



GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE

ATTACHMENTS

**Under Separate Cover
Council Meeting**

6.00pm Tuesday 27 April 2021

Table of Contents

7.17 Councillor Professional Development
Attachment 1 Council Expenses and Entitlements Policy - 28 July 2020 4

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY



Council Expenses & Entitlements Policy

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

CONTENTS

1.	PURPOSE.....	3
2.	SCOPE.....	3
3.	POLICY STATEMENT	3
4.	PROCEDURES	3
	5. <i>Communication Equipment</i>	3
	6. <i>Communication Costs</i>	4
	7. <i>Stationery</i>	4
	8. <i>Civic Functions and Events</i>	5
	9. <i>Ticketed Events</i>	5
	10. <i>Conferences, Seminars, Training Programs and Professional Development</i>	5
	11. <i>Meals and Refreshments</i>	6
	12. <i>Meeting rooms, office space and furniture</i>	7
	13. <i>Administrative Assistance</i>	7
	14. <i>Mail Inward and Outward</i>	7
	15. <i>Insurance</i>	8
	16. <i>Additional Expenses of the Mayor</i>	8
	17. <i>Travelling Expenses</i>	8
	18. <i>Childcare Costs and Carer Expenses</i>	10
	19. <i>Payment of Allowances</i>	10
	20. <i>Legal Expenses</i>	10
	21. <i>Other Expenses</i>	11
	22. <i>Recoupment of Private Expenses</i>	11
	23. <i>Claiming Expenses</i>	11
	24. <i>Reimbursement of Expenses</i>	12
	25. <i>Audit and Reporting</i>	12
26.	SUPPORTING INFORMATION.....	12
27.	RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION.....	12
28.	RESPONSIBILITIES	13
29.	DEFINITIONS OF TERMS OR ABBREVIATIONS USED	14
30.	RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS	14
31.	HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT OF COMPATABILITY.....	14
32.	POLICY OWNER	14
33.	FEEDBACK.....	15
34.	DOCUMENT INFORMATION.....	15

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide Councillors with a clear understanding of their entitlements with regard to out of pocket expenses and provision of Council owned resources whilst performing duties as an elected representative of the community;
- Provide guidance on ethical behaviour in relation to claiming Councillor out-of-pocket expenses; and
- Demonstrate accountability to the community.

2. SCOPE

2.1 This policy applies to:

- Golden Plains Shire Council Councillors;
- Members of Delegated Committees, and the Audit and Risk Committee (collectively referred to as "Committee Members" in this policy).

2.2 This policy covers the reimbursement to Councillors, and Committee Members where specified, for reasonable bona fide out-of-pocket expenses incurred and the facilities, support and resources provided whilst performing their duties as an elected representative of the community.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 This policy is a specific requirement of s.41B of the *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act).

3.2 This policy outlines the resources and support to be provided by Council to Councillors and Committee Members and eligible expenditure that may be reimbursed when incurred in the performance of their duties.

4. PROCEDURES**5. Communication Equipment**

5.1 The following equipment will be provided to each Councillor for the purposes of conducting Council related business only:

- One laptop / notepad computer, being a:
 - Microsoft Surface Pro
- One mobile phone (Android);
- Internet connection;

