



## **COUNCILLOR EXPENSES AND SUPPORT POLICY**

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## Council Policy

### COUNCILLOR EXPENSES AND SUPPORT POLICY

#### 1. PURPOSE

Councillors and delegated committee members provide local community representation and civic leadership. Their role, as defined in the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) includes complying with Council procedures required for good governance and acting in accordance with the standards of conduct.

The purpose of this Policy is to provide the Colac Otway Shire Council, individual Councillors and delegated committee members with clarity and guidance as to:

- The financial entitlements of a Councillor and delegated committee member.
- The appropriate process for the reimbursement of expenses incurred by a Councillor or delegated committee member.
- The resources and facilities available to Councillors and delegated committee members, to support them in performing their duties.

#### 2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Councillors and members of Delegated Committees of the Colac Otway Shire Council.

#### 3. DEFINITIONS

<b>Carer</b>	A carer is defined under section 4 of the Carers recognition Act 2012
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Delegated Committee</b>	A committee established by a Council under section 63 of the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> or, a joint delegated committee established by two or more Councils under section 64, or a committee, other than a Community Asset Committee, exercising any power of a Council under this Act or any other Act delegated to the committee under this Act or any other Act.
<b>Direct Benefit</b>	For the purpose of determining if there is a direct benefit for the involvement of Council in assessing if a matter is Eligible Council Business, the following criteria should be satisfied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The Councillor is attending in their capacity as a Councillor; and</li><li>b. The Councillor will be engaging with other attendees at the event, in their capacity as a Councillor, to promote Council interests.</li></ul>
<b>Eligible Council Business</b>	The following will be deemed to be Eligible Council Business: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Council meetings and other meetings conducted under the auspices of</li></ul>

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	<p>Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) Standing Committee or Advisory Committee meetings of Council when the Councillor is the nominated representative/substitute or otherwise by approval of the Mayor</li> <li>c) Regional meetings where the Councillor claiming reimbursement is Council's endorsed representative and travel is not paid/reimbursed by the regional organisation or meeting convenor</li> <li>d) Functions to which Councillors are invited by an organisation and where there is a direct benefit for the involvement of Council (attendance by partners will not be paid for by Council).</li> <li>e) Events where a Councillor is delivering a speech or presentation on behalf of Council.</li> <li>f) Travel within the Shire by Councillors who are attending sites for the reasonable purpose of assessing issues raised by identified members of the community, as recorded in Councillor's diaries, which are considered reasonable and necessary for Councillors to be informed about matters about which they may need to make decisions.</li> <li>g) Meetings by Councillors at the request of identified members of the community, as recorded in Councillor's diaries, which are considered reasonable and necessary for the performance of the Councillor's duties and where travel is within the Shire.</li> <li>h) Conferences and seminars approved in accordance with this Policy.</li> <li>i) Attendance at Delegated Committee meetings and travel or other out-of-pocket expenses (as outlined in this policy) incurred whilst fulfilling the role of Delegated Committee member.</li> </ul> <p>Note - Any claims for expense reimbursements related to matters falling outside of these definitions must be approved by the CEO.</p>
<b>Refreshments</b>	Tea, coffee, non-alcoholic beverages, and a light meal such as may be considered suitable for morning tea or afternoon tea.

#### 4. REFERENCES

##### *Local Government Act 2020*

This policy is consistent with the:

- Requirements of section 40 of the Act in relation to the reimbursement of expenses for Councillors and members of delegated committees.
- Model Councillor Code of Conduct.
- Requirements in the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* regarding categories for annual reporting.
- Public Transparency Policy regarding documents to be made available for public inspection.

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## 5. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Councillors are entitled to the Allowance set by State Government but may also incur reasonable expenses and require appropriate resources and facilities to support the effective performance of their duties.

