



## Elected Members' Expenses and Resources Policy

**Policy type: Governance**

Policy owner	Governance and Strategy Group Manager		
Adopted by	Council		
Description of policy	The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines on the claiming of expenses by elected members as well as defining the resources available to elected members during their term in office.		
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### 1. Objective

To establish guidelines on the claiming of expenses by Elected Members and what resources will be available to Elected Members during their term of office.

### 2. Principles

- 2.1. Elected Members should be reimbursed for actual and reasonable expenses they incur in carrying out their official duties.
- 2.2. Reasonable resources should be made available to Elected Members to enable them to carry out their responsibilities more efficiently.
- 2.3. Reimbursement of expenses and use of resources apply only to Elected Members personally and only while they are acting in their official capacity as Elected Members.
- 2.4. Elected Members' expense expenditure must have a justifiable business purpose, be moderate and conservative having regard to the circumstances, be made transparently and is appropriate in all respects.

### 3. Definitions

<b>Absence without leave</b>	is a period of time when an elected member is not fulfilling his/her responsibilities as an elected member and is doing so without formal approval from the Mayor.
<b>Actual</b>	means as evidenced by the original receipt attached to the claim form.
<b>Childcare allowance</b>	means the childcare allowance included in the Local Government Members (2019/20) Determination 2019 which provides for the payment of childcare allowances by a local authority. The maximum payment is up to, and including \$6,000 per year, per child.
<b>Council business</b>	means formal Council, committee meetings, workshops, seminars, statutory hearings, training courses, conferences, site visits, meetings

with staff, meetings with community groups, meetings with members of the public and social activities where a member attends as a Council representative.

<b>Expenses</b>	means personal money spent by Elected Members whilst going about their official duties as Elected Members and includes mileage claims.
<b>Expense rules</b>	means the type of expenses that are able to be claimed because they have been approved by the Remuneration Authority.
<b>Family member of the member</b>	in respect of the childcare allowance, means a spouse, civil union partner, de facto partner, or a relative whether by a blood relationship or adoption.
<b>Leave of absence</b>	is a period of time, approved by the Mayor, for which an elected member is on leave from the duties of being an elected member.
<b>Member</b>	means, for the purposes of this policy, in relation to a local authority (other than the Canterbury Regional Council) or a board, a person who is declared to be elected to that local authority or board under the Local Electoral Act 2001 or who, as the result of further election or appointment under that Act or the Local Government Act 2002, is an office holder in relation to the local authority or board (e.g. a chairperson).
<b>Personal communications</b>	means any communication that does not represent the official view of Council.
<b>Reasonable</b>	means that it is within the amount specified by the policy or as deemed reasonable by the Mayor and/or Chief Executive.
<b>Receipt</b>	means an itemised tax invoice, i.e. an EFTPOS receipt is not an acceptable form of support for expense claims.
<b>Remuneration Authority</b>	is an independent body established under the Local Government Act 2002, part of whose responsibilities are to determine remuneration and expense rules for local authority members.
<b>Resources</b>	are goods and services normally used by Council to support its business, that are provided to Elected Members for their personal use to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities as Elected Members.
<b>Threshold distance</b>	means the current definition determined by the Remuneration Authority.
<b>Vehicle Mileage Allowance</b>	means the current definition and rate determined by the Remuneration Authority.

#### **4. Background**

The Local Government Act 2002 has given the Remuneration Authority the responsibility for setting remuneration, approving expense rules and setting the mileage allowance for Elected Members.

## **5. Policy Statement**

### **5.1. What expenses may be claimed?**

The sections below outline the expenses that may be claimed by the elected members for Thames Coromandel District Council.

### **5.2 Accommodation and Meals**

5.2.1. When it is necessary to stay away from home overnight on Council business, the actual and reasonable costs of accommodation, meals and parking (if not provided free by the accommodation provider) are paid for by Council.

5.2.2 Accommodation, meals and incidental expenditure must have a clear business purpose and should be cost-effective, taking into account:

- the geographic location of the accommodation relative to where the elected member(s)' business is;
- the standard of accommodation;
- safety and security considerations;
- that additional mileage or taxi/uber expenses are not usually required.