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

- Data allowance up to 1GB per month;
 - Relevant computer software; and
 - One printer (Inkjet Multi Function Device) (optional).
- 5.2 Council will arrange for the installation of the necessary equipment and provide the necessary maintenance and consumable products required for its operation.
- 5.3 Use of mobile phones and mobile devices must be in accordance with the organisation's Communication and Mobile Devices Standard.
- 5.4 Use of Council's corporate network, including the internet, must be in accordance with the organisation's IT Standards and Procedures Suite and organisational guidelines.
- 5.5 Accessories or services beyond the standard equipment referred to in this section may be provided upon written request to the Chief Executive Officer.
- 5.6 The IT Department shall maintain a register of all equipment provided to Councillors for Council business.
- 5.7 All Council owned equipment and property is returnable to Council on completion of tenure of the particular Councillor. The Chief Executive Officer will make arrangements for the collection of the equipment.
- 6. Communication Costs**
- 6.1 Council will bear all operating costs of Council-supplied equipment incurred in Australia. Council will not be responsible for calls/transmissions made outside Australia unless a prior arrangement has been made with the Chief Executive Officer.
- 6.2 Councillors will be provided with monitored internet access (either directly or by reimbursement) for the purpose of conducting Council business.
- 6.3 Personal calls/texts and data usage should be minimised and where significant personal use has occurred, costs must be reimbursed to Council.
- 6.4 Where Councillors are appointed to regional bodies as a representative of Council, Councillors are to discuss the usage and possible contribution by these bodies with the Chief Executive Officer prior to commencement of appointment.
- 6.5 Subject to clause 5.5, the additional cost of any accessories provided may be charged to the Councillor.
- 7. Stationery**
- 7.1 Council will provide stationary facilities to each Councillor. These facilities are provided for use by the Councillor in the conduct of their duties of office.
- 7.2 Each Councillor will have access to an adequate supply of the following:
- A4 Letterhead
 - Business cards

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

- Name badge
 - Diary, planner or time manager
 - Consumables for equipment, including paper, ink cartridges, etc.
- 7.3 All stationery provided shall remain the property of the Council and shall be returned within two weeks of retirement or termination of office.
- 7.4 Upon request a four draw filing cabinet will be available from Council to establish a home office. The Mayor or any Councillor wishing to purchase additional furniture or equipment shall do so at their own cost.
- 7.5 All Council-owned stationery and property is returnable to Council on completion of tenure of the particular Councillor. The Chief Executive Officer will make arrangements for the collection of the equipment.
- 8. Civic Functions and Events**
- 8.1 Councillors will be invited to attend civic functions and events over their term of office as Councillors.
- 8.2 Councillors' partners may be invited to accompany the Councillor at civic functions and events where deemed appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 8.3 Civic functions and events will generally fall into the categories of:
- Civic receptions;
 - Mayoral functions; or
 - Council hospitality.
- 9. Ticketed Events**
- 9.1 Subject to annual budget limits, Council will pay the costs of ticketed functions for the Mayor, or a Councillor, to attend when the function relates to Council business as determined by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 9.2 Subject to clause 9.1, Council will pay the cost of other ticketed functions in accordance with Council resolutions.
- 10. Conferences, Seminars, Training Programs and Professional Development**
- 10.1 Councillors and Committee Members will be given the opportunity of attending training programs and conferences.
- 10.2 The selection of a meeting or conference should be based on its relevance to the role and development of the Councillor or Committee Member.
- 10.3 Attendance at any local, interstate or overseas meetings or conferences where the total cost exceeds \$3,000 must be subject to approval by a meeting of Council.
- 10.4 Attendance at any local, interstate or overseas meetings or conferences at a total cost to Council of \$3,000 or less may be approved by the CEO provided such

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

expenditure by a Councillor does not exceed \$3,000 in any given financial year.

- 10.5 Application to attend any local, interstate or overseas meetings or conferences involving Council expenditure must be made in accordance with Council Policy and on the approved form.
- 10.6 Where in accordance with Council Policy and relevant to the role of a Councillor, Council may pay the study costs of a Councillor, their professional development fees and registration fees for attendance at meetings or conferences provided such expenditure by a Councillor does not exceed \$3,000 in any given financial year. Where expenditure by a Councillor totals \$3,000 Council may formally resolve to allocate additional funds to the Councillor.
- 10.7 Subject to clause 10.6, where Council pays upfront study costs of a Councillor, in the event the Councillor does not successfully complete the unit such payment is required to be refunded back to Council.
- 10.8 Subject to clause 10.6, "conferences" includes the main conference dinner if not covered by registration cost and all meals within reasonable limits for the duration of the meeting or conference. Additional meal costs incurred as a result of the attendance of partners and/or children shall be borne by the Councillor.
- 10.9 Appropriate accommodation selected by the Chief Executive Officer, will be available from the day prior to registration day and each day on which official sessions of the meeting or conference are held. Any additional accommodation costs incurred as a result of the attendance of partners and/or children shall be borne by the Councillor.
- 10.10 After the conclusion of the Conference/Seminar, a summary of actual expenditure incurred must be provided to the CEO through the Executive Assistant – Chief Executive Officer.
- 11. Meals and Refreshments**
- 11.1 Where Council meetings or briefings are held at times which extend through normal meals times, Councillors will be provided with suitable meals served on the premises.
- 11.2 Where a Council Briefing runs over the scheduled end time and through or within one hour of a normal meal time, if no meal has been arranged on the premises Councillors are entitled to claim reimbursement for an overtime meal allowance at the Australian Taxation Office overtime meal allowance rate applicable.
- 11.3 Appropriate meals will be arranged by the Executive Assistant – Chief Executive Officer.
- 11.4 Councillors not requiring a meal are to advise accordingly to enable catering to be reduced.
- 11.5 The meal arrangements for each meeting will be:
- Council Meeting – Light refreshments and dinner in the form of a one course served meal together with tea, coffee and beverages.
 - Council Briefing – Light refreshments and lunch or dinner in the form of a one course buffet meal together with tea and coffee.