This Policy ensures that Council's reimbursement of expenses and provision of resources and facilities are consistent with, and in accordance with the Act and its Regulations. The use of resources, facilities, reimbursement and claiming of expenses must:

- Be necessary and appropriate for the purpose of achieving the objectives of Council.
- Be reasonable bona fide expenses incurred while performing duties as a Councillor or delegated committee member.
- Have regard to any relevant Acts, Regulations, Ministerial Guidelines or Council policies.
- Be in accordance with the Model Councillor Code of Conduct.

## 6. MAYORAL AND COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES

In accordance with section 39 of the Act, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors are entitled to receive an Allowance while performing their duties as elected officials.

### 6.1 CALCULATION OF ALLOWANCE

Allowances are set by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal (VIRT). As per section 39(4) of the Act, a Council cannot pay an allowance that exceeds the amount specified in the relevant Determination of the VIRT.

*A Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Councillor may elect—*

- to receive the entire allowance to which they are entitled; or*
- to receive a specified part of the allowance to which they are entitled; or*
- to receive no allowance.*

Councillor allowances include the addition of the equivalent of the superannuation guarantee. The values of allowances set in this Determination will be annually adjusted by the Determinations made by the VIRT under section 23B of the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal And Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019*.

In relation to payment of the Allowance:

- Allowances are taxable income and are paid in four weekly arrears.
- Payment is made by electronic funds transfer, into an account authorised in writing by the Councillor.

Payment to a Councillor ceasing to hold office or pending an election, will be calculated based on the date on which the Councillor will cease to hold office.

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## 7. TRAVEL EXPENSES AND CAR MILEAGE EXPENSES

Councillors and members of a Delegated Committee are entitled to reimbursement of travel expenses incurred in performing their duties and functions (refer to Eligible Council Business definitions).

### 7.1 TRAVEL RECORDS FOR INTERNATIONAL AND INTERSTATE TRAVEL

Councillors and Delegated Committee members who travel overseas or interstate in an official capacity must record:

- the dates on which the travel began and ended; and
- the destination of the travel; and
- the purpose of the travel; and
- the total cost to the Council of the travel, including accommodation costs.

Councillors and Delegated Committee members undertaking this travel must complete a Councillor Travel Claim Form and submit this to Councillor Support for CEO approval within 30 days of returning from the travel, or where that quarter is at the end of the Financial Year, within 14 days.

Councillors and delegated committee members must not collect rewards/loyalty points for personal use via rewards/loyalty programs for any Council related transactions (for example, Flybuys, frequent flyers or the like).

The Governance team will maintain a register of overseas and interstate travel on behalf of Council. This register will be made available on Council's website.

### 7.2 USE OF PRIVATE VEHICLE FOR ELIGIBLE COUNCIL BUSINESS

Councillors and Delegated Committee members are encouraged to use Council vehicles for Eligible Council Business, except where this is not practical. The request is to be sent to the Executive Assistant to CEO Mayor, and Councillors.

Council does not accept responsibility for loss or damage to a Councillor's or Delegated Committee member's private vehicle when used for performing duties as a Councillor or Committee member.

Private vehicles are not covered by Council's insurance policy.

Where private vehicles are used by Councillors and Delegated Committee members on Eligible Council Business:

- The vehicle must be comprehensively insured by the owner of the vehicle.
- The vehicle must be roadworthy.
- The owner of the vehicle must be able to prove the vehicle is registered, comprehensively insured and roadworthy.
- The owner of the vehicle must notify their insurance company that the vehicle is being used for work purposes.

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- The reimbursement rate paid by Council for the use of privately owned vehicles used on Council business includes a component for the cost of the owner insuring the vehicle being used.
- Councillors and Delegated Committee members may be eligible for reimbursement of their personal excess in the event of an accident in a personal car when being used for Eligible Council Business purposes. Councillors and delegated committee members should contact Council's Risk and Insurance Officer to confirm eligibility following an incident.

