



GREATER BENDIGO CITY COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR EXPENSE AND SUPPORT POLICY



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1. PURPOSE

1.1 This policy supports Councillors and members of delegated committees to perform their role, as defined under the *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*, by ensuring that expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their role are reimbursed. The policy also provides guidance on:

- Entitlements and support
- Processes for reimbursement
- Reporting, monitoring, evaluation and review requirements
- Other measures supporting Councillors to fulfil their duties.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In accordance with section 41 of the Act, the City must adopt and maintain a policy in relation to the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for Councillors and members of Council delegated committees.

2.2 Councillors and members of delegated committees are entitled, under section 40 of the Act to reimbursement of expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their duties.

2.3 This policy has been developed to establish clear guidelines and enable claims for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses to be processed without the need to seek Council approval for individual claims.

3. SCOPE

3.1 This policy applies to:

- Councillors
- Members of delegated committees.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1 In this Policy:

Act means the *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*

Carer means a carer as defined under section 3 of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012*

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) means the person appointed by Council to be its Chief Executive Officer, or any person acting in that position

City means the Greater Bendigo City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*

Committee secretariat means the City officer/team/Unit that manages the committee

Council means the Greater Bendigo City Council being all the Councillors collectively

Councillor means a person holding the office of member of Greater Bendigo City Council

CTM means Corporate Travel Management which is a provider of travel management solutions to the City under the State Government Travel Services Contract.¹

Delegated Committee means delegated committees defined under section 63 of the *Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)*

Delegated Committee member means a person appointed to a Delegated Committee

Information and Communication Technology equipment means any device including mobile phones, tablets, laptops, computers and any peripheral or related devices or accessories

Mayor means the Councillor elected to the Office of Mayor of the City or any person appointed by Council to be acting as Mayor

Municipality means the Greater Bendigo municipality

Out-of-pocket expense means an expense that has been met by the Councillor or delegated committee member, using their own funds, which may later be reimbursed

¹ The Technology One supplier number is G8660

5. PRINCIPLES

5.1 The general principles underpinning this policy are as follows:

- Councillors must meet the standards of conduct set out in the Councillor Code of Conduct prescribed under section 139 of the Act;
- encouraging diversity in participation, equity, inclusion and access; and
- accountability and transparency.

5.2 This policy ensures that the reimbursement of expenses is in accordance with the Act and meets the Act's principles of public transparency; achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community; and ensuring the ongoing financial viability of the Council.

5.3 Councillors and members of delegated committees will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses that are:

- bona fide expenses; and
- have been reasonably incurred in the performance of their role; and
- are reasonably necessary to perform their role.

5.4 The City is committed to ensuring that all claims are processed effectively and efficiently as possible.

6. POLICY

Entitlements - Councillor

6.1 General

6.1.1 All exercise of entitlements, including claims for reimbursement, must comply with the Principles detailed at section 5 of this Policy.

6.2 Travel

6.2.1 **Private vehicle use.** Councillors are entitled to reimbursement for the use of their own vehicle where:

- (a) Vehicle use is entirely within the municipality;
- (b) Vehicle use is outside the municipality, that is pre-authorised by the Manager Governance. Councillors should, whenever possible, use a City fleet vehicle or public transport when performing duties outside the municipality;
- (c) Car mileage will be reimbursed at the rate specified at Attachment One.

6.2.2 City Fleet Vehicles

- (a) **Mayoral Vehicle.** The City may provide a vehicle for the Mayor's exclusive use during their term. The provision of the vehicle is subject to the following terms and conditions:
- (i) Use of vehicle is in accordance with the [Fleet Policy](#) and [Drivers Licence Policy](#);
 - (ii) The Mayor may use the vehicle for reasonable private use;
 - (iii) Any damage, accident or fault to be reported to Manger Governance as soon as practicable.
- (b) **Fleet Vehicles.** Councillors may book City fleet vehicles, through the Governance Unit, for use when performing duties. The provision of the vehicle is subject to the following terms and conditions:
- (i) Use of vehicle in accordance with the [Fleet Policy](#) and [Drivers Licence Policy](#);
 - (ii) The vehicle must not be utilized for private use;
 - (iii) Any damage, accident or fault to be reported to Manger Governance as soon as practicable.
- (c) Where required, a designated fleet vehicle will be made available for use by a Councillor with disability for the purpose of supporting that Councillor to effectively undertake their role as a Councillor.

