- Attendance at Council Committee Meetings, as a member of a Delegated Committee or where the Councillor has been appointed as the Council representative or has been requested by the Council representative to attend on their behalf.
- Attendance at official Council Functions.
- Attendance at conferences and seminars where such attendance and usage of a private vehicle by a Councillor has been pre-approved by the CEO
- Attendance at Ordinary, Committee or subcommittee meetings of State or Regional Organisations where the Councillor has by Council resolution been elected as a Council delegate or been requested by said delegate to attend on Councils behalf.
- Attendance at Council approved professional development programs.
- Or for any other travel approved by the CEO.

Reimbursement of car mileage expenses will only be approved if claims are submitted using the Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Travel Reimbursement Claim Form F04/111 and provide adequate detail of:

- Purpose of the trip,
- Date and location of meeting/event/function/training,
- Odometer readings for the start and end of the trip, and
- Total kilometres travelled.

Expenses not fitting into one of the classifications above will not be approved for reimbursement.

Note: all travel should be undertaken utilising the safest direct route and the most practical and economical mode of transport.

4.7 Remote Area Travel Allowance

Council is required to pay a remote area travel allowance if a Councillor or Delegated Committee member resides more than 50 kilometres, by the safest road route, from the Council Chamber. Reimbursement is at the rate specified in the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal for each day of which one or more meetings or authorised functions were attended by the Councillor/Delegated Committee member up to a maximum level set per annum.

Councillors and Delegated Committee members seeking the Remote Area Travel Allowance should complete and submit the Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Travel Reimbursement Claim Form to the Chief Executive Officer (Councillors) or relevant Director (Delegated Committee member) for processing on each occasion of travel.

4.8 Meetings, Seminars, Conferences and Training

Councillors and Delegated Committee members are entitled to reimbursement for relevant expenses incurred in attending pre-approved meetings, seminars, conferences and training that are directly relevant to their role on Council outside the municipality. This may include public transport, meals (excluding alcohol), conference, seminar or training costs, parking and reasonable minor incidentals (as determined by the Chief Executive Officer), up to the maximum rates stated at 4.9.

All arrangements for attendance at meetings, seminars, conferences and training by Councillors and Delegated Committee members should be made through the Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer and Councillors.

Any expenditure on seminars, conferences or professional development must provide for maximum net community benefit when weighed up against expenditure incurred by Council.

Councillors and Delegated Committee members seeking reimbursement for expenses associated with their attendance at meetings, seminars, conferences and training, should complete and submit the Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Expense Reimbursement Claim Form, together with all receipts/tax invoices, to the Chief Executive Officer (Councillors) or relevant Director (Delegated Committee member) for processing.

4.8.1 Council Initiated Training/Professional Development

Upon commencement of each councillor term, Councillors must comply with section 32 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, including completing induction training within six months after the day the Councillor take the Oath or Affirmation of office, this includes Councillors that have been re-elected or been a Councillor before.

In addition to the Councillor Induction Program, in house governance training facilitated by officers or external presenters will be arranged from time to time that Councillors are expected to attend. Council will also provide access to professional development programs on matters such as meeting procedures, governance training, financial training and team building throughout their term on Council.

The Executive Assistant to the CEO and Councillors will maintain attendance records to evidence Councillor participation.

4.8.2 External Training/Professional Development

The attending Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee will be required to provide a report back to Council at the next available Council briefing following attendance at external Professional Development outlining the benefits to their role and the Community.

The Executive Assistant to the CEO and Councillors will maintain attendance records to verify Councillor participation.

Council will not pay any fees or associated costs of retaking any part of a development activity that a Councillor has failed to successfully complete or attend unless there are circumstances which are accepted and approved by the CEO.

The allocation to a Councillor ends when the Councillor's term of office ends, and any balance does not roll over if the Councillor is re-elected.

4.9 Meals and Accommodation maximum rates

Council will reimburse costs for accommodation and meals while Councillors and Delegated Committee Members are undertaking prior approved travel and/or professional development outside the municipality.

Expense Type	Max Melbourne Metropolitan and Interstate	Max Regional and Rural
Breakfast (if not included in room rate)	\$25.00	\$20.00
Lunch	\$25.00/\$30.00	\$20.00
Dinner	\$50.00	\$40.00
Reasonable Minor Incidentals (does not include alcohol)	\$15.00	\$15.00
Accommodation	\$200.00	\$150.00
Parking	Actual cost	Actual cost

4.10 Functions and Events

Where a Councillor or Delegated Committee member is the designated Council representative to perform an official duty at a function or event, Council will meet costs associated with their attendance. This may include public transport, meals (excluding alcohol), conference or seminar costs, parking and reasonable minor incidentals (as determined by the Chief Executive Officer), up to the maximum rates outlined in section 4.9. If their partner is invited, Council will meet the cost of their attendance also.

Where a Councillor or Delegated Committee member and their partner are invited to a function or event and no official duties are required, the Chief Executive Officer has the discretion to determine whether Council will meet the cost of their attendance. Approval must be sought prior to the function or event.