### 7.3 CAR MILEAGE CLAIMS

Councillors and Delegated Committee members are eligible to claim car mileage expenses when using their private vehicles to attend Eligible Council Business. Travel is measured to and from their main Colac Otway Shire residence (or Colac Otway Shire rateable property).

- Councillors and delegated committee members will be entitled to a rebate for kms travelled while using their own vehicles in accordance with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) rate upon receipt of a duly completed Travel Expense Claim Form authorised by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or their delegate.
- A remote travel allowance is paid as compensation for time spent on long-distance travel to eligible Council Members. To be eligible, a Council member must normally reside more than 50km by the shortest practicable road distance from the location specified for Council meetings, or for municipal or community functions which the Council member has been authorised by Council to attend.
- Mileage claimed in relation to Eligible Council Business must be documented in Councillors' and Delegated Committee members' calendars in sufficient detail to be able to be independently substantiated for audit purposes.

### 7.4 PRIVATE USE OF COUNCIL VEHICLES

Other than the Mayor, no Councillor or Delegated Committee member is to use a Council vehicle for private use.

The Mayor may authorise another Councillor to use the Council vehicle, allocated for use by the Mayor, in relation to the conduct of duties concerning Eligible Council Business.

The Mayor may not authorise another Councillor to use the Council vehicle allocated for use by the Mayor, for private use.

### 7.5 CLASSES OF TRANSPORT

In the event that Councillors or Delegated Committee members access other means of transport in the performance of their duties concerning Eligible Council Business, the following classes of transport apply:

- Aircraft travel in economy class including, where available, the use of a flexible fare class for any inbound flight. Under this provision, the most economical fare should be chosen, provided that the departure and/or arrival times are reasonable.
- Hire car up to standard 6-cylinder vehicle.

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- Train or bus travel in (first class or economy class).
- Standard taxi or rideshare service.

## 7.6 TRANSPORT CHOICES AND TRANSPORT EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

Transport expense reimbursement applies when a Councillor or a Delegated Committee member is attending Eligible Council Business.

For tram, train and bus travel in and around Melbourne, the Councillor or Delegated Committee member will be provided with a Myki card.

Where public transport is not appropriate, if possible, Council's vehicle fleet should be used. This should be booked by Councillor Support.

If a taxi, Uber or another rideshare option is unavoidable then the Councillor or Delegated Committee member will pay the applicable fare and seek reimbursement using the relevant form, providing the applicable receipt.

## 7.7 OTHER INCIDENTAL TRAVEL EXPENSES

Councillors and Delegated Committee members may be eligible to claim other incidental expenses when using their private vehicles on Eligible Council Business including:

- Parking expenses (to be pre-booked for discounted rates (early bird rate), where possible).
- Toll fees.

Councillors and Delegated Committee members are not entitled to claim the cost of any traffic infringements, penalties, parking tickets or similar expenses.

Where travel has been overseas or interstate, associated incidental travel costs must be completed in accordance with clause 7.1 of this policy.

## 7.8 MEALS AND ACCOMMODATION CONNECTED WITH TRAVEL

Councillors and Delegated Committee members may claim the reasonable costs of:

- Reasonable meal expenses (excluding alcohol) for the duration of any travel in the course of performing Eligible Council Business. This does not include the cost of meals for partners, guests or families of Councillors or Delegated Committee members.
- Appropriate accommodation when interstate or overseas, that has been selected by the CEO or their delegate and booked by Councillor Support or an officer authorised by the CEO, will be available from the day prior to commencement day and each day on which events involving Eligible Council Business are held. This does not include any additional costs of accommodation for partners, guests or families of Councillors or Delegated Committee members.
- Councillors and Delegated Committee members may request accommodation where Eligible Council Business is being conducted:

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- in Melbourne, or at a location more than 150 kms from the Councillor's or Delegated Committee member's main residential address by road and:
  - is commencing at or before 9am; or
  - is concluding after 5pm; or
  - exceeds more than 5 hours in length.

