

## **5.7. EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT POLICY FOR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES**

**GENERAL MANAGER:** Darryl Crees, General Manager Corporate Services  
**DEPARTMENT:** Corporate Services

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council adopts the revised Expenses Reimbursement Policy for Elected Representatives General Policy.**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

There is a statutory requirement for Council to have an expenses reimbursement policy and a review of this policy is to occur within 6 months of the quadrennial election. In undertaking the review staff have performed a comparison with eight other councils and the revised policy is presented to Council for adoption.

### **BACKGROUND**

The *Local Government Regulation 2012* requires Council to have an Expenses Reimbursement Policy and the regulation defines the policy as:

*"The expenses reimbursement policy is a policy providing for the following-*

- (a) payment of reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by councillors for discharging their duties and responsibilities as councillors;*
- (b) provision of facilities to councillors for that purpose."*

This policy was originally adopted by Council in January 2014 and is due for re-adoption within six months of each quadrennial election.

### **COMMENT**

In reviewing the policy, staff analysed the expenses reimbursement policies of eight other councils, being:

- Cook Shire Council
- Mareeba Shire Council
- Cassowary Shire Council
- Hinchinbrook Shire Council
- Burdekin Shire Council
- Whitsunday Shire Council
- Mackay Shire Council
- Banana Shire Council

Whilst there were different variances between councils, all councils except Douglas had a hospitality allowance for the Mayor which ranged from \$1,000 per annum to \$6,000 per annum. Due to the considerable work performed by the Mayor in advocating for our region with Members of Parliament, Ministers and other dignitaries, it would seem appropriate that policy be amended to include a hospitality allowance of \$1,000.

## PROPOSAL

That Council adopts the revised Expenses Reimbursement Policy for Elected Representatives General Policy.

## FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Reimbursement expenses have been factored into the 2016/17 annual budget based on data and trends over the last three budgets.

## CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

### Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

#### Theme 5 - Governance

*5.2.2 - Implement adopted policies and guidelines to ensure consistency in administrative management which also encourages innovation in Council operations.*

## COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

**Fully-Responsible**      Funding the full cost of a program or activity

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 -              Expenses Reimbursement Policy for Elected Representatives General Policy



**EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT FOR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES GENERAL POLICY**

**Intent** To clarify the extent of expense reimbursement and facilities provided to Councillors.

**Scope** This policy applies to all Councillors.

**PROVISIONS**

**1. REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES**

In accordance with section 249 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, Council must prepare and adopt by resolution an Expenses Reimbursement Policy.

This policy must provide for:

- a. Payment of reasonable expenses incurred, or to be incurred, by Councillors discharging their duties and responsibilities as Councillors whilst undertaking Council Business
- b. Provision of facilities to the Councillors for that purpose

Definitions

**Council Business**

This is official business conducted on behalf of, and approved by, Council where a Councillor is required to undertake certain tasks to satisfy legislative requirements or achieve business continuity for the Council. Council Business should result in a benefit being achieved either for the local government and/or the local government area.

Participating in a community group event or being a representative on a board not associated with Council is not regarded as Council Business.

**Councillors**

Councillors shall mean the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors.

**Expense**

Expenses are payments made by Councils to reimburse Councillors for their reasonable expenditure incurred or to be incurred when discharging their duties as Councillors. These payments are not regarded as remuneration. The expenses may be either reimbursed to Councillors or paid direct by Council for something that is deemed a necessary cost or charge when performing their roles.

**Facility**

Facilities provided by Councils to Councillors are the ‘tools of trade’ required to enable them to perform their duties with relative ease and at a standard appropriate to fulfil their

professional role for the community.

**Reasonable**

Councils must make sound judgements and consider what is prudent, responsible and acceptable to their communities when determining reasonable levels of facilities and expenditure. The community expects limits and does not want to see excessive use or abuse of public funds.

**2. SCHEDULE OF EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT AND FACILITIES**

**SECTION A EXPENSES REIMBURSEMENT**

Councillors are eligible for the following:

- An annual payment of \$600 per annum will be reimbursed to Councillors for home communication (including internet) expenditure.
- If a Councillor uses a private vehicle for official Council business, reimbursement may be claimed based on log book substantiation of the relevance of the travel to Council. The log book detailing the use must be submitted within one (1) month of use and reimbursement is to occur within (3) months of use. Examples of Official Council business are deemed to be:
  - Travel to Council meetings and/or workshops;
  - Travel to attend meetings of external bodies/community groups to which the Councillor is the Council appointed representative;
  - Travel to conferences or training courses when Council has resolved the relevant Councillor attend.
- Where Councillors obtain approval to attend conferences, workshops or training courses, Council will cover the following expenses:
  - Registration fees;
  - Accommodation including breakfast (where appropriate);
  - Economy airfares (any upgrades will be at Councillor’s own expense);
  - Reasonable meal expenditure (will only be reimbursed upon presentation of receipts/tax invoices);
  - Reasonable taxi fares or public transport costs (will only be reimbursed upon presentation of receipts/tax invoices)

Such approval can be provided as follows:

- a. The Mayor and Chief Executive Officer can provide approval for attendance by Councillors where the expenditure is not expected to exceed \$800 (for any one attendance)
- b. The Chief Executive Officer can provide approval for attendance by the Mayor where the expenditure is not expected to exceed \$2,000 (for any one attendance)
- c. By Council resolution for all other attendances.
- d. An exception to the above financial limits is attendance to the Local Government of Queensland Annual Conference which all Councillors are encouraged to attend.

