

1.0 AUTHORITY

- *Local Government Act 2020, sections 27A, 27B, 32–33B and 39–42*
- *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*
- *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2024*
- *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019*

2.0 INTENT

This Policy ensures Councillors are appropriately supported to perform their statutory role effectively by:

- Providing clear entitlements for reimbursement of reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred while performing official duties.
- Outlining the procedure to be followed by a Councillor in applying for reimbursement of expenses.
- Establishing Councillors' resources, facilities and support entitlements.
- Embedding mandatory training and professional development across the Council term.
- Outlining reporting obligations and requirements.
- Maintaining transparency, accountability and continuous improvement.

3.0 SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Councillors of the Mornington Peninsula Shire (Shire) and to members of Delegated Committees.

4.0 GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

Under the *Local Government Act 2020 (the Act)*, Council must give effect to the following overarching governance principles:

- Council decisions are to be made, and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law.
- Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations.
- Innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued.
- Collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought.



- The ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured.
- Regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making.
- The transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.

5.0 POLICY STATEMENT

This Policy recognises the significant responsibilities of Councillors and provides clear guidance on the support, resources and financial entitlements necessary to fulfil their roles. Councillors are expected to exercise sound judgement and select the most economical and appropriate options when incurring expenses.

5.1 Expenses and Reimbursements

Under s40 and s41 of the Act, Councillors are entitled to reimbursement of reasonable bona fide out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the performance of their role.

Councillors should always seek the most cost-effective and economical option when conducting Council Business.

The following expenses are eligible for reimbursement when directly related to official Council Business:

5.1.1 Travel and Transport

- Private Vehicle Use – reimbursed at the Australian Taxation Office work-related kilometre rate as updated annually. Claims must include date, purpose, origin and destination.
- Public Transport, Taxis and Ride-share – reimbursed where the most practical and economical option. Receipts required.
- Parking and Tolls – reimbursed on provision of receipts or statements.

5.1.2 Interstate and Overseas Travel

- All interstate or overseas travel must be approved by Council Resolution.



- Approval reports must include the purpose of the travel, proposed location and dates, full cost estimates including transport (economy class), accommodation, fees and incidentals, potential benefits to the Shire and alignment with Council priorities.
- Councillors must provide a delegate's report within 30 days of returning from travel.
- Travel and accommodation will be booked for the duration of the event, with up to one additional day either side considered reasonable.

5.1.3 Accommodation and Sustenance

- Reasonable business-class accommodation reimbursed for approved events outside the municipality.
- Councillors can claim the reasonable cost of daily sustenance including breakfast, lunch, dinner and refreshments in line with the reasonable travel expense amounts published by the Australian Taxation Office.

5.1.4 Carer and Dependent Care

- In accordance with s41(2)(c) and (d) of the Act, the Shire will reimburse the cost of necessary carer expenses incurred by Councillors to enable the Councillor to undertake Council business. This includes the care of a child under 16, an elderly dependent, or a person with a disability or frailty.
- Necessary carer expenses are payable where the Councillor is in a relationship as defined in section 4 of the *Carer's Recognition Act 2012*.
- Reasonable carer expenses will be considered for reimbursement that relate only to care and no other domestic duties, on the provision of a receipt from a registered carer or business.
- Reasonable child-care costs will be considered on provision of a receipt from a registered childcare provider showing the date and time care was provided and detail the reason the care was required on each occasion.

5.1.5 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

- ICT equipment and services are provided by Council (refer to 5.4). Where Councillors use personal equipment for Council business, reasonable additional costs may be reimbursed on submission of itemised invoices.
- Councillors may request the transfer to Council of their non-Council mobile telephone number. Approval will be given if there are no transfer costs or pre-existing contract arrangements imposed on the Shire.

5.1.6 General Expenses

General expenses that may be eligible for reimbursement include:

- Tickets to functions or events where attendance clearly relates to Council Business.
- Council related books and subscriptions.

5.1.7 Accompanying Spouse or Partner

The Shire will not cover the cost of a spouse or partner attending Council business, except in the following circumstances:

- Attendance at one official dinner held as part of a Victorian-based conference related to local government or the sector (e.g. MAV, VLGA)
- Functions hosted by the Shire
- Functions hosted by another Victorian municipality where partner attendance is clearly invited (e.g. the spouse/partner is named or referenced on the invitation)

5.2 Professional Development and Training

Council is committed to support Councillors in meeting their training and development needs relating to their role as a Councillor, to further develop their understanding of the issues faced by Local Government, meet the requirements of the mandatory professional development training and provide opportunities to network with other Councillors.

5.2.1 Mandatory Councillor Induction and Professional Development

In accordance with ss27A, 32 and 33A of the Act and associated regulations, Councillors must complete professional development training annually to ensure they are able to effectively fulfil their roles.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will provide a Professional Development Program to meet mandatory training requirements in accordance with relevant legislation. Where practical, training will be integrated into Council briefings, online learning or other accessible formats to maximise participation, ensure consistent information sharing and reduce costs.