Accommodation at the conference, training or meeting venue is preferable for safety-related reasons.

- Incidentals do not include personal expenses including mini bar, newspapers, personal phone calls, pay-per-view entertainment, etc. Personal expenses will not be reimbursed to the Councillor or Delegated Committee member. In any case where a personal expense has been charged to Council, these costs will be recovered from the Councillor through the debtor invoice process.

## 8. CHILDCARE AND CARER EXPENSES

Council will reimburse the cost of necessary childcare and carer expenses incurred by Councillors and Delegated Committee members in the course of performing duties associated with Eligible Council Business.

### 8.1 CHILD OR DEPENDANT CARE EXPENSES

In accordance with sections 41(2)(c) and (d) of the Act, Council 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.

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

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

Except by prior written agreement of the CEO, 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).

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

The level of financial support shall be determined by the CEO in consultation with the claimant.

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## 9. 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 Council monthly.
- To enable Council to process a reimbursement, a Councillor or Delegated Committee member must:
  - Complete the Councillor Reimbursement Form; and
  - Attach a tax invoice or tax receipt to support their claim, along with any other relevant supporting documentation; and
  - Submit the completed claim for reimbursement directly to Councillor Support.
- All relevant forms will be available to Councillors via their devices.
- It is the responsibility of Councillors and Delegated Committee members to ensure that claims for reimbursement occur within the stated timelines. Where the timelines are not met, information will be provided to the Mayor and/or CEO for consideration as to the payment of the claim. Claims for expenses incurred more than 12 months ago will not be eligible for consideration, nor will Councillors or Delegated Committee members be able to dispute this refusal.
- In any case, where a Councillor or Delegated Committee member is unable to provide a receipt of costs incurred whilst travelling on Eligible Council Business, a statutory declaration may be accepted by the CEO.
- Appropriate and sufficient reasoning for being unable to produce a receipt must be provided by the Councillor or Delegated Committee member.

## 10. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY EXPENSES

Councillors are entitled to the following information and communication resources to support their performance of duties of Eligible Council Business.

### 10.1 EQUIPMENT PROVIDED

- A portable computer;
- Relevant computer software;
- A mobile phone;
- Business cards; and
- A name badge.

Council will issue and maintain relevant equipment and provide any associated products required for their operation.

Equipment is provided as part of the Councillor induction process and all queries regarding provision or maintenance of equipment should be addressed to Councillor Support.

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Accessories or services beyond the standard equipment referred to in this clause may be provided upon appropriate assessment of the business need and a written request to the CEO. The additional cost of any accessories provided may be charged to the Councillor.

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## 10.2 RETURNING EQUIPMENT

At the end of a Councillor's term or when they otherwise permanently cease to perform their duties as a Councillor all devices and equipment are to be returned to Council.

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## 10.3 USAGE REQUIREMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS

Mobile phone usage is restricted to domestic calls; international calls are not to be made unless first authorised by the CEO, and must directly relate to the performance of duties associated with achieving the objectives of Council and comply with the mobile phone management procedure.

Where the mobile phone plan allows for unlimited local calls and texts at no extra cost, Councillors will be advised of this and may choose to use the phone for private local telephone call and text usage.

All mobile phone and internet usage connected with Council property must be in accordance with Council policies and the Model Councillor Code of Conduct. All internet usage and telephone and text log data may be monitored by Council to ensure compliance.

The Manager Information Services will maintain a register of all equipment provided to Councillors for Council business. Such equipment is returnable to Council on completion of tenure of the particular Councillor and must be in good condition, subject to fair wear and tear.

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## 11. CONFERENCE AND TRAINING EXPENSES

Councillors may attend professional development and training programs, conferences or meetings. The approval of any training, conference or meeting attendance will be based on its relevance to the role and professional development of the Councillor.

