

Policy on Elected Members' Allowances and Expenses 2010 – Greater Wellington Regional Council

(As adopted by Council on 18 November 2010, and amended on 14 December 2010 and 3 March 2011 for Remuneration Authority approval)

1. Introduction

In addition to determining the remuneration of elected members, the Remuneration Authority (the Authority) is required to determine the allowances and expenses of all elected members.

Every year the Authority asks each local authority to provide the proposed rules for the recovery of expenses incurred by elected members. The Authority then makes a determination, prescribing the rules that apply.

In developing this policy, key factors have been fairness to elected members and ratepayers, and administrative efficiency. Therefore, where possible, standard allowances are based on fair and reasonable estimates of costs incurred, rather than requiring a claim to be made.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Council's Sensitive Expenditure Policy (Elected Members).

2. Policy on allowances and expenses

2.1 Parking

Elected members will be provided with parking spaces at the Regional Council Centre for their use when on council business.

Two dedicated parking spaces for the Chair and Deputy Chair will be provided in the basement of the Regional Council Centre. Five dedicated spaces will be provided in the James Smiths Council Car Park, with additional spaces reserved for elected members on meeting days.

Elected members who incur parking charges when on Council business at other locations are entitled to reimbursement of the actual cost.

2.2 Use of public transport

Elected members who travel by public transport in relation to Council business are entitled to reimbursement of the actual cost. Evidence of the cost incurred should be provided.

2.3 Chair's vehicle

The Chair of the Council will be provided with a vehicle. If the Chair elects to have the vehicle available for private use, a deduction will be made from their salary as determined by the Authority.

2.4 Mileage allowance

Subject to the interpretation and exceptions listed below, elected members, excluding the Chair, are entitled to a mileage allowance when using their own vehicle for Council business. The rate payable is subject to the following conditions:

- The first 30 kilometres travelled each day is not eligible for mileage.
- The first 5000 kilometres of eligible mileage claimed by an elected member in any financial year shall be subject to an allowance of \$0.70 per kilometre.
- Any eligible mileage over 5000 kilometres claimed by an elected member in any financial year shall be subject to an allowance of \$0.35 per kilometre.

Interpretation

With respect to mileage allowances and reimbursement of public transport costs, the term “Council business” includes attendance at the following:

- Official meetings of the Council and any committee and subcommittee of Council
- Council workshops
- Meetings and workshops of advisory groups established by Council
- Meetings and workshops of external bodies to which the elected member has been appointed by Council
- Statutory hearings
- Meetings of Council-owned companies
- An external event or meeting where there has been:
 - a resolution of Council or a committee, or
 - an authorisation by the Council Chair, or
 - with respect to the member of a committee, an authorisation by the Chairperson of that committee
- Visits to, and tours of, facilities or sites or works for which the Council is responsible, or has involvement, or which will be the subject of business to come before the Council or any committee
- Seminars and training courses where the elected member’s attendance has been authorised
- Constituency meetings
- Discussions with committee Chairpersons or Council officers
- Consultation with Mayors, territorial authority committee Chairpersons, or elected members

- Official briefings.

Mileage may include travel to and from the member's residence, if the travel is:

- (a) in the member's own vehicle; and
- (b) on Council business as outlined above; and
- (c) by the most direct route reasonable in the circumstances.

"Council business" does not include events where the primary focus is on social activity.

Exceptions

- If Greater Wellington is providing transport, and an elected member chooses – for personal reasons – to travel separately, they will not be entitled to a vehicle allowance.
- Where an elected member chooses for personal reasons to travel by private motor vehicle to a conference or seminar outside of the Wellington region, they will be entitled to no more than the cheapest equivalent air fares available for the day(s) of travel, where such fares are less than the mileage allowance at ordinary rates.

2.5 Communications allowance

It is expected that Councillors have their own home computer with internet connection, a home telephone and mobile phone and that these items are available for Councillors to use for their Council related business.

Elected members having such items available for Council business are eligible to receive a communications allowance. The rate payable will be the maximum rate determined by the Authority. The rate will be reduced by the following amounts for any individual item that the Councillor does not have available for Council related business:

- Personal computer/laptop with internet connection: one half
- Mobile phone: one third
- Landline telephone: one third.

As an alternative to providing their own personal computer for Council business use, an elected member may be issued with a standard specification Greater Wellington laptop computer for use on Council business. The provision of such equipment would result in the maximum allowance payable to the member being reduced by 50% and is subject to the following conditions:

- The laptop may be used only for Council business

- The laptop remains Greater Wellington property at all times and must be returned when requested
- The use of the laptop must be in accordance with Greater Wellington's *Information Technology Security and Use Policy*
- Any consumables associated with the use of the laptop are the responsibility of the elected member.

Greater Wellington will provide a mobile phone for the Chair and cover all expenses associated with the use of that phone on Council business. The phone remains the property of the Council, and the communication allowance payable to the Chair will be reduced as outlined above to reflect the provision of the phone.

2.6 Travel time allowance

Elected members, excluding the Chair, are entitled to a travel time allowance in relation to travel undertaken in relation to Council business. The rate payable will be the maximum rate determined by the Authority, and is subject to the following condition:

- The first two hours of travel time each day is not eligible for the allowance.

2.7 Conferences, courses, seminars etc.

Elected members 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 Chief Executive, all travel and accommodation will be booked through Democratic Services.

Core training will be organised by Democratic Services. Approval for Councillor attendance at one-off events in New Zealand will be approved by the Council Chair; in the case of attendance by the Chair the approval will be by the Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer.

Overseas conference attendance is to be approved by Council, consistent with the Council's Sensitive Expenditure Policy (Elected Members).

2.8 Newspaper subscription

The Chair shall be entitled to a subscription providing for home delivery of the local daily newspaper to their nominated home address.

2.9 Clothing

Councillors may be supplied with jackets and coats bearing the Council's branding. These remain Council property at all times.

2.10 Stationery

Stationery is available on request for use on Council business.

2.11 Councillors' office

Elected members are entitled to use the Councillors' office on level 5 of the Regional Council Centre for Council business purposes. The office is equipped with a desk, phone, and a computer.

2.12 Travel insurance

Travel insurance will be provided for overseas travel on Council business.

2.13 Personal accident insurance

Greater Wellington's personal accident insurance includes cover for the death or bodily injury of an elected member. Any payment received as a result of a claim made under this cover in respect of an elected member is payable to the Council, and will be utilised for Council purposes only, e.g. as a contribution to the costs of running an extraordinary election. No payment will be made to the elected member who is the subject of the claim.

2.14 Payment

Where applicable, allowances will be paid fortnightly.

Claims for expenses should be made fortnightly on the forms provided, must be made no later than three months after the date concerned, and should include all relevant receipts. Payment of claims made after that date requires the approval of the Council Chair.

Payment will be made by direct credit.