The Professional Development Program will include:

- An induction program with additional training for Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Acting Mayors.
 - Councillors must complete mandatory induction within four months of taking the Oath or Affirmation of Office.
 - Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Training to be completed within one month of election to these roles.
- An ongoing Professional Development Program to be completed each calendar year by all Councillors.

Mandatory training must include the topics prescribed in *the Governance and Integrity Regulations 2020*:

- Roles and responsibilities of Councillors and Mayors
- Working together as a Council
- Decision-making, integrity, and accountability
- Community representation and engagement
- Strategic planning and financial management
- Conduct, conflict of interest, and land use planning.



The CEO will certify the completion of mandatory professional development annually as part of Council's reporting obligations. The Governance Team will maintain training records and issue annual Certification Statements confirming each Councillor's completion status.

5.2.2 Non-mandatory Training and Professional Development (Discretionary)

Councillors are encouraged to undertake training directly enhancing their ability to perform their statutory role. Training and professional development should always be tested against the following criteria:

- It is in the interest of the community
- Whether it is relevant to the Councillor's role
- Takes place and can be utilised during the Councillor's term of office.

Professional development opportunities offered by industry peak bodies that could be considered appropriate include:

- Governance and leadership programs (e.g., VLGA, MAV).
- Financial sustainability and risk management workshops.
- Specialist planning, infrastructure or climate adaptation training, such as understanding planning legislation and decision-making processes, infrastructure delivery and asset management, or strategies to manage climate risk and build local resilience.
- Recognised governance qualifications such as the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) Company Directors Course and the Institute of Community Directors Australia – Diploma of Governance.
- Attendance to the ALGA National General Assembly & Regional Cooperation Forums (Australian Local Government Association).

5.2.2.1 Conferences, Seminars and Events

Attendance at conferences, seminars and events relevant to Local Government or the role of a Councillor provides valuable opportunities for learning, networking and staying informed on emerging issues and best practice.

Councillors are entitled to have the cost of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses associated with attending a conference, seminar, event or training course such as travel, accommodation and meals not included in the event fee. These costs will be attributed to the overall cost of the event and subject to the Professional Development Allowance.

5.2.2.2 Approval Process

Attendance at all non-mandatory training and professional development is subject to the following cost thresholds and the Professional Development Allowance outlined in 5.2.3:

- For costs up to and including \$2,000, approval must be obtained from the Manager Governance and Risk.
- For costs exceeding \$2,000, CEO approval is required.
- Interstate or overseas travel must be approved by Council resolution.

5.2.3 Professional Development Allowance and Budget Allocation

Councillors will have a Professional Development Allowance for all non-mandatory professional development and training (which is in addition to the budget allocation for mandatory training). The Professional Development Allowance is:

- \$16,000 per Councillor for the four-year Council term.
- Councillors are unable to spend more than the above allowance.

Council will approve an annual budget allocation for mandatory training as part of Council's annual budget to ensure mandatory training is funded.

5.3 Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillor Allowances

In accordance with s39 of the Act, allowances are determined by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal under the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Act 2019*.

The Tribunal assigns each Council to a category based on population and revenue. Mornington Peninsula Shire Council is classified as a Category 3 Council. Allowances are reviewed annually.

Allowances are inclusive of superannuation guarantee contributions and subject to taxation.

- Allowance details will be published monthly on Council's website.
- Quarterly consolidated allowance reports will be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee.
- Allowances are included in the Annual Report and reported through the State Government's Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF).

5.4 Resources and Support

In accordance with s42 of the Act, Council will provide resources and facilities reasonably necessary to enable Councillors to perform their role, including:

- Office space, meeting rooms and administrative support.
- ICT equipment (laptop, mobile phone, printer) and internet access.
- Stationery and postal services for Council business and when communicating, Councillors are encouraged to use electronic formats.
- Access to the Shire Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and annual flu vaccine.
- Insurance coverage while performing official Council business.
- Uniforms and Corporate Clothing, Council will provide or reimburse reasonable costs for corporate uniforms or protective clothing required for official duties.
- Sustenance, refreshments and meals are provided for Councillors attending official Council meetings, briefings, civic functions or while conducting Council business in Council offices.
- Support for Councillors with Disabilities. Reasonable adjustments (transport, specialised equipment, personal assistance) as approved by the Chief Executive Officer.
- Councillors seeking external legal advice relating to their official role must submit a written request to the Chief Executive Officer via the Mayor for prior approval. Upon approval, the Governance and Risk Manager will coordinate the legal engagement to ensure appropriate oversight and cost management.

Council will only cover legal expenses where:

- Prior CEO approval has been obtained
- Council resolution specifically authorises the expense, or
- Coverage is provided under an existing Council policy

In all other circumstances, legal expenses remain the personal responsibility of the Councillor.

5.4.1 Additional facilities for the Mayor

- A fully maintained vehicle, including fuel, maintenance and insurance, provided for official and reasonable private use in line with the Shire's Fleet Management Policy.
- A Mayoral medallion, added to the Mayoral Chains for use at official functions. At the end of the Mayoral term each Mayor will be provided with a replica medallion in recognition of their services.