For formal local functions and events supported by Council, the Chief Executive Officer has the discretion to determine whether Council will meet the cost of attendance for Councillors or Delegated Committee members and their partners. Approval must be sought prior to the function or event.

Councillors and Delegated Committee members seeking reimbursement for expenses associated with performing an official duty at a function or event should complete and submit the Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Expense Reimbursement Claim Form, together with all receipts/tax invoices, to the Chief Executive Officer (Councillors) or relevant Director (Delegated Committee member) for processing.

4.11 Communication Tools

Each Councillor will be provided with a fully maintained mobile phone, computer, relevant software, email and access to the internet for use during their Council term. The Mayor will also be provided with a landline office phone. Councillors will not be reimbursed for call costs from personal phones or any additional costs associated with personal electronic devices as these costs are considered to be covered by the Councillor Allowance.

Delegated Committee members may be reimbursed for reasonably incurred phone calls where it has been necessary to use these tools to perform their role. Delegated Committee members seeking reimbursement for these costs should complete and submit the Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Expense Reimbursement Claim Form and associated receipts to the Chief Executive Officer (Councillors) or relevant Director (Delegated Committee member) for processing.

4.12 Stationery and Facilities

Council will provide Councillors with standard stationery including:

- Corporate name badge (for use while on Council business)
- Business card
- Basic stationery supplies
- Civic Centre (Access card provided)
 - Printing
 - Councillor Office with desktop PC
 - Meeting rooms (booked through EA)
 - Confidential material destruction bin

Councillors also have access to administrative support through the Executive Assistant to the CEO and Councillors. If Councillors choose to purchase the equivalent of any resources or facilities made available to them Councillors will not be entitled to claim reimbursement for their own purchase of those same resources and facilities.

4.13 Councillor Portal

Councillors have a dedicated Councillor Portal (Via HRCC intranet) which provides access to:

- Forms relevant for Councillors
- Council meeting agenda, minutes, appendices

- Council briefing papers
- Governance Rules
- Policies and Procedures, Guidelines and Frameworks, Plans, Strategies, Reports and Charters
 - Councillor declarations including Conflict of Interest, Gifts Benefits & Hospitality, Personal Interest Returns
- Web links, including *Local Government Act 2020*, Know Your Council, MAV, VLGA, HRCC Website
- Councillor Induction
- Council Service Request (online request form)
- Contact details for Councillors and executive team

4.14 Memberships or Subscriptions to Professional Associations

Council will not meet the costs of any memberships or subscriptions to professional associations (i.e. those required by virtue of professional qualifications such as finance, engineering, law etc) by a Councillor or Delegated Committee member unless there is a specific resolution of Council, or it is in accordance with a Council policy. For other professional development refer to 4.8.

4.15 Legal Expenses

Council will not meet the costs of any legal expenses incurred by a Councillor or Delegated Committee member unless there is a specific resolution of Council, or it is in accordance with a Council policy.

4.16 Mayor and Councillor Allowances

Section 39 of the *Local Government Act 2020* entitles a Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors to receive an allowance in accordance with a determination of the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal. If a Councillor retires or has their position as a Councillor terminated, they will be required to reimburse Council any allowance paid in advance.

Allowances will be withheld in the event that a Councillor is suspended or ordered to stand down in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

4.17 Mayoral Resources and Support

To assist the Mayor to undertake their role, Council will provide the following during their Mayoral term:

- a) A fully equipped office exclusively for their use, along with access to meeting space, printers and phones at the Civic Centre
- b) Administrative support via the Executive Assistant to the CEO and Councillors
- c) A Council mobile phone
- d) Vehicle for the Mayor of a type similar to that of the Chief Executive Officer
- e) A Council vehicle for their full private use in accordance with Council's Vehicle Usage Policy
- f) A procurement (credit) card, where requested by the Mayor, with a \$5,000 transactional and monthly limit to facilitate purchase of goods and services whilst on Council business, in accordance with Council's Procurement Card Use Policy.

4.18 Reimbursement Exclusions

The following expenses cannot be funded or reimbursed by Council:

- Stationery, facilities or equipment as already provided for in this policy.
- Damage to or loss of personal possessions.
- Any expense arising from a breach of road, traffic, parking or other regulations or laws:
 - Where infringements are incurred by a Councillor or member of a Delegated Committee while driving a Council pool vehicle, the cost of the infringement must be paid by the Councillor or Delegated Committee member.
- Expenses associated with the election campaign of any Councillor.
- Expenses claimed by a Councillor or Delegated Committee member as a tax deduction.

- Hotel mini bar, room movies, room service and similar.
- Tickets and entry fees to events that are in addition to that provided for in this policy.
- Expenses for a Councillor or Delegated Committee's partner which are not expressly provided for in this policy.
- Expenses incurred by Councillors when acting in a private capacity.

4.19 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Quarterly reports of all Councillor and Delegated Committee member expenses will be provided as part of the Quarterly Performance Report to Council and the Audit and Risk Committee. Details will also be published in the Annual Report.

These reports will include:

- (a) Expenses incurred by Councillors and Delegated Committee members during the quarter.
- (b) Reimbursement claims made by Councillor and Delegated Committee members during the quarter.
- (c) Reimbursements made by Councillors and Delegated Committee members during the quarter.