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

- Where a formally invited external guest is in attendance at a Council dinner additional courses may be arranged.
- 11.6 Councillors will be requested to advise of any dietary requirements at the commencement of their term of office and are to advise of any alterations during the course of their term.
- 12. Meeting rooms, office space and furniture**
- 12.1 The Mayor will be provided with an office suitably equipped with quality office furniture, including a desk, meeting table and chairs. Other furniture or equipment (within reason) can be made available upon request.
- 12.2 The main office of Council includes a number of meeting rooms which can be booked and used by Councillors for meetings, or for use as an occasional working space, during office hours. Bookings are to be coordinated through the Executive Assistant – Chief Executive Officer.
- 12.3 IT equipment and refreshments can be made available for meetings upon request. Requests are to be coordinated through the Executive Assistant – Chief Executive Officer.
- 12.4 Subject to availability, other venues owned and controlled by Council can be used by Councillors for meetings, interviews and other functions associated with their role as Councillors. The Executive Assistant – Chief Executive Officer can assist in the booking of these venues.
- 13. Administrative Assistance**
- 13.1 Reasonable administrative/secretarial assistance will be provided to assist the Mayor to undertake the role effectively. The level of support is determined by the Chief Executive Officer in conjunction with the Mayor.
- 13.2 Limited administrative/secretarial assistance will be made available to Councillors for work directly related to the duties of their roles. All such work should be coordinated through the Executive Assistant – Chief Executive Officer and approved by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 14. Mail Inward and Outward**
- 14.1 All mail received by Council is deemed to be Council business and will be opened by Council's Records staff. The exception is mail marked 'private and confidential'. Mail is scanned and forwarded to the Executive Assistant – Chief Executive Officer. The hardcopy correspondence is retained in a Daily Batch in Records Management.
- 14.2 Letterhead paper incorporating the Council logo must be used for all Council related correspondence.
- 14.3 Councillors must exercise care to ensure that correspondence does not commit Council funds or convey a position which is contrary to that adopted by Council. Letterhead incorporating the Council logo must not be used for personal correspondence.
- 14.4 Each Councillor may leave up to 20 standard mail items related to Council business for postage through the Australia Post system.

