



Councillors' Allowance and Expense Reimbursement Policy

1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024

May 2024

1. Contents

1. Contents	2
2. Purpose and Scope	3
2.1 Policy principles	3
3. Policy	4
3.1 Travel.....	4
3.1.1 <i>Air travel – domestic</i>	4
3.1.2 <i>Air travel – international</i>	4
3.1.3 <i>Accommodation</i>	4
3.1.4 <i>Meals</i>	5
3.1.5 <i>Car parking</i>	5
3.1.6 <i>Rental cars</i>	5
3.1.7 <i>Taxis and other transport</i>	6
3.2 Vehicles	6
3.2.1 <i>Vehicle Provision</i>	6
3.3 Vehicle Mileage Allowances	6
4. ICT Allowances	7
5. Childcare Allowance	7
6. Professional Development, Clubs and Associations	7
6.1 Conferences, Courses and Seminars	7
6.2 Other Expenses	8
7. Calculation and Taxation of Allowances	8
8. Resource Consent Hearing Fees	9
8.1 Fees for attending Resource Management Act (RMA) resource consent hearings	9
9. Council Processes for Payment of Allowances and Reimbursements	9
10. Breach of Expense and Reimbursement Rules	9
11. Related Legislation and Guidance	10

2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set the rules on the claiming of expenses by elected members and the resources that will be available to them during their term of office.

This policy applies to the elected members of West Coast Regional Council (WCRC).

Actual and reasonable expenses may be incurred in relation to legitimate Council business events or legitimate Council business needs and travel. Reasonable resources should be made available to elected members to enable them to more efficiently carry out their responsibilities.

Elected members should only be reimbursed for actual and reasonable expenses they incur in carrying out Council business, within the parameters set by the Remuneration Authority and legislation.

Reimbursement of expenses, payment of allowances and use of the Council resources apply only to elected members personally, and only while they are carrying out Council business in their capacity as an elected member.

Transparency and accountability guide the reimbursement of elected members' allowances and expenses. WCRC is mindful of the requirement to use public funds responsibly and to maintain public confidence in the organisation.

2.1 Policy principles

The expenses and allowances payable, and supplies, consumables or services administered under this Policy are provided:

- at no cost to elected members, but only while they are holding office (e.g. not on a leave of absence or absent without leave); and
- for Council-business use only.

To be reimbursable, expenses must:

- have a justifiable council-related business purpose; council business includes formal Council meetings, committee meetings, workshops, seminars, statutory hearings, training courses, site visits, meetings with staff, meetings with community groups and meetings with members of the public. It does not include events where the primary focus is on social activity, political meetings or electioneering.
- be moderate and reasonable, having regard to the circumstances and able to pass the test of prudent use of ratepayers' money under public scrutiny.
- be actual and justified by an original receipt.
- be approved by the relevant authoriser.
- be within relevant budget provisions.

- be presented on the approved West Coast Regional Council claim form.
- be signed as true and correct by the claimant.
- be consistent with the rules set by the Remuneration Authority.

3. Policy

3.1 Travel

3.1.1 Air travel – domestic

Elected members are entitled to use domestic air travel for Council related travel where air travel is the most cost-effective travel option. All approved travel bookings are made through the Corporate Services team.

For the sake of clarity, if a member resides outside of the West Coast Regional Council area and, for personal reasons, chooses to travel by airline to the Council area on Council business, compensation will be paid for travel time only, as outlined in section 3.3 below.

3.1.2 Air travel – international

The prior approval of the Council via formal resolution is required for any international air travel, where costs or partial costs are paid for by council funds. As a general policy all international air travel by members is economy class, where Council funds all or part of the fares. Council approval is required for exceptions, e.g., where Premium Economy or the equivalent air travel is desirable for health or other compelling reasons.

All approved bookings are to be made by the Corporate Services team.

3.1.3 Accommodation

WCRC uses a travel and accommodation booking service and system, and all bookings and arrangements are to be via this system through an authorised Corporate Services staff member. Unless extraordinary circumstances arise, members are to use these venues/arrangements where appropriate. All bookings are to be made in consultation with the Corporate Services team.

An authorised staff member may arrange overnight accommodation for members when travel or business requirements make it unreasonable for a member to return on the same day, e.g, travelling after a late meeting, travelling in excess of 100km one-way, or in exceptional circumstances.

Accommodation should be cost-effective, taking into account the location relative to where members are working, the standard of accommodation and safety and security issues.