Approval of attendance at professional development programs will be based on the following criteria and considerations:

- Participation in the professional development program is in the interests of the Colac Otway Shire Community;
- Participation in the professional development program provides a demonstrable public benefit, as distinguished from private benefit;
- The content of the professional development program is directly relevant to the Delegated Committee member or Councillor's role; and
- The knowledge or benefit from the professional development that will be utilised during the Delegated Committee member or Councillor's term of office.

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## 11.1 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

From 26 October 2024, the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020* will require all Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors to complete mandatory training within certain timeframes.

The mandatory training includes:

- Mayoral training – Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Acting Mayors (if appointed for one month or more) must complete the Mayoral training within one month of being elected to the role.
- Induction training – New councillors must complete mandatory Councillor induction training within four months of taking the oath or affirmation of office.
- Professional development training – All councillors must complete ongoing professional development training each year of their term, starting in the year following their election.

The CEO shall ensure that Council develops and implements an appropriate Training and Development Program to support Councillors to meet the requirements and objectives of the above mandatory training.

In addition to mandatory training the CEO shall work with each Councillor, within their first 12 months of the election, to identify any specific training or development needs. Council will fund these personal training and development opportunities within the limits of the budget approved by Council.

During their term, all Councillors will be entitled to complete the Company Director course provided by the AICD provided that:

- they have completed all mandatory training and development identified by the *Local Government Act 2020* and relevant regulations, including specific training identified by the CEO as mandatory;
- the course is completed in the first two years of their term in office; and
- there is at a minimum, twelve months remaining of their term of office as at the completion date of the course.

Enrolment in the AICD course will be approved by the CEO prior to commencement and is dependent on it being accommodated within the Budget allocation approved by Council for Councillor training and development.

Attendance by a Councillor at local, interstate or overseas meetings, conferences or training where the total expenditure incurred by that Councillor in the financial year will exceed \$1,500, must be subject to approval by Council resolution. This includes participation in the AICD Course, Annual MAV Conference and the National General Assembly.

## 11.2 PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Council holds a range of corporate professional memberships that are reviewed on an annual basis. Councillors are able to access information, training and development opportunities through these corporate memberships.

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Council does not fund individual professional memberships of Councillors with the exception of memberships to the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALWGA) to enable female Councillors to participate in their professional development programs.

Council will pay Councillors' AICD annual standard membership fees during their term of office for Councillors that have successfully completed the course. It is the Councillor's responsibility to pay the initial joining fee (unless it is part of the AICD course funded by Council) and any additional fees.

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### 11.3 ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation of a reasonable standard necessarily required for attendance at any approved training, conference or meeting will be booked by Councillor Support at the site of the training, conference or meeting or at a suitable, safe, nearby accommodation centre.

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### 11.4 APPLICATION PROCESS

All training and development bookings and membership registrations will be administered by Councillor Support. Councillor Support will prioritise identifying the most affordable option available, including through the use of Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) Council Credit Points (CCPs), discounts and other cost-savings mechanisms.

Application to attend any local, interstate or overseas meetings or conferences involving Council expenditure must be made by completing the relevant form.

Council will pay registration fees for attendance at approved meetings, training or conference sessions. Other related travel, meal, accommodation and related expenses may be claimed as outlined in this policy.

Applications within budgetary requirements to attend relevant training, conferences and meetings will not be unreasonably refused.