5.2.3 All accommodation will be booked through Council's travel booking system which provides for preferred accommodation venues and charge-back facilities. Alternative accommodation may be used where:

- There are no rooms available at a reasonable cost at the preferred location(s).
- The elected member is attending conference/training at a particular location.
- An alternative, lower priced option is preferred by the elected member(s).
- The accommodation need results from travel delays or an emergency.

5.2.4 When meals do not form part of a "package", they may be claimed on presentation of an actual and itemised receipt (not a credit card or EFTPOS statement or photocopy).

5.2.5 The following maximum limits for meals.

- Breakfast and/or lunch – up to \$30.00 (incl GST) per elected members per meal. Any cost over this limit are the responsibility of the individual.
- Dinner – up to \$50.00 (incl GST) per elected member per meal. Any costs over this limit are the responsibility of the individual.

5.2.6 The following maximum limits for meals apply within the Thames area:

- Breakfast - \$15.00 (incl GST) per elected member per meal. Any costs over this limit are the responsibility of the individual.
- Lunch - \$15.00 (incl GST) per elected member per meal. Any costs over this limit are the responsibility of the individual.
- Dinner– \$30.00 (incl GST) per elected member per meal. Any costs over this limit are the responsibility of the individual.

5.2.7 When meals are provided as part of a "package", additional meal expenses cannot be claimed.

### **5.3 Childcare Allowance**

5.3.1 A member is eligible to be paid a childcare allowance in respect of childcare provided for a child only if:

- the member is a parent or guardian of the child, or is a person who usually has responsibility for the day-to-day care of the child (other than on a temporary basis); and
- the child is aged under 14 years of age; and
- the childcare is provided by a person who is not a family member of the member; and does not ordinarily live with the member; and
- the member provides evidence satisfactory to the local authority of the amount paid for childcare.

5.3.2 The Council will not pay childcare allowances to an elected member that total more than \$6,000 per annum, per child.

## **5.4 Travel**

5.4.1 Travel expenditure should be economical and efficient, having regard to purpose, distance, time, urgency, and personal health, security and safety considerations. Any travel must have a clear business purpose.

5.4.2 To the extent practical, air travel should be booked well ahead of the actual travel, so that expenditure is the most cost-effective possible. The lowest practically priced airfare is to be used for all journeys (domestic and other) unless there is at least five hours or more of uninterrupted flight duration, a heavy work schedule on arrival, or personal health, known health conditions, safety, or security reasons, where premium economy may be used.

5.4.3 International air travel paid for by Council must be authorised by resolution of Council.

5.4.4 Council-funded membership of any airline club is restricted to the position of the Mayor.

5.4.5 Private travel before, during or at the end of travel paid for by Council is the responsibility of the individual and at no additional cost to Council otherwise the cost of any stopover paid for by Council must have a clear business purpose and be pre-approved by the Mayor (or Risk and Assurance Committee Chairperson in the case of the Mayor) and Chief Executive.

5.4.6 An Elected Member's ability to claim any daily or overnight accommodation expenses ends at the conclusion of the conference/forum or when the elected member leaves the conference/forum.

## **5.5 Use of Private Vehicle**

5.5.1 Where an elected member needs to use their own vehicle on Council business, vehicle mileage allowance can be claimed on the following basis:

- Per kilometre minus the threshold distance as determined and updated by the Remuneration Authority;
- Travel must be by the most direct route;
- The Vehicle mileage allowance rate per kilometre for the first 5000km per annum and the rate per kilometre for any distance over 5000 kilometres as per the remuneration Authority's rate.

5.5.2 Council will not pay for travel by private motor vehicle where travel by other means is more practical and cost-effective.

## **5.6 Use of Taxis/uber**

5.6.1 Taxis/uber may only be used for Council business at a destination outside of the district when it is the most appropriate form of transport.

5.6.2 Costs must be paid for by the individual and will be reimbursed on presentation of actual receipts.

## **6. When expenses may not be claimed**

6.1 For the purpose of clarity, Elected Members may claim expenses approved by the Remuneration Authority, while carrying out their official roles and duties, except those that:

- are incurred before they are sworn in as members of Council, or after they officially leave office; and/or
- are incurred while not acting in their official capacity; and/or
- are incurred on a trip outside of the sub-region without specific approval from the Mayor or a standing committee prior to the travel; and/or
- are incurred while on leave of absence; and/or
- are incurred while absent without leave; and/or
- are incurred while holding office illegally; and/or
- are related to activities that are incidental to and not the main reason for a trip / event.