Purchases from hotel mini-bars and charges for in-room video or cable movies are to be paid for by the elected member before checking out of the accommodation.

3.1.4 Meals

Breakfast is not claimable on day one of travel, although in some exceptional circumstances approval may be given by the Chairperson for this expense up to a maximum of \$30 per head (e.g., if travel time commences pre-breakfast).

When staying overnight, a reasonable cost for breakfast may be claimed for day two onwards, or where possible, breakfast may be charged back to accommodation.

Lunch and reasonable expenses for morning and afternoon teas are claimable from day one of travel either within or outside the region. A reasonable cost will be reimbursed.

Dinner is claimable when Council business or meetings extend late or go in to the evening, or when staying away overnight, and will be reimbursed to a maximum of \$80 (including GST) per night.

Claims for alcohol will not be accepted.

Morning and afternoon tea are not claimable (this includes takeaway coffee and bottled water).

Reimbursements will only be made when members are on official Council business.

Meals cannot be claimed if:

- a complimentary meal is provided
- a meal is prepaid through an accommodation package (e.g. hotel breakfast)
- the cost of the meal is included in the cost of seminar or conference
- members are entertained by their hosts.

3.1.5 Car parking

Parking fees incurred while on WCRC business will be reimbursed on production of an original detailed receipted GST invoice.

3.1.6 Rental cars

Rental cars may be used when attending meetings or conferences in other centres, where this is the most cost-effective travel option.

Approved rental car bookings are to be made by the Corporate Services team.

3.1.7 Taxis and other transport

There may be occasions when a member requires a taxi service. Taxi fares may be booked in advance through the relevant Corporate Services staff.

Taxi costs paid for by the individual member for taxi travel within New Zealand, or for international travel on Council business, will be reimbursed on presentation of actual receipts.

3.2 Vehicles

3.2.1 Vehicle Provision

Elected members are entitled to make use of WCRC pool cars for use on official council business, in which case the WCRC 'Safe Driving Policy' shall apply. Bookings for pool vehicles are to be made through the Corporate Services team.

3.3 Vehicle Mileage Allowances

In accordance with the *Local Government Members (2023/24) Determination 2023*, the following rules apply:

- Vehicle mileage will be paid for all travel on Council business when the member is travelling in a private vehicle by the most direct route that is reasonable in the circumstances.
- The maximum allowance for a petrol or diesel vehicle is:
 - 95 cents per km for the first 14,000 kms travelled in the determination term (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024)
 - 34 cents per kilometre for any distance over 14,000 kms travelled in the determination term (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024).
- The maximum allowance for a petrol hybrid vehicle is:
 - 95 cents per km for the first 14,000 kms travelled in the determination term (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024)
 - 20 cents per km for any distance over 14,000 kms travelled in the determination term (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024).
- The maximum allowance for an electric vehicle is:
 - 95 cents per km for the first 14,000 kms travelled in the determination term (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024)
 - 11 cents per km for any distance over 14,000 kms travelled in the determination term (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024).

If the Council is providing transport, and a member chooses for personal reasons to travel

independently, they may not be entitled to a vehicle allowance.

Where a member chooses for personal reasons to travel by private vehicle to a conference or seminar outside of the West Coast region, they will be entitled to reimbursement of the mileage travelled, up to the value of equivalent airfare.

Any speeding fines and any other traffic infringement notices incurred will not be reimbursed.

For the sake of clarity, the member is not required to be a member of the committee or subcommittee to claim mileage allowance.

4. ICT Allowances

At the commencement of each 3 year term, all elected members will be provided with approved standard IT equipment such as laptop or tablet, and a mobile phone. IT support is provided to elected members.

Any council-owned device remains the property of the WCRC and must be returned when the member leaves office.

Any equipment provided must be used in accordance with the Council's *IT Systems for Councillors Policy* (17 October 2022).

Any other relevant provisions of the *Local Government Members (2023/24) Determination 2023* apply to ICT.

5. Childcare Allowance

In accordance with the *Local Government Members (2023/24) Determination 2023*, members may claim a childcare allowance as a contribution to expenses of up to \$6,000 per child during the determination term if:

- the member is the parent or guardian of the child or is usually responsible for the day-to-day care of the child; and
- the child is under 14 years of age; and
- the childcare is provided by someone who is not the member's family member and does not ordinarily reside with the member.