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

- 14.5 Mail must be contained within Golden Plains Shire Council envelopes and coordinated through the Shire offices by the Executive Assistant – Chief Executive Officer.
- 14.6 Council letterhead must not be used in relation to a Council Election and Councillors need to remain mindful of caretaker provisions that apply in the lead up to an election.
- 15. Insurance**
- 15.1 Councillors are covered by the Council Insurance policies on a 24-hour, 7-day a week basis, while discharging the duties of civic office in good faith, including attendance at meetings of external bodies as Council's representative.
- 15.2 Council will pay the insurance policy excess in respect of any claim made against a Councillor arising from Council business where any claim is accepted by Council's insurers, whether defended or not.
- 15.3 Council equipment provided to Councillors to assist in performing their role, is covered for damage or theft under Council's insurance policies. Councillors are expected to exercise due care in protecting the equipment from damage or theft.
- 16. Additional Expenses of the Mayor**
- 16.1 Any reasonable expenses incurred by the Mayor, shall be deemed to be expenses of the Mayor.
- 16.2 Council will provide at its cost to the Mayor a fully registered, insured, maintained and fuelled vehicle for use by the Mayor (optional) on official duties and for private use. Use of the Council motor vehicle will be in accordance with Council's Fleet Policy. If the Mayor chooses to use a personal vehicle instead then any travelling expensed will be reimbursed in accordance with section 17.
- 16.3 Council will provide to the Mayor a corporate credit card with a credit limit of \$1,000 for use while discharging the functions of the office of the Mayor. Use of the corporate card is to be in accordance with Council policy and procedures. The corporate card statement is to be reconciled with tax invoices and authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 17. Travelling Expenses**
- 17.1 Councillors shall be eligible to claim travelling expenses when using their private vehicles on eligible Council business measured from and to their nominated Golden Plains Shire Council residence (or Golden Plains Shire Council rateable property).
- 17.2 Committee Members shall be eligible to claim travelling expenses when using their private vehicles on eligible Council business measured from and to their nominated residence.
- 17.3 The following will be eligible Council business for the purposes of travel reimbursement:
- Council meetings and Assemblies of Councillors.
 - Standing Committee or Committee meetings of Council. Where being applied to Councillors, that Councillor must be the nominated

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

representative/substitute or otherwise by approval of the Mayor.

- Regional meetings where the Councillor claiming reimbursement is Council's endorsed representative and travel is not paid/reimbursed by the regional organisation or meeting convenor.
 - Functions to which Councillors are invited by an organisation (attendance by partners must be paid for by the Councillor) and where there is a direct involvement of Council.
 - Travelling expenses incurred by Councillors embarking on inspection of issues raised by members of the community within the Shire, which are considered reasonable and necessary and where travel is within the Shire.
 - Conferences and seminars approved in accordance with Section 10.
- 17.4 Where practicable and by prior arrangement with the Chief Executive Officer, a Council / pool vehicle may be made available to Councillors for travel where use of private vehicles or other means of transport is not convenient. No private use of Council vehicles other than the Mayor is allowable.
- 17.5 Approved claims for travelling expenses will be reimbursed at the Australian Taxation Office travel rate applicable – standard 4 cylinder.
- 17.6 Travel must be undertaken as efficiently as possible.
- 17.7 Council supports the transport needs of people with a disability and/or those requiring specialised transport. Council will provide reimbursement for travel and transport where a Councillor or Committee Member requires modified vehicles to transport wheelchairs and/or other support aides.
- 17.8 Claim forms will only be paid on the basis of the actual form of transport used and costs incurred.
- 17.9 When a Councillor is elected as an office bearer to a regional group/association that group/association will be requested to contribute to travel expenses incurred for attendance at "non-standard" functions (e.g. functions attended as the Chair of the group/association rather than as Council representative). Councillors are to discuss the contribution with the Chief Executive Officer prior to commencement of appointment.
- 17.10 Where in accordance with Section 10, Council will provide a Councillor with transport arrangements to, from and during meetings or conferences, which may be by:
- Aircraft – economy class airfare.
 - Hire car – standard 4 cylinder;
 - Private/Council vehicle – including vehicle parking costs;
 - Taxi; or
 - Train/Bus - economy class.
- 17.11 In accordance with Government policy:
- If a Councillor, including a Mayor, normally resides more than 50kms by shortest possible practicable road distance from the location or locations specified for the conduct of ordinary, special or committee meetings of the Council, or any municipal or community functions which have been authorised by Council resolution for the

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

Councillor to attend, they must be paid an additional remote area travel allowance of \$40 in respect of each day on which one or more meetings or authorised functions were actually attended by that Councillor, up to a maximum of \$5000 per annum.

18. Childcare Costs and Carer Expenses

18.1 Childcare and care of frail aged and/or people with a disability can be claimed where the expense is incurred due to attendance at Council meetings, civic functions, committee meetings, functions or formal briefings and when representing Council on Council business as an official delegate or representative and:

- The child or person resides in the Councillor's or a member of a Committee Member's household and the Councillor is the primary carer or;
- Where the Councillor or a Committee Member is a carer in a care relationship within the meaning of section 4 of the *Carers Recognition Act 2012*; or;
- Where the Councillor's partner is the primary carer and he/she is accompanying the Councillor to a civic function.

