



Ashfield Council

Staff use of Council facilities and expenses policy

November 2011

This policy will be reviewed triennially by: Finance
Next review date: November 2014



Title:	Staff use of Council facilities and expenses policy
Summary:	This policy sets out 1) the allowable business expenses which staff may incur in the course of their duties and the procedure for approval of claims for such expenditure; 2) use of Council facilities by staff.
Record Number:	
Date of Issue:	November 2011
Approval:	Council 22/11/2011
Version Control:	V2
Contact Officer:	Chief Financial Officer
Relevant References:	M2008-24 Out of Pocket Expenses - NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet
Main Legislative or Regulatory References:	Local Government Act 1993 Div 2 Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 Div 5
Applicable Delegation of Authority:	Council Divisional Delegations Schedules
Related Ashfield Council Policy:	Ashfield Council Code of Conduct Financial Controls and Reporting Statement of Business Ethics Conference Attendance Policy Staff use of facilities policy Internet and Email policy
Related Ashfield Council Procedure:	Petty Cash form Conference Attendance Procedure



Policy Background

Public policy currently reflects increased requirements for better accountability for the use of public assets, resources and facilities funded by taxpayers and ratepayers. A greater level of emphasis now also exists for probity, trust, good conduct and risk minimisation to be consistently demonstrated in the workplace for the management and use of these public assets, resources and facilities.

Council staff regularly incur expenditure on various work-related expenses, such as travel (incl accommodation, food and transport,) conference attendance, training, meetings and corporate events in the course of their work. It is important therefore that Council ensures that standards of transparency and accountability are maintained and that there is a measure of corporate consistency across each of Council's Divisions as to how facilities and funds are used and accounted.

Policy Purpose

The purposes of this policy are to:

- establish principles, requirements and permitted activities for the use of Council facilities for Council staff. The policy also recognises that for the purpose of enabling a work/life balance to be achieved staff should be permitted to carry out minor activities of a personal nature using facilities to enable them to manage their lives providing there is no impact, risk or financial cost to Council.
- ensure that expenditure by Council staff must be for Council business purposes, be properly documented and available for scrutiny by both internal and external audit. It is the responsibility of all staff to exercise good judgement in deciding on the appropriateness of expenditure under this policy. "Appropriateness" in this context must be matched directly and unambiguously to the role and responsibilities of the staff member concerned whether through Council programs, administrative tasks, responsibilities under delegation or activities defined within the position description of the staff member concerned.

Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Define the principles for the permissible use of Council facilities by Council staff,
- Enable proper accountability and transparency for the use of resources held by Council on behalf of the Ashfield community,
- Permit a limited level of defined minor personal use of Council facilities,
- Ensure minimal budget cost to Council,
- Provide risk mitigation in the use of Council facilities where such risk may arise.
- Ensure that there is fairness, consistency and accountability for expenses incurred by Council staff; and
- Outline the process for paying expenses so that they can be properly recorded, reported and audited.



Implementation and access

Use of council resources/facilities – Key Principles

Council staff must use council resources ethically, effectively, efficiently and carefully in the course of their official duties, and must not use them for private purposes (except when supplied as part of a contract of employment) unless this use is lawfully authorised and proper payment is made where appropriate.

Council staff must avoid any action or situation that could create the appearance that council property, official services or public facilities are being improperly used for personal benefit or the benefit of any other person or body.

Ashfield Council facilities and equipment must not be used for private employment or for private financial gain by Council staff.

Council staff must be scrupulous in the use of council property, including intellectual property, official services and facilities, and must not permit their misuse by any other person or body. No Council staff member may convert any property of the council to their own use unless properly authorised.

Other permitted uses

Union delegates and consultative committee members may have reasonable access to council resources for the purposes of carrying out their industrial responsibilities, including but not limited to:

- a) the representation of members with respect to disciplinary matters,
- b) the representation of employees with respect to grievances and disputes,
- c) functions associated with the role of the local consultative committee.

Approval should be granted only where private use would not disrupt official business, the equipment is not at risk of damage, loss or deterioration and the user meets the cost of consumables.

Staff who are volunteers with local non political, community organisations within the Ashfield LGA may apply to the General Manager on behalf of the organisation to use Council's facilities and equipment for simple administrative tasks such communication facilitation (email, typing up correspondence). This may be approved so long as there is no significant cost to Ashfield Council and no disruption to business.

Council staff must not create a risk or liability for Ashfield Council by their use of facilities or equipment (e.g. by breaching software copyright). Where an Ashfield Council software licence agreement permits staff to use software on a home computer, it must not be used in connection with private employment or commercial use.

While Ashfield Council carries its own insurance, staff who borrow property must minimise the risk of loss or damage. Items borrowed without approval may not be covered by insurance.



Council Official Stationery and formal communication materials

Council staff must not use council letterhead, council crests and other information that could give the appearance it is official council material for the non Council business purposes. Stationery, letterhead and official logos must not be used for anything other than official Council business. Staff should not seek to make private use of the services of other staff whilst those staff are on duty. Staff who are asked to do jobs that are not work related in work time should refuse.

Electronic communication device use

Council staff must not use council's computer resources to search for, access, download or communicate any material of an offensive, obscene, pornographic, threatening, abusive or defamatory nature.

Limited private use of employer communication devices (e.g. computers, telephones, fax machines, e-mail, Internet, pagers mobile phones) by the staff is approved, provided the use is infrequent, brief and involves minimal cost, and does not interfere with the performance of work. Such use must not involve activities that might be questionable, controversial or offensive. The following are not permitted activities under this clause:

- gambling
- accessing chat lines not associated with work
- transmitting inappropriate jokes
- accessing Web sites containing pornographic material or images of nudity or sending such material by e-mail
- the sending of frivolous programs or mail
- excessive use of the Internet
- unauthorised use of the Ashfield Council's e-mail distribution lists
- down loading or transmitting large files (greater than 20 Mb) not associated with work
- collecting personal information not relevant to the functions of Ashfield Council

Where a member of staff makes regular, costly, or extended use of an employer communication device they should reimburse Ashfield Council for the cost. Such use must be kept to a minimum during working hours.

In the case of mobile phones which include SMS, internet and multimedia services, personal use should be kept to a minimum. The employment contract refers to the recovery of costs if call costs are excessive or unauthorised services are accessed.

Council communication devices should not be used for the sending of non-business related written material to any political organisation. Staff must not use Ashfield Council's communication devices for any private income generating purposes.



Electronic communication and computing devices

All electronic devices used by or booked by staff remain the property of Ashfield Council at all times and may not be disposed of, leased or otherwise transferred to any other person or party.

Intellectual property

Ashfield Council controls and manages all copyright created by the staff while under the direction and control of the Council. Where Ashfield Council has requested certain material to be prepared then copyright in that material will belong to Ashfield Council. Where staff develop material in their own time or during working hours, for their employment with Ashfield Council, then copyright in that material will belong to Ashfield Council.

General provisions for incurring expenses

Ashfield Council will reimburse expenses that have been wholly, necessarily and exclusively incurred whilst engaged in authorised activity on its behalf by Council staff. Council does not provide general expense allowances to staff but staff are entitled to reimbursement for legitimately incurred work-related expenditure.

The responsibility lies with the staff member to seek authorisation prior to incurring any cost that is not explicitly allowable under this policy. When reimbursement is sought, before Council will pay for an expense under this policy, staff must provide a formal written claim lodged not more than 3 months after the expense was incurred.

No staff member is able to authorise his or her own expenses. This includes any costs paid for directly by Ashfield Council, such as through travel and accommodation agents.

Anyone authorising a claim should take reasonable care to ascertain that the claim is reasonable and consistent with the agreed expenses policy. Line managers or supervisors should normally approve staff expenses. Where the line manager is not an authorised signatory, or where their level of delegation is insufficient, the claim must also be authorised by another appropriate person. Normally this would be the next level line manager and/or the Divisional Director. In their absence the General Manager has the authority to approve claims.

Expenses which are claimed should equate to the cost incurred, except where an agreed allowance or maximum claim amount is in place. The addition of general charges over and above the actual cost is not permitted.

Any attempt to falsify any expense claim will be considered to be misconduct and appropriate action will be taken against the claimant. Where, with reasonable care, the authorising signatory should have recognised the fraudulent nature of the claim, then action may also be considered in relation to this failure.



Out of pocket expenses

Out of pocket expenses are determined by the nature of the expenditure not how the goods or services are purchased. Other than exceptional cases, staff are required to obtain prior approval of an authorised/delegated senior manager for any out-of-pocket expenses of an irregular and/or minor nature associated with work. For out of pocket expenses incurred by staff to be acceptable as a charge against Council funds the following conditions apply –

- The event to which the charge is related must have a direct business relationship to the staff member's duties;
- The expenditure incurred should not provide a predominantly personal benefit to staff, members of their family or friends. Wreaths or flowers may be purchased for the purpose of a floral tribute for example, as an appreciation for long service to the Council or for civic/community functions;
- Expenditure on minor gifts of protocol or public relations are not acceptable unless such gifts are in conformity with the Council's functions and would be considered acceptable in accordance with community expectations;

These requirements do not, of course, apply to expenditures to which legislative, industrial, Council resolution, Division of Local Government etc directions apply.

Travel Expenses

For Council business travel, staff may use Council vehicles (where available), taxi vouchers or public transport. Out-of-pocket travel expenses incurred by staff for Council business will met by Council however this does not include travel to and from a staff member's place of work and home in the ordinary course of daily work except for pre-approved journeys.

The mode of transport used will depend on the distance required to travel however it is an expectation that long distance travel will use either Council vehicles or public transport rather than the use of taxis. The ceiling for travel in the metropolitan area will not be greater than \$70 (including GST) applies to the cost of a single trip, unless otherwise approved by the General Manager. Users of this facility must return their copy of the Cab Charge docket, clearly indicating reason for travel, place of departure and arrival and time of arrival to Manager Financial Services within 7 days.

Council will meet all reasonable costs associated with parking and road tolls for travel relating to defined Council business.

The driver is personally responsible for all traffic or parking fines incurred while travelling in private or Council vehicles on Council business.



Conference Attendance

Staff seeking to attend conferences should refer to the separate Conference Attendance policy and procedure for the requirements for applications and record keeping.

Where a staff member is attending a conference or meeting for which accommodation has been booked and paid in advance by Council, and subsequently they do not require this accommodation for the full period of the event, they should advise Council no later than 24 hours prior to the commencement of the event to enable any reimbursement of expenses to be sought. Where such notice does not occur, it is an expectation of this policy that a staff member will reimburse Council for any costs for the period for which they do not require accommodation. Staff who require to cancel an entire booking for an approved Conference or similar event due to other commitments should notify Council as soon as possible prior to the commencement of the event to enable reimbursement or credits to be pursued for any travel or accommodation bookings.

Procedure for claiming expenses

- In keeping with the Division of Local Government's standard contract for General Managers, expenses incurred by the General Manager shall be wherever practicable paid and reconciled against a Council issued credit card. All other provisions of this policy will apply to the General Manager as to all other members of staff. Expense claims for the General Manager will be approved by the Mayor.
- All expense claims should be submitted on the approved claim form. Claim forms not completed properly or legibly; those including items outside the scope of the policy without specific approval; and those not properly authorised will not be paid and will be returned to the claimant for corrective action. The responsibility for the claim will remain with the claimant until the properly completed and authorised claim form is submitted for payment.
- Claimants must sign their own expense claim form and cannot delegate this responsibility to another staff member.
- Expense claims must not be paid through petty cash beyond the value of \$50
- Each claim must include original receipts, or tax invoices (where GST applies) in all instances unless specified otherwise to be considered for reimbursement. If a receipt has not been obtained a suitable explanation as to the reason for this should be included on the claim form.
- Payments will be made directly to the claimant's bank account unless an alternative should be used.
- Petty Cash Dockets (attachment A) are to be used when the expenditure is below \$50 (including GST). All other expense claims are to be submitted using a Payment Requisition Form (attachment B)
- Council will pay properly documented claims within seven days of the submission of the claim.

Certifications required:

I certify that this expenditure was for business purposes, appropriate and the prices are in accordance with previously agreed prices (if applicable) and are fair and reasonable.

I certify that the service or supply has been rendered or delivered and that goods have been supplied in good order and condition.

Payment requested by: (Name, title, signature and date)

I certify that I have delegated authority to approve this payment.

Payment approved by: (Name, title, signature and date)

I certify that the attached account has been checked in detail including costings and computations and the prices are in accordance with previously agreed prices (if applicable) and, as far as I can reasonably ascertain, are fair and reasonable.

Payment checked and processed by: Creditors Clerk - Signature



ASHFIELD COUNCIL
PETTY CASH DOCKET

Received from Petty Cash the sum of \$ being for

.....
.....

Requested By: Job No:(xxxxx.xxxx.xxx)

..... Petty Cash will not be issued if
..... a job number is not supplied.

Authorised By:

.....

Issued By: Date:

.....

ASHFIELD COUNCIL
PETTY CASH DOCKET

Received from Petty Cash the sum of \$ being for

.....
.....

Requested By: Job No:(xxxxx.xxxx.xxx)

..... Petty Cash will not be issued if
..... a job number is not supplied.

Authorised By:

.....

Issued By: Date:

.....



**ASHFIELD COUNCIL
Payment Requisition Form**

DATE: .../.../...
CREDITOR NO: (Regular Creditors Only)
NAME:
INVOICE NO#:
TOTAL VALUE:
DUE DATE:.../.../.....
ADDRESS LINE 1:
LINE 2:
POST CODE:
DESCRIPTION:

Line	Job No xxxx.xxxx.xxx	Invoice Date	Value
01			
02			
03			
04			
05			
06			
07			
08			
09			
10			

I certify that this expenditure was for business purposes, appropriate and the prices are in accordance with previously agreed prices (if applicable) and are fair and reasonable.

I certify that the service or supply has been rendered or delivered and that goods have been supplied in good order and condition.

PAYMENT REQUEST BY: (Signature)
.....

(Name, Title & Date)

I certify that I have delegated authority to approve this payment and that there are sufficient funds available in the program budget.

PAYMENT APPROVED BY: (Signature)
.....

(Name, Title & Date)

I certify that the attached account has been checked in detail including costings and computations and the prices are in accordance with previously agreed prices (if applicable) and, as far as I can reasonably ascertain, are fair and reasonable.

Payment checked and processed by:
CREDITORS CLERK (Initials)