5.5 Transparency and Reporting

- After attending a non-mandatory conference, seminar, event or training course a Councillor will provide a verbal report or written summary to Council via a Delegates Report outlining the learning outcomes.
- A Professional Development Register will be maintained and published quarterly on the Council website.
- Councillors will be provided with individual monthly reports on directly attributable Councillor expenses. Councillors will generally be provided with 14 days to review their report and seek clarification where required. Reporting will include running totals of reimbursements under each category.
- Quarterly reports of allowances, reimbursed expenses and professional development expenditure will be published on the Council website.
- Quarterly consolidated reports will be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee.

- Annual Report – allowances, expenses (by category), and training completion rates, in line with the *Planning & Reporting Regulations 2020*.
- State Reporting, expenses reported through the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF).

5.6 Exclusions

Expenses that will not be considered for reimbursement include:

- Personal or private expenses.
- Costs associated with spouses or partners, except where attendance is explicitly permitted under this policy
- Expenses incurred while on approved leave.
- Alcohol (except for official Council events approved by the Mayor).
- Fines, penalties or infringements.
- Political party/advocacy memberships.
- Donations, gifts or hospitality.
- The cost of attending a charity or fundraising event.
- The cost of purchasing any resources or facilities that have been made available to Councillors by the Shire.
- Non-Council business travel regardless of whether it forms part of or coincides with travel for Council Business.
- Claims that do not meet the approval, eligibility, or submission requirements set out in this policy.

5.7 Reimbursement Process



- To claim reimbursement, Councillors must complete the approved form and provide original receipts with supporting documentation detailing the expense.
- Claims must be lodged within 14 days of the end of each calendar month in which the expense was incurred or following the completion of travel.
- Claims will be reviewed and approved by the Manager Governance and Risk or the Chief Executive Officer.
- Any expense claim that does not meet the requirements of this policy will be returned to the Councillor explaining why the claim has not been accepted.
- A Councillor can make a complaint or appeal in writing to an Independent Reviewer against any decision regarding a reimbursement.
- In the event of a complaint or appeal, the Independent Reviewer will advise the Councillor and the Mayor of the reasons for refusal of the claim.

6.0 HUMAN RIGHTS CHARTER COMPATIBILITY

This policy has been assessed as being compatible with *the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*.

7.0 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- Model Councillor Code of Conduct
- Councillor Gift Policy
- Public Transparency Policy
- Fleet Management Policy

8.0 DEFINITIONS

Allowance

The remuneration payable to Councillors, the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor, determined by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal under the *Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary*



	<i>Standards Act 2019</i> . Includes superannuation guarantee contributions and is subject to taxation.
Annual Professional Development Plan	A plan prepared by the CEO each year, identifying mandatory and recommended professional development activities for Councillors to meet statutory requirements and support continuous learning.
Certification Statement	A certification statement issued by the CEO confirming completion of mandatory professional development by Councillors, required annually and tabled to Council.
Council Business	Duties and responsibilities carried out by a Councillor in connection with their role, including attendance at Council meetings, briefings, committee meetings, civic or ceremonial functions, site inspections, community or authority meetings, representation as an appointed delegate, and participation in mandatory or approved discretionary professional development.
Bona Fide Expense	A genuine out-of-pocket expense that is reasonable, necessary, and directly incurred in the performance of Councillor duties.
Carer	A carer as defined in s4 of the <i>Carers Recognition Act 2012</i> , providing ongoing personal care, support or assistance to a person in need due to disability, frailty, chronic illness or age.
Delegated Committee	A committee established under s63 of the Act, which must include two Councillors and may include other persons.
Independent Reviewer	An Executive Officer who was not the original decision maker.
Mandatory Professional Development	Training required under ss27A, 32 and 33A of the Act, including induction (within four months of election), annual professional development (to be completed each year), and Mayoral/Deputy Mayoral training (within one month of election).

Out-of-Pocket Expenses	Reasonable and necessary expenses personally incurred by a Councillor or delegated committee member in performing their duties, eligible for reimbursement under s40 of the Act.
Professional Development	Structured training, education or development activities directly enhancing a Councillor's role, including governance, financial management, strategic planning, integrity, community engagement, statutory planning, and recognised governance qualifications.
Professional Development Allowance	The allocated funding available to each Councillor over their four-year term to support non-mandatory professional development, training and attendance at relevant conferences, seminars and events. The allowance is capped at \$16,000.
Reasonable Adjustments	Additional resources, facilities or modifications provided to enable a Councillor with a disability to perform their role, consistent with the <i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010</i> .

9.0 POLICY SPONSOR

The Manager Governance and Risk is responsible for overseeing the application and review of the Councillor Expenses Policy.

10.0 DOCUMENT CONTROLS

Council will review the Councillor Expense and Support Policy within four years or earlier as required.

10.1 Document Version Table

Summarise the key changes made to the document to provide a quick understanding of the updates.



Document Version Control				
Version	Section	Revision Description	Date Revised	Approved by

Administrative Updates

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 document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Shire department, the change to an existing policy or document referred to in this policy, and minor updates to legislation and the like which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters the document must be by resolution of Council.