

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

1. Introduction

In addition to determining the remuneration of elected members, the Higher Salaries Commission is also required to determine the allowances and expenses of all elected members.

The Commission has asked each local authority to send them the proposed rules for the recovery of expenses by elected members. The Commission will then make a determination prescribing the rules that apply.

In developing this policy, a key factor has been administrative efficiency. Therefore, where it is possible to do so, an effort has been made to provide standard allowances based on the fair and reasonable value for the costs incurred, rather than requiring a claim to be made.

2. Proposed 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 Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson will be provided in the basement of the Regional Council Centre. Four dedicated spaces will be provided in the James Smiths Council Car Park, with additional spaces being reserved for elected members on meetings days.

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

2.2 Chairperson's car

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

2.3 Mileage

Subject to the interpretation and exceptions listed below, elected members are entitled to a vehicle allowance when using their own vehicle for council business. The rate payable will be that determined by the Higher Salaries Commission and reflects both cost recovery and an element of remuneration of travelling time.

Elected members who travel by public transport in relation to council business are entitled for reimbursements of the actual cost.

Interpretation

With respect to mileage allowances, the term “council business” includes attendance at the following:

- Official meetings of the Council and any committees and subcommittees of which the elected member is a member
- Council workshops
- 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 Chairperson 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 Chairs or Managers
- Consultation with Mayors, territorial authority committee Chairs or elected members
- Constituency meetings
- Official briefings

At no time does “council business” include events where the primary focus is on social activities

Exceptions

- If the Council 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 equivalent air fares where such fares are less than the mileage allowance charged at ordinary rates.

2.4 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 Council secretary, all travel and accommodation will be booked through the Council Secretariat.

Attendance will generally be authorised by resolution in a public session of a Council or Committee meeting, but may also be authorised by the Council Chairperson in association with the General Manager, or with respect to the member of a committee, by the Chairperson of that committee in association with the principle reporting officer for the committee.

Except for the Council Chairperson, the Council will not meet the costs of spouses' or partners' attendance at conferences.

2.5 Answerphones/faxes/filing cabinets

On request, elected members will be supplied with an answerphone, facsimile and filing cabinet for their period of office. The Council will also supply any necessary sundry consumables. The equipment remains the property of the Council and must be returned when the elected member leaves office.

2.6 Clothing

Councillors will be supplied with jackets and coats bearing the Council's branding.

2.7 Telephone rental

Except as set out below, elected members are entitled to an allowance of \$19.65 per month, being half the standard cost of a residential phone connection.

If the installation of a second telephone line is necessary for council business, the Council will pay the costs of installing the second line and the elected member will be entitled to an allowance of \$39.30 per month to cover the monthly rental cost. The decision about whether a second line is necessary will be made by the Chairperson of the Council in consultation with the General Manager. Elected members who have a second line installed will not be entitled to the allowance of \$19.65 per month.

2.8 Mobile phones

Elected members who can be contacted on a mobile telephone are entitled to an allowance of \$20 per month. This allowance is based on half the cost of the monthly rental plus a contribution towards the cost of calls relating to council business. It is assumed that a key benefit of a mobile phone is for in-coming calls where the cost is met by the caller, and that elected members will make most outgoing calls from land lines.

Elected members will provide their own phone at their expense.

2.9 Computers

Subject to the condition below, elected members are entitled to an allowance of \$71.66 per month to assist them to provide a personal computer that can be used for council business, including email and printing costs.

The allowance is based on the following:

$$\text{Allowance} = (\$3000/36/2) + \$5 + \$25 = \$71.66$$

\$3000 is taken as the cost of a personal computer with Microsoft Word and anti-virus protection together with a printer. This figure is divided by 36, the number of months in a triennium and also the expected life of a personal computer, and then by 2, taking council use as half of the use of the computer.

\$5 is half the monthly cost of a basic Internet connection.

\$25 is half the cost of a printer cartridge.

Printer paper will be supplied on demand from the Council.

Condition

The computer allowance is subject to the elected member providing a home computer connected to the Internet and loaded with a current version of Microsoft Word and anti-virus software that is kept up-to-date.

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 located on level 5 of the Regional Council Centre. The office is equipped with desks, phones and a computer.

2.12 Typing facilities

Typing facilities are available to Councillors for use on council business only.

2.13 Insurance

Elected members will be provided with personal accident insurance covering death or bodily injury as a result of an accident. Travel insurance will be provided for any overseas travel.

2.14 Payment

Where applicable, allowances will be paid fortnightly.

Claims for expenses should be made fortnightly on the forms provided and 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 Chairperson of the Council.

Payment will be made by direct credit.

2.15 Taxation

Taxation on allowances shall be deducted at the prevailing taxation rates as determined by the Inland Revenue Department. Greater Wellington Regional Council shall furnish details of taxable payments made and deductions for every tax year.