6.2 The following expenses are considered to be the responsibility of individual Elected Members and may NOT be claimed:

- Medical insurance
- Staff discounts
- Life insurance
- Accident insurance
- Income replacement insurance
- Travel and meals/entertainment incurred by elected member's spouse/partner
- Alcoholic drinks
- Mini-bar drinks/snack, books/magazines, video, pay-per-view or other entertainment
- Late check-out fees, in absence of extenuating circumstances
- Tips
- Any fines (parking or traffic offences).

## **7. When expenses are to be paid**

7.1 Expenses claimed are to be paid monthly, to coincide with a payment of the elected member's salary, provided an Elected Members' Expenses Claim Form with receipts attached is received in sufficient time to be included in the normal process.

7.2 All claims must be made within 60 days of expenditure occurring with the aim to keep expenditure within the year in which it occurs and is budgeted for.

7.3 Expenses claims, receipt of personal gifts and Mayoral credit card expenses are to be published on Council's website.

## **8. Use of Resources**

8.1 The equipment requirements for Elected Members are deemed to be:

- a phone (mobile and landline); and

- a PC, laptop or tablet; and
  - a compatible scanner and printer.
- 8.2 Elected members are to provide their own phone, PC/laptop/tablet/ipad, scanner and printer and be reimbursed annually through the communication allowance.
- 8.3 The Mayor is to be provided with the use of information technology /communications equipment compatible with Council's systems for the term of his/her office.
- 8.4 The maximum communications allowance in accordance with the Remuneration Authority's Determination is payable to Councillors and Community Board Chairs on an annual basis. This allowance is towards expenses of all or any of the following: mobile and landline telephone; a PC, laptop or tablet and a compatible scanner and printer, landline and broadband connection, Council generated calls, texts and data through mobile phones.
- 8.5 A communications allowance of \$1000 is payable to Community Board members on an annual basis. This allowance is towards expenses of all or any of the following: mobile and landline telephone; a PC, laptop or tablet and a compatible scanner and printer, landline and broadband connection, Council generated calls, texts and data through mobile phones.
- 8.6 The Remuneration Authority's rules on the Mayoral car are to apply.

## **9. Authorisation for Conferences - New Zealand and Overseas**

- 9.1 Attendance by Elected Members at conferences in New Zealand or overseas, at Council's cost, is to be approved by the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor.
- 9.2 Following attendance at a conference, elected members must provide a synopsis of the conference to the Council and have all expenses approved by the appropriate authority.

## **10. Car Parking**

Free car parking is provided for Elected Members to use while on Council business.

## **11. Receipt of Gifts**

- 11.1 Elected members shall not accept any gift, service, or benefit under circumstances where the elected member knows, or ought to know, that it could affect their present or future decision-making responsibilities.
- 11.2 Offers of gifts or benefits from contractors to elected members should be declined unless an exceptional circumstance as deemed by the Mayor to protect Council from risk including reputational.
- 11.3 Gifts over the value of \$100.00 which have been presented to an elected member in the course of their duties and which are retained by an elected member personally must be recorded in an Elected Members' gift register.

## **12. Exceptions**

There may be exceptional circumstances, or disputes, regarding Elected Members expenses and resources which need to be dealt with on a case by case basis. Such cases will be dealt with by the Mayor and/or Chief Executive, and any exceptions be reported back to Council.

## **13. Relevant Delegations**

- 13.1 The Chief Executive has delegated authority to implement this policy and to sub delegate his/her authority.

- 13.2 All claims made under this policy are to be made using the appropriate form and authorised by the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor for the Manager of Governance Support to administer.
- 13.3 All claims made under this policy by the Mayor are to be made using the appropriate form and authorised by the Risk and Assurance Committee Chairperson and one other elected member for the Manager of Governance Support to administer.

#### **14. References and Relevant Legislation**

- The most current Local Government Elected Members (Certain Local Authorities) Determination.
- For childcare allowance, refer to clause 14 of the Local Government Members (2019/20) Determination 2019.
- Local Government Act 2002, Schedule 7, Section 6.
- Controlling Sensitive Expenditure – Guidelines for Public Entities (Controller and Auditor General).

#### **15. Implementation and review**

This policy will be effective from 14 December 2022.

This policy will be reviewed every three years, following the triennium local government election.