Satisfactory evidence of the amount paid for childcare must be provided in the form of an original detailed receipted GST invoice.

6. Professional Development, Clubs and Associations

6.1 Conferences, Courses and Seminars

When considered appropriate for a Councillor to attend a conference / course / seminar at the cost of the Council, approval shall only be given for the purpose of acquiring knowledge, including new developments, or transacting business that is appropriate to that Councillor. Costs of attendance must be able to be met within the approved budgets.

Attendance will generally be authorised by resolution in a public session of a Council or Committee meeting, but may also be authorised in writing by the Council Chair.

Councillors who have been authorised to attend a conference, course, seminar etc. will have attendance fees, travel, accommodation and meals paid for. Unless otherwise agreed by the Group Manager Corporate Services, all travel and accommodation will be booked through authorised Corporate Services staff.

The Council will not meet costs of partners / spouses attending conferences / courses / seminars.

Councillors, after attendance at an approved conference / course / seminar should present a report to an appropriate meeting on relevant matters including course content, matters of interest to other members and staff and an assessment of the value of the attendance.

6.2 Other Expenses

Certain items have been confirmed as not refundable as follows:

- (a) increased clothing standard because of attendance at Council and other meetings,
- (b) constituent expenses,
- (c) lost time or the additional payments incurred in having normal work undertaken by someone else,
- (d) personal subscriptions to magazines,
- (e) personal subscriptions to clubs and organisations,
- (f) hospitality extended to constituents in private home on Council business and community contacts; and,
- (g) spouses costs in attending functions.

7. Calculation and Taxation of Allowances

If any allowance is payable as a single amount for the determination term and a member is not a member for the whole of the determination term, the amount payable to that member shall be pro-rated in accordance with the formula provided in the *Local Government Members (2023/24) Determination 2023*.

Taxation on allowances shall be deducted at the prevailing taxation rates as determined by the Inland Revenue Department.

8. Resource Consent Hearing Fees

8.1 Fees for attending Resource Management Act (RMA) resource consent hearings

Fees for attending RMA resource consent hearings will be paid in accordance with the *Local Government Members (2023/24) Determination 2023*.

9. Council Processes for Payment of Allowances and Reimbursements

All claims for reimbursement of expenses must be submitted on the Councillor expense claim form to the Group Manager Corporate Services.

Administration of Elected Members' claims for expenses and meeting allowances will be coordinated by the Group Manager Corporate Services.

All expenses must be approved by the Chair, or in his or her absence, the Deputy Chair. The Chief Executive must approve the Chair's expenses.

Claim forms:

- (a) are to be submitted to the Group Manager Corporate Services who will vet claims, and arrange for approval and payment into members' bank accounts.
- (b) for each month are to be received by the 20th of the following month EXCEPT for the months of May and June. Expense claims for the month of May and beginning of the month of June are to be received by the 15th of June to enable payment in that financial year. Expenses incurred between 16-30 June will be processed in the following financial year.
- (c) submitted after three months will not be entertained except in extraordinary circumstances.

All reimbursement claims are to be supported with a detailed receipted tax invoice. It is not sufficient for payments made by credit card or EFTPOS docket to be supported by only the credit card / EFTPOS receipt. A detailed description of business reasons must be supplied.

Elected members must maintain an accurate record of travel undertaken in their private vehicles related to any claimed mileage allowance and provide a copy in support of mileage claims. Claims must include details of where and why the travel was undertaken.

Payment will be made monthly by direct credit.

10. Breach of Expense and Reimbursement Rules

Instances where this policy has not been followed may lead to an investigation pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct.

11. Related Legislation and Guidance

- (a) Schedule 7, section 6 of the Local Government Act 2002, which requires the Remuneration Authority to determine the “remuneration, allowances and expenses” payable to Councillors of local authorities, and states that the Remuneration Authority may approve the rules under which expenses are reimbursed to Councillors.
- (b) Remuneration Authority Determinations and related guidance, including [Allowances for local government members | Remuneration Authority \(remauthority.govt.nz\)](#).
- (c) Office of the Auditor-General guidelines, including “*Controlling sensitive expenditure: Guidelines for public entities*”. [Controlling sensitive expenditure: Guide for public organisations — Office of the Auditor-General New Zealand \(oag.parliament.nz\)](#)
- (d) Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968.
- (e) WCRC Policy *IT Systems for Councillors*, 17 October 2022.