Expenses paid or reimbursed under this policy are also subject to regular review by Council's internal auditors.

4.20 Accountability and Responsibility

4.20.1 Council

- Responsible for the decision to approve this Policy by Council Resolution
- Responsible to ensure this policy adheres to the *Local Government Act 2020* and consistent with other Council Policies

4.20.2 Councillors and members of Delegated Committees

- Responsible for ensuring they are each familiar with the requirements of this policy
- Accountable for managing own compliance with this policy
- Responsible for submitting reimbursement forms in accordance with this policy
- Maintain a record of own expenses incurred

4.20.3 Chief Executive Officer

- Overall responsibility for compliance with this policy
- Overall responsibility for enforcing accountability
- Monitor the implementation of this policy and conduct periodic reviews to drive continuous improvement
- Check legitimacy of claims
- Authorise expenses (Councillors)

4.20.4 Directors

- Overall responsibility for compliance with this policy
- Overall responsibility for enforcing accountability
- Overall responsibility for monitoring this policy
- Check legitimacy of claims
- Authorise expenses (Delegated Committee members)

4.20.5 Executive Assistant to CEO and Councillors

- Identifying suitable and affordable pricing options for accommodation, travel
- Ensure adequate funds for the claimant are available for professional development/training
- Ensure claim forms are appropriately reviewed and signed as per this policy before financial processing

- Maintain attendance records for Council organised professional development and training sessions

4.20.6 Finance

- Administration of the financial process including review of claim forms
- Extraction of quarterly expenses for reporting purposes

4.20.7 Governance

- Provision of a quarterly report to Council and the Audit and Risk Committee, and publish endorsed reports to Councils website.
- Participate where required in the review and development of this policy, frameworks and procedures in compliance with this policy.

5. COMMUNICATION

This policy will be available on the Horsham Rural City Council website, Councillor Portal and intranet. It will also be discussed at Council Briefing meetings and Delegated Committee meetings and will form part of the induction training for new Councillors and Delegated Committee members and refresher training provided mid-term.

6. RESPONSIBILITY

Policy Owner: Director Corporate Services

This Policy will be reviewed at least once every Council term or earlier as required by changed circumstances including changes to legislation and plans, strategies or policies of HRCC.

This policy is also included in a suite of policies, procedures and frameworks that is incorporated into the Audit and Risk Committee review.

7. DEFINITIONS

Definition	Meaning
Carer	A person who provides care for another person who has a disability, is older, has a mental illness or an ongoing medical condition (including a terminal or chronic illness or dementia) (<i>Carers Recognition Act 2012, section 4</i>)
Civic duties	Duties or activities in relation to the municipality undertaken on behalf of Council
Civic Functions	Functions in the municipality undertaken by Council
Councillor Portal	Access to information, services and support that assist Councillors to perform their role
Delegated committee	A committee established by Council which must include at least two Councillors and may include any other persons appointed to the Delegated Committee by the Council who are entitled to vote (<i>Local Government Act 2020, section 63</i>)

8. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Document	Location
<i>Carers Recognition Act 2012</i> (section 4)	Internet
<i>Gender Equity Act 2020</i>	Internet
<i>Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019</i>	Internet
<i>Local Government Act 2020</i> (sections 40 and 41)	Website
Horsham Rural City Council – Councillor Code of Conduct	Website, intranet, Councillor Portal
Horsham Rural City Council – Council Procurement Card Use Policy (A04/034)	Intranet
Horsham Rural City Council – Information Privacy Policy (A04/039)	Website, intranet, Councillor Portal
Horsham Rural City Council – Public Transparency Policy	Website, intranet, Councillor Portal
Horsham Rural City Council – Terms of Reference (for each individual delegated committee)	Website, intranet
Horsham Rural City Council – Vehicle Usage Policy (A04/011)	Intranet, Councillor Portal

Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Expense Reimbursement Claim Form (F04/112)	Intranet, Councillor Portal, Councillors Room, EA to CEO and Councillors
Councillor/Delegated Committee Member Travel Reimbursement Claim Form (F04/111)	Intranet, Councillor Portal, Councillors Room, EA to CEO and Councillors

9. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version	Approval Date	Approval By	Amendment	Review Date
01	21 October 2013	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replaces Councillors reimbursement of Expenses Policy 	
02	19 December 2016	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed and updated 	
03	27 August 2018	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed and updated 	27 August 2022
04	24 August 2020	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replaces Councillor Allowances, Reimbursement and Support Policy to reflect requirements of the new <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> 	April 2021
05	26 April 2021	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor formatting changes 	26 April 2024
5.1	March 2023	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New logo 	26 April 2024
06	22 April 2024	Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major update in accordance with audit recommendations and LG Inspectorate. Reviewed by Audit & Risk Committee on 21 Mar 2024 	22 April 2028

It is recognised that from time-to-time circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to Council and Administrative Policies. Where an update does not materially alter a Policy, such a change may be made administratively, without the need for formal adoption by EMT or Council. Examples include a change to the name of a Council Department/Position Title, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government Department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, all changes will be noted in the document control section and version number updated.