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### 11.5 NON-ALLOWABLE EXPENDITURE

The following out-of-pocket expenses are the responsibility of Councillors or Delegated Committee members and cannot be the subject of a claim for funding or reimbursement:

1. The cost of any road, traffic, parking or public transport infringements or penalties incurred by Councillors or Delegated Committee members, whether or not in the course of performing their role.
2. Any private travel, regardless of whether it is conjoined with approved interstate or overseas travel in the course of performing their role.
3. Any private-use costs associated with use of ICT that are deemed unreasonable.
4. Any intentional, wilful, or negligent damage to ICT.
5. 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;

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- d. Snacks;
  - e. Electronic organisers;
  - f. Toiletries;
  - g. Briefcases or bags;
  - h. Personal travel insurance;
  - i. Any in-room entertainment, including movie hire;
  - j. Kennel fees or animal expenses;
  - k. Hairdressing, barber and beautician services;
  - l. Loss of property (claims for loss of property may be available under travel insurance);
  - m. Any costs associated with accommodation that are outside room and breakfast (e.g. mini bar, laundry, tips and gratuities);
  - n. Airline club fees;
  - o. Excess baggage claims;
  - p. Toiletries;
  - q. Tourism related costs (e.g. day trips, excursions, activities, hire of bikes or boats etc.);
  - r. Reading materials (including newspapers, magazines, books etc.);
  - s. Travel costs not associated with the conference or event;
  - t. In-flight or in-house movies or entertainment costs;
  - u. Personal gifts, goods, services or souvenirs purchased;
  - v. Additional expenses associated with the attendance of a Councillor's partner, child(ren), etc, except care-related costs outlined in this policy.
6. Other than by Council resolution, expenses or other support for attendance at political party events.

## 12. RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

The following additional resources and facilities are provided to support Councillors performing their duties while undertaking Eligible Council Business and discharging duties of civic office.

### 12.1 OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Council will provide the Mayor with a fully registered, insured, maintained and fuelled vehicle for their use on official duties and for reasonable private use. The private use of the Mayor's vehicle does not extend to family members.

Use of a Council motor vehicle will be in accordance with Council's Motor Vehicle Policy, as amended from time to time.

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At least 48 hours prior to the conclusion of the Mayoral term, the Mayoral vehicle must be returned to the EA CEO, Mayor and Councillors so that it may be serviced, cleaned and detailed prior to the commencement of the incoming Mayor.

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## 12.2 BUILDING ACCESS AND PARKING

Councillors will be provided with a dedicated space within the Rae Street Precinct for their general use. Each Councillor will receive an access card for the Councillors' Office between 7am and 7pm weekdays.

Councillors must not allow third parties access to Council Facilities, including the Councillors' Office, unless it is part of a meeting auspiced or scheduled by Council. Details of attendees should be provided to the EA CEO, Mayor and Councillors.

Car parking is available to Councillors at the Civic Officer in Rae Street at no cost.

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## 12.3 INSURANCE

Councillors are covered by the following Council insurance policies on a 24-hour, 7-day a week basis, while performing Eligible Council Business and discharging the duties of civic office:

- Council's workers compensation insurance.
- Councillors' and Officers' Liability Insurance.
- Travel insurance for interstate and international travel.

Council will pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim made against a Councillor arising from actions taken in good faith in relation to Eligible Council Business where a claim is accepted by Council's insurers, whether defended or not.

In accordance with section 43A of the *Local Government Act 2020*, a Council must not indemnify a Councillor for legal costs incurred as a result of any application made, process or proceeding, or decision or determination made, relating to an internal arbitration or Councillor Conduct Panel proceeding, that alleges misconduct or serious misconduct, unless it is determined by the arbiter or the Councillor Conduct Panel that representation is necessary under sections 141(2)(c) or 163(2)(b) of the Act.

Council equipment provided to Councillors to assist in performing their role, is covered for damage or theft under Council's insurance policies. Councillors are expected to exercise due care in protecting the equipment from damage or theft.

Councillors must notify the CEO as soon as possible after they become aware of a potential claim.

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## 12.4 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Councillors may make use of Council's appointed confidential employee assistance program/ professional counselling service in order to help resolve both personal and Council-related problems that may impact on their capacity to undertake their role as a Councillor.

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## 12.5 PROVISION OF HOSPITALITY

**Uncontrolled when printed**

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The Mayor, on behalf of the Council, can provide Hospitality (as defined) to groups or individuals who are regarded as key stakeholders with whom the Council seeks to develop closer or more effective working relationships or to further Council's interests and objectives.

