

ITEM 2. COUNCILLORS' EXPENSES AND FACILITIES POLICY - REVIEW**FILE NO: S048524****SUMMARY**

Council is required by the Department of Local Government to review its Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that there is accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses incurred by Councillors. The policy also ensures the facilities provided to assist Councillors to carry out their civic duties are reasonable and meet the expectations of the local community.

In September 2006, the Department of Local Government issued *Guidelines for the payment of expenses and the provision of facilities for Mayors and Councillors for Local Councils in New South Wales*. The Guidelines replace the Departmental Circular to Councils 04/60 *Policy on payment of expenses and provision of facilities to the mayor, deputy mayor and other councillors*.

Council must give public notice of its policy and allow at least 28 days for public submissions. Council must consider any submissions received and make any appropriate changes to the policy.

Council is required to submit its expenses and facilities policy to the Department by 30 November each year; however, for the financial year 2006/2007 Council must submit a policy that complies with the Guidelines by 28 February 2006.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that:

- (A) the revised draft Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy, shown as Attachment A to the subject report, be approved for public exhibition; and
- (B) a further report be provided to Council at the conclusion of the public exhibition period.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Guidelines from the Department of Local Government

Attachment B: Civic Office, Expenses and Facilities Policy adopted by the former City of Sydney Council

Attachment C: Revised draft Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy

BACKGROUND

1. The Council is required to adopt a policy for the payment of expenses incurred by, and the provision of facilities to, the Lord Mayor and Councillors.
2. The aim of the Guidelines issued by the Department of Local Government is to clarify the scope and extent of the expenses that may be claimed by, and equipment and facilities provided to, the Mayor and Councillors so that these are reasonable and appropriate and ensure a level of consistency in Council policies.
3. Some of the proposed changes include:
 - (a) monetary limits are to be set for all expense provisions in the policy where practicable and should not be open-ended ;
 - (b) establishment of a time limit for Councillors to seek reimbursement of their expenses and reimbursement of costs and expenses;
 - (c) clarification of approval arrangements to avoid one person being the sole decision maker to avoid potential conflict;
 - (d) Councillors to be personally responsible for all traffic or parking fines incurred when driving their own or Council vehicles on Council business; and