6.2.3 Intrastate travel. Intrastate travel is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (a) Travel must utilise City fleet vehicle or public transport, unless otherwise approved by the Manager Governance;
- (b) The Governance Unit can arrange transportation, upon request;
- (c) Where accommodation is required, Councillors must obtain approval from the Mayor prior to travel;

6.2.4 Interstate travel. Interstate travel is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (a) Councillors must obtain written approval from the Mayor prior to travel;
- (b) The Mayor must obtain consensus from the Councillors prior to travel;
- (c) The Governance Unit will arrange prepaid travel, where possible through CTM, including:
 - (i) Transport;
 - (ii) Accommodation and meals, in accordance with rates at Attachment One;
 - (iii) Insurance.

6.2.5 **International Travel.** International travel is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (a) Councillors must obtain approval from Council prior to travel;
- (b) The Governance Unit will arrange travel, where possible through CTM, including:
 - (i) Transport;
 - (ii) Accommodation and meals, in accordance with rates at Attachment One;
 - (iii) Insurance;
 - (iv) Telecommunications – international travel pass, calling cards, local SIM cards and/or mobile phone roaming.

6.3 **Child or Dependant Care**

6.3.1 In accordance with sections 41(2)(c) and (d) of the Act, the City will reimburse costs to a Councillor or delegated committee member where:

- (a) the provision of childcare is reasonably required
- (b) the provision of care for a dependent is reasonably required

6.3.2 Care expenses that may be claimed include but are not limited to:

- (a) Childcare centre fees
- (b) Home care
- (c) Hourly fees
- (d) Agency booking fees
- (e) Reasonable travel expenses for transporting the carer to the dependent or the dependent to the carer

6.3.3 Except by prior written agreement of the Manager Governance, payments for carer and childcare services will not be made:

- (a) to a person who resides with the Councillor
- (b) has any financial or pecuniary interest with the Councillor
- (c) has a relationship with the Councillor or their partner (i.e. immediate family member)
- (d) has recognised care responsibility (i.e. parent or other regular care giver)

6.3.4 Evidence of out of pocket costs incurred by the Councillor must be provided with any claim.

6.3.5 The level of financial support shall be determined by the Manager Governance in consultation with the claimant.

6.4 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

- 6.4.1 The City will provide information communication technology (ICT), including equipment, software, and support including basic training, subject to the:
- (a) Conditions in Attachment Two
 - (b) [General IT Use Policy](#)
 - (c) [Portable and Attractive Assets Policy](#)
- 6.4.2 Councillors must return all items to the City on the next business day at the conclusion of a Councillor's term, unless otherwise agreed by Manager Governance.
- 6.4.3 Reasonable personal use is permitted as long as it does not affect the primary use of the equipment, or waste equipment or network resources.
- 6.4.4 The City reserves the right to review or audit anything created or stored on the equipment.
- 6.4.5 The City reserves the right to monitor usage.
- 6.4.6 Decisions regarding new product/service selection and existing product/service retention, repair or replacement is vested solely in the City.

6.5 Office and Meeting Facilities

- 6.5.1 The City will provide Councillors with access (individual fob/security tag) to the City's office and designated spaces, including meeting rooms at the Bendigo Town Hall.
- 6.5.2 Designated spaces may be used by all Councillors for related Council business during usual business hours or by prior arrangement with the Governance Unit.
- 6.5.3 Councillors may book rooms for meeting with external parties through the Governance Unit.
- 6.5.4 Where a fob or security tag is misplaced or stolen, Councillors must contact the Governance Unit as soon as practicable (and may be responsible for replacement costs).

6.6 Professional Development

- 6.6.1 The City will meet the cost of training and development courses, seminars and activities of professional and personal development within the limits of the budget approved by Council and taking into consideration the relevance of the course for the Councillor and the Council.
- 6.6.2 The budget and the individual allocations will be set as agreed by Council on a yearly basis following assessment of professional development requirements.
- 6.6.3 To assist this process, the Mayor will undertake a professional development assessment with each Councillor.

6.7 Memberships

- 6.7.1 The City will pay professional membership where there is a demonstrated benefit to the Councillor performing their duties, and to the City as agreed by the Council.