There may be occasions when it is necessary and appropriate for Council Hospitality to a particular group or individual to be provided by a Councillor other than the Mayor. Such proposals are to be discussed and approved by the Mayor and CEO prior to the occasion.

The CEO may approve the provision of alcohol at the cost of Council, for any Civic Function, where the benefits to the community are documented by the CEO prior to approval of the Event. All Councillors are expected at such functions to display a high standard of civic leadership regarding the responsible provision and usage of alcohol.

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## 12.6 MEALS AND REFRESHMENTS – COUNCILLOR BRIEFINGS AND COUNCIL MEETINGS

Councillors will be requested to inform Councillor Support of any dietary requirements or preferences at the commencement of their term of office, and to advise of any alterations to those requirements or preferences during the course of their term.

### **Meals and Refreshments**

Councillors will have access to tea, coffee and water at all times while on Council premises.

Where Council meetings or briefings are held at times which extend through lunchtime, Councillors will be provided with a suitable meal served on the premises.

Councillors should inform the office if they will not be attending meetings or briefings, so meals are not ordered.

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## 12.7 MEETING ROOMS

The Civic Council Office includes a Councillors' office reserved for exclusive use by Councillors. This room is equipped with computer access and is suitable for office work, reading, and research and small meetings.

Other meeting rooms at the Council office can be booked for use by Councillors to conduct meetings during office hours through Councillor Support.

Meeting equipment can be made available for meetings upon request.

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## 12.8 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE

The Mayor will be provided with reasonable administrative assistance, as required.

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# 13. OTHER EXPENSES NOT ELSEWHERE COVERED

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## 13.1 LEGAL EXPENSES

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Other than by specific Council resolution or in accordance with a Council policy, any legal expenses incurred by a Councillor or Delegated Committee member will be the responsibility of that individual.

Councillors and Delegated Committee members may discuss potential claims on a case by case basis with the CEO who will work with the Executive Officer Governance to determine if an insurance claim is applicable.

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### 13.2 OTHER EXPENSES

Any claims for expenses not specifically covered by this policy must first be referred to the CEO for authorisation/approval before being submitted.

Councillors and Delegated Committee members are encouraged to discuss in advance with the CEO any event, meeting or other gathering where there is the potential for incurring expenses so that:

- The appropriateness of potential claims can be considered; and
- Any available cost saving measures can be put in place.

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### 13.3 AUDIT AND REPORTING

In the interest of transparency and accountability, quarterly expenses paid by Council or reimbursed to Councillors or Delegated Committee members under this policy will be reported to the CEO, Council's Audit and Risk Committee.

Councillor expenses will be reported quarterly in the Quarterly Performance Statement of the Council in a manner consistent with applicable accounting and reporting standards.

Any items considered to be in breach of the *Local Government Act 2020* or this policy will be reported to the Colac Otway Shire Council's Audit and Risk Committee.

All payments made to Councillors during their elected term and falling within the terms of this policy will be publicly disclosed on Council's website on a quarterly basis.

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### 13.4 CONSEQUENCES OF BREACH

Any action by a Councillor or Delegated Committee member in relation to matters contained in this policy which breaches obligations under the *Local Government Act 2020* or Model Councillor Code of Conduct, may result in action taken by Council pursuant to the *Local Government Act 2020* and Code.

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## 14. RELATED DOCUMENTS

### Council Policies

- Model Councillor Code of Conduct
- Fleet Policy
- Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy
- Governance Rules
- Information Privacy Policy
- Public Transparency Policy

### Legislation

- *Carers Recognition Act 2012*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- *Local Government Act 2020*

## 15. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy owner		Executive Officer Governance	Division	Executive
Adopted by council		25 February 2025	Policy Number	18.5
File Number		D23/1167355	Review date	2029

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