18.2 The care must not be provided by someone who normally lives at the residence.

18.3 Informal care will be reimbursed a maximum rate of \$15.00 per hour.

18.4 In the case of care provided through an approved program or by a registered provider, the amount on the official tax invoice will be paid by Council.

19. Payment of Allowances

19.1 Mayor and Councillor Allowances shall be paid fortnightly.

19.2 Payment shall be withheld upon a Councillor ceasing to hold office or pending an election until such time as the Councillor is declared elected.

19.3 Upon a Councillor ceasing to hold office, any moneys paid in advance shall be refunded.

19.4 The Mayor or any Councillor having completed a full term of office shall not be entitled to any pro rata adjustment of allowance to take into account any days less than or exceeding one year.

19.5 Committee Member allowances shall be paid upon receipt of an invoice submitted by the member to the Council as soon practicable after the committee meeting.

19.6 Payment shall be made by electronic funds transfer, in a manner authorised in writing by the Councillor or the Committee Member.

19.7 Allowances will be set and reviewed by the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal as in accordance with Section 39 of the Local Government Act 2020..

20. Legal Expenses

20.1 Other than by specific Council resolution or in accordance with a Council policy, any legal expenses incurred by a Councillor shall be the responsibility of that Councillor.

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY**21. Other Expenses**

- 21.1 Councillors and Committee Members may require reimbursement of other expenses not specifically dealt with in this policy which are incurred while performing their duties.
- 21.2 The following provisions will apply when making a claim for reimbursement of other expenses:
- All Claims for reimbursement are to be made on the approved form and contain the name of the claimant, details of the nature of the claim and a signed certification that the expenses listed were incurred while performing duties as a Councillor;
 - Original receipts must be attached for all purchases (credit card receipts will not be accepted);
 - Where the provider of the goods or service is registered for GST, a tax invoice must be obtained for all purchases;
 - Other expenses claimed by a Councillor shall be approved by the Mayor or by resolution of Council; and
 - Other expenses claimed by a Mayor shall be approved by resolution of Council; and
 - Other expenses claimed by a Committee Member shall be approved by the Chief Executive Officer or by resolution of Council.

22. Recoupment of Private Expenses

- 22.1 Councillors must reimburse the direct costs of any private use of home/workplace facilities to Council.
- 22.2 The direct costs of private use of home/workplace facilities provided by Council may be repaid to Council via two methods:
- Direct payment to Council on completion of the approved form; or
 - Fortnightly deduction from Councillor Allowance on completion of the approved form.

23. Claiming Expenses

- 23.1 Claims are to be lodged with the Executive Assistant – Chief Executive Officer or the Director Corporate Services on a quarterly basis (fiscal year) within 14 days of the end of the quarter.
- 23.2 All expenses need to be accompanied by documentation including the approved expense claim form and any proof of expenditure, including receipts.
- 23.3 Claims for reimbursement will be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 23.4 Expenses incurred from the purchase and consumption of any alcoholic product will not be paid.
- 23.5 Late claims will only be reimbursed subject to a resolution of Council.

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY**24. Reimbursement of Expenses**

- 24.1 Any claims for expenses not covered by this policy must firstly be referred to the Chief Executive Officer before being submitted.
- 24.2 Reimbursements will be paid by electronic funds transfer (EFT) within 14 days of receipt of a properly completed and supported claim form.
- 24.3 Reimbursement of Councillors' out-of-pocket expenses will only apply to costs that have been incurred in the performance of normal Council duties, and not for expenses that support or are connected with a candidate's election campaigning.

25. Audit and Reporting

- 25.1 Councillor expenses to be regularly reported to Council on a quarterly basis.
- 25.2 All payments made to Councillors during their elected term and falling within the terms of this policy shall be publicly disclosed on Council's website.
- 25.3 Councillor expenses are subject to audit by the Victorian Auditor General, the Victorian Local Government Investigations and Compliance Inspectorate and Council's internal auditors and reported to the Chief Executive Officer.
- 25.4 Any items considered to be in breach of the *Local Government Act 2020* or this policy will be reported to the Audit and Risk Committee.

26. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 26.1 Relevant sections from the *Local Government Act 2020* applicable to this policy:
- s.39 Allowances for Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors
 - s.40 Reimbursement of expenses of Councillors and members of a delegated committee
 - s.41 Council expenses policy
 - s.42 Resources and facilities for the Mayor and Councillors
 - s.43 Indemnity provision

27. RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION**27.1 Council Policies:**

- Governance rules
- Public transparency policy
- Governance framework

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

- Information privacy policy

27.2 Legislation:

- Carers Recognition Act 2012
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Freedom of Information Act 1982
- Local Government Act 2020
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Gender Equity Bill 2020

28. RESPONSIBILITIES**28.1 Compliance, monitoring and review:**

The policy owner is responsible for ensuring the policy:

- aligns with relevant legislation, government policy and Council's requirements/strategies/values;
- is implemented and monitored (i.e. the policy is followed, reflects the changing policy environment, and emerging issues are identified); and
- is reviewed to evaluate its continuing effectiveness (e.g. achieving its purpose, remains relevant/current).

28.2 Reporting:

Quarterly reports of all councillor and delegated committee member expenses will be provided to council, and the council's Audit and Risk Committee.

The report will include:

- expenses incurred by councillors during the quarter;
- reimbursement claims made by councillors during the quarter; and
- reimbursements made by councillors during the quarter.

Council commits to monitoring processes and decision making to understand the overall success of the policy's implementation.

A period review of the policy will be undertaken to ensure any changes required to strengthen or update the policy are made in a timely manner.

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

28.3 Records Management:

Council must maintain all records relevant to administering this policy in accordance with the Public Records Act 1973.

29. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS OR ABBREVIATIONS USED

Term	Definition
<i>Act</i>	<i>Means the Local Government Act (Vic) 2020.</i>
<i>Carer</i>	<i>A carer is defined under section 4 of the Carers Recognition Act 2012</i>
<i>Council</i>	<i>Golden Plains Shire Council</i>
<i>Councillors</i>	<i>Means the individuals holding the office of a member of Golden Plains Shire Council</i>
<i>Council Resources</i>	<i>Includes – offices, vehicles, staff, hospitality, services, property, equipment (phones, computers etc.) and stationery</i>
<i>Expenses</i>	<i>Costs incurred by the Mayor, Councillors or members of a Delegated Committee in performing their official duties</i>
<i>Formal Study</i>	<i>Training and education provided by a recognised training or tertiary education provider that leads to a formal qualification.</i>
<i>Committee Member</i>	<i>A person appointed by the Council as a member of a Delegated Committee or the Audit and Risk Committee in accordance with the Local Government Act (Vic) 2020.</i>

30. RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

30.1 Legislation

The Local Government Act 2020

30.2 Strategic Documents, Policies or Procedures

Councillor Code of Conduct

Councillor Expense Reimbursement Claim Form

Communication and Mobile Devices Standard

IT Standards and Procedures Suite and Organisational Guidelines

31. HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT OF COMPATABILITY

31.1 It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).

32. POLICY OWNER

32.1 The Coordinator Governance and Risk is the policy owner.

COUNCIL EXPENSES & ENTITLEMENTS POLICY

32.2 The policy owner is the individual who is given the responsibility to review, edit and maintain this policy and associated procedure. The policy owner is also the point of contact for any questions regarding this policy.

33. FEEDBACK

33.1 You may provide feedback about this document by emailing enquiries@gplains.vic.gov.au

34. DOCUMENT INFORMATION

DOCUMENT TYPE:	Council Policy document
DOCUMENT STATUS:	Approved
DOCUMENT OWNER POSITION:	Coordinator Governance and Risk
APPROVED BY:	Council
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NOTES:	Policy documents are amended from time to time, therefore you should not rely on a printed copy being the current version. Please consult Council's Policy page on the Golden Plains Shire Council website to ensure that the version you are using is up to date. Available at: https://www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au/residents/my-council/about-council/council-policies