6.8 Conferences and Functions

6.8.1 The City will bear reasonable costs enabling Councillors to attend an event whilst performing duties. Reasonable costs may include:

- (a) Registration fees
- (b) Main conference dinner (if not covered by registration cost)
- (c) Travel, including transport and accommodation as per section 6.2
Travel

6.8.2 **Spouse/Partner Accompanying Councillor.** Where prior approval is sought the City may cover the cost, limited specifically to the entry fee and meal, of a spouse or partner expressly invited to attend a function to accompany a Councillor.

6.8.3 **Charity Events.** The City may cover the costs to allow attendance of the Mayor (Acting Mayor or Deputy Mayor in the absence of the Mayor), as representative for the City.

6.8.4 Where Councillors attend a charity fundraising event for which contribution is required, Councillors attend at their own expense.

6.9 Access and Inclusion

6.9.1 The City is committed to ensuring equitable access, social inclusion and respect for human rights and may provide appropriate support to ensure Councillors can complete their duties proficiently.

6.9.2 The City will provide support to a Councillor upon consideration of written report from a medical practitioner or other relevant qualified professional or the Councillor making the claim where appropriate.

6.9.3 The level of support including financial provided by the City shall be determined by the Manager Governance, in consultation with the claimant.

6.9.4 Support may include reimbursement of a Carer's expenses to support Councillor travel and/or attendance at meetings, professional development, and conferences and functions.

6.10 Councillors' Welfare

6.10.1 The Mayor and CEO can provide support to Councillors, specific guidance, counselling or coaching that may be required to enhance their performance as a Councillor.

6.10.2 A Councillor shall be entitled to counselling on a confidential basis through the City's approved Employee Assistance Program.

6.11 Insurance

6.11.1 Councillors are covered by the following Council Insurance Policies, whilst performing duties:

- (a) Personal Accident Insurance
- (b) Public Liability Insurance
- (c) Professional Indemnity Insurance
- (d) Councillors and Officers Liability Insurance

- (e) Travel Insurance
 - (f) WorkCover (as a deemed employee).
- 6.11.2 The City will pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim made against a Councillor arising whilst performing duties, where the claim is accepted by the City's insurers.
- 6.11.3 Spouses and partners are covered by the City's Personal Accident Insurance when accompanying Councillors whilst performing duties.
- 6.11.4 Insurance does not cover any criminal, wilful or negligent acts of the Councillor or related parties.

6.12 Legal Expenses

- 6.12.1 Legal expenses incurred by a Councillor shall be the responsibility of that Councillor unless:
- (a) Prior written approval of the CEO is provided; or
 - (b) By Council resolution

6.13 Working with Children Check and Police Check

- 6.13.1 The City will meet the costs of a Councillor undertaking a Working With Children Check and Police check, if required by the City.

Entitlements - Members of Delegated Committees

- 6.14 **General.** All exercise of entitlements, including claims for reimbursement, must comply with the Principles detailed at section 5 of this Policy.
- 6.15 **Travel Expenses.** Members of Delegated Committees are entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses:
- 6.15.1 As per Attachment One
 - 6.15.2 Only if pre-approved by the Delegated Committee secretariat.
- 6.16 **Carer and dependent-related expenses.** Members of Delegated Committees are entitled to reimbursement of carer and dependent-related expenses:
- 6.16.1 In accordance with clause 6.3
 - 6.16.2 Only if pre-approved by the Delegated Committee secretariat.
- 6.17 **Access and Inclusion.** Members of Delegated Committees are entitled to reimbursement of Access and Inclusion related expenses:
- 6.17.1 In accordance with clause 6.9.
 - 6.17.2 Only if pre-approved by the Delegated Committee secretariat.

Exclusions to Entitlements

- 6.18 The following out-of-pocket expenses are the responsibility of Councillors or members of delegated committees and cannot be the subject of a claim for funding or reimbursement:
- 6.18.1 The cost of any road, traffic, parking or public transport infringements or penalties incurred by Councillors or members of Delegated Committees, whether or not in the course of performing their role;
 - 6.18.2 Any private travel, regardless of whether it is conjoined with approved interstate or overseas travel in the course of performing their role;
 - 6.18.3 If Councillors choose to purchase the equivalent of any resources or facilities made available to them as outlined above, Councillors will not be entitled to claim reimbursement for their own purchase of those same resources and facilities.
 - 6.18.4 Any private-use costs associated with use of ICT that are deemed unreasonable.
 - 6.18.5 Any intentional, wilful, or negligent damage to ICT.
 - 6.18.6 Other general expenses including:
 - (a) Alcohol
 - (b) Passport application expenses
 - (c) Fees or charges incurred from a traveller's failure to cancel a guaranteed reservation
 - (d) Mini bar purchases
 - (e) Electronic organisers
 - (f) Toiletries
 - (g) Briefcases or bags
 - (h) Newspaper and magazine purchases
 - (i) Personal travel insurance
 - (j) Any in-room entertainment, including movie hire
 - (k) Kennel fees or animal expenses
 - (l) Hairdressing, barber and beautician services
 - (m) Loss of property (claims for loss of property may be available under the city's travel insurance)
 - 6.18.7 Other than by Council resolution, expenses or other support for attendance at political party events.

Process for Reimbursements - Councillors

- 6.19 Making a claim for payment:
- 6.19.1 Claims must be submitted:
 - (a) For all car mileage claims using the Monthly Travel Log form (Attachment Three);
 - (b) For all other claims using the Expenses Reimbursement Form (Attachment Four).
 - 6.19.2 Where the provider of the goods or service is registered for GST a tax invoice must be obtained and provided (without this the GST component of the cost cannot be reimbursed).
 - 6.19.3 Receipts (or statutory declaration in absence of receipt) must be attached to the claim form (credit card receipts will not be accepted).
- 6.20 All claims for expenses must be lodged within three months of the expenses being incurred. At the end of the financial year all claims must be received no later than one month after the financial year.
- 6.21 All claims will be assessed (and approved or denied) for compliance by the Governance Unit.
- 6.22 A Councillor may request the CEO review of a decision made by the Governance Unit under this Policy.
- 6.23 All approved payments will be provided by either:
- 6.23.1 Direct disbursement to the supplier; or
 - 6.23.2 Electronic funds transfer into the nominated back account.
- 6.24 If the claim is denied, the Governance Unit will advise the Councillor in writing of the reasons.

Process for Reimbursements – Members of Delegated Committees

- 6.25 All expense claims for members of delegated committees must be requested through the relevant committee secretariat.
- 6.26 Committee secretariats must follow the City's internal process for reimbursement.
- 6.27 All claims will be assessed for compliance by the Committee secretariat
- 6.28 All claims for expenses must be lodged within one month of the expenses being incurred.
- 6.29 A Member of a Delegated Committee may request the Governance Unit to review a decision made by the Committee secretariat under this Policy.
- 6.30 All approved payments will be provided by either:
- 6.30.1 Direct disbursement to the supplier; or
 - 6.30.2 Electronic funds transfer into the nominated back account.
- 6.31 If the claim is denied, the Committee secretariat will advise the member in writing of the reasons.

Reporting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- 6.32 Monthly reports of all Councillor expenses will be published on the City website.
- 6.33 Quarterly reports of all Councillor and delegated committee member expenses will be provided to Council's Audit and Risk Committee.
- 6.34 Annual report of all Councillor expenses will be published in the City's Annual Report.
- 6.35 Reports will include:
 - 6.35.1 Expenses incurred by Councillor and delegated committee members; and
 - 6.35.2 Reimbursements made by the City to Councillors and delegated committee members
- 6.36 Council commits to monitoring processes and decision making to understand the overall success of the policy's implementation.
- 6.37 Within one month of funded travel and/or attendance at conferences and/or functions, the Councillor or delegated committee member will report to Council verbally and in writing outlining:
 - 6.37.1 Purpose for the travel;
 - 6.37.2 Its relevance to any Council plan, strategy, program or project;
 - 6.37.3 Perceived benefits to the Council and/or the community and/or the individual;
 - 6.37.4 Any other aspects deemed relevant.

7. REVIEW

- 7.1 Further information or advice on this policy should be directed to the Governance Unit at corporate.governance@Bendigo.vic.gov.au.
- 7.2 This Policy will be reviewed within 12 months of each municipal election.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 8.1 For the purpose of clarification in giving effect to this Policy, Councillor duties may include, but are not limited to:
 - 8.1.1 attendance at meetings of Council and its committees
 - 8.1.2 attendance at briefing sessions, workshops, civic events or functions convened by Council
 - 8.1.3 attendance at conferences, workshops and training programs related to the role of Councillor, Mayor or Deputy Mayor
 - 8.1.4 attendance at meetings, events or functions representing Council
 - 8.1.5 duties in relation to constituents concerning Council business.
- 8.2 This Policy also applies to members of Council Delegated Committees when undertaking approved travel required for their role.

9. RELATED DOCUMENTS

9.1 The following documents are related to this Policy:

9.1.1 [Local Government Act 2020 \(Victoria\)](#)

9.1.2 [Councillor Code of Conduct](#)

9.1.3 [Fleet Policy](#)

9.1.4 [Drivers Licence Policy](#)

9.1.5 [Public Transparency Policy](#)

10. HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATABILITY

10.1 The implications of this policy have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

11. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

11.1 It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a City unit, 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, any change or update which materially alters this document must be made through consultation and by resolution of Council only.

12. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date Approved	Responsible Officer	Unit	Change Type	Version
Oct 2015		Executive Services	Expenses & Support	1.0
Oct 2015		Executive Services	IT Use	1.0
Oct 2016	Tania Herbert	Information Management	Mobile Device	1.0
Aug 2020	Manager Governance	Governance	Expenses & Support Review	2.0
Feb 2022	Manager Governance	Governance	Revision	2.1

13. ATTACHMENTS

13.1 Travel Rates

13.2 ICT Conditions of Use

13.3 Monthly Travel Log Form

13.4 Expenses Reimbursement Form

Attachment One – Travel Rates

Private vehicle reimbursement

The Australian Taxation Office regularly publishes the [cents per kilometre method](#) for motor vehicle expenses.

Councillors are entitled to claim expenses not in excess of the most recent rate published.

Accommodation and Meals Rates

Each financial year the Australian Taxation Office publishes a [Taxation Determination](#) articulating reasonable travel expense amounts.

Councillors are entitled to claim:

- Domestic travel not in excess of Table 2 (mid-salary level)
- Overseas travel not in excess of Table 7 (mid-salary level)

With reference to the financial year the travel will be undertaken (or the most recent Determination if not yet published).

Attachment Two – ICT Conditions of Use

The City will provide information communication technology (ICT), including equipment, software, and support including basic training, subject to the following conditions:

- (a) All information technology provided remains the property of the City
- (b) Councillors must conduct council business utilising equipment supplied by the City
- (c) Equipment must only be used by Councillors and Officers
- (d) Councillors must maintain the confidentiality of their account and password, to prevent unauthorised access
- (e) Councillors must comply with the network enforced password procedures
- (f) Councillors must comply with all reasonable directions regarding devices and equipment for audit, maintenance, update or replacement
- (g) Councillors must not disable or circumvent the installed virus protection software
- (h) Councillors must use the installed virus protection software to scan all:
 - (i) Files, from non-Council sources, prior to downloading
 - (ii) External disks, immediately upon connection
- (i) Councillors must use all ICT in a safe manner, and in compliance with all City policy, and State and Federal legislation. Including but not limited to privacy, copyright, freedom of information, equal employment opportunity, Public Records Act, Intellectual Property and Occupational Health and Safety.
- (j) Councillors will manage constraints of usage inherent to system, including operating system and application space limitations
- (k) Councillors must manage appropriately any connection or usage charges (for example data and phone calls)
- (l) Councillors must not download or install unauthorised applications or files
- (m) Councillors must comply with any software licence obligations
- (n) Councillors must not utilise the equipment for online gambling
- (o) Councillors must ensure appropriate safe keeping of all equipment
- (p) Councillors must maintain equipment in fair/reasonable condition
- (q) Councillors must report, to the Governance Unit, as soon as practicable:
 - (i) Faulty equipment, breakages or issues
 - (ii) Lost, stolen or misplaced equipment
 - (iii) Any suspicion of a virus being introduced onto the equipment or network.

Attachment Three – Monthly Travel Log Form

Attachment Four – Expenses Reimbursement Form



Full Name			
Title			
Contact details			
Date of Claim		Total Amount Claim	\$

Details of Out-of-pocket expense:	Date Incurred:	
	Duty at the time expense was incurred	
	Item description	

- Attached:**
- Tax Invoice
 - Receipt
 - Statutory Declaration

EFT Payment details -	
Account Name:	
BSB (6 digits):	
Account number	

I certify the above information to be correct and are reasonable bona fide out-of-pocket expenses.	
Signature:	Date:

Please forward this form to Civic and Governance Support

Office Use Only	<i>JL Account number:</i>	-	-	-
	<i>GL Account number:</i>	-	-	-

Approved by

Name:		Date:
Position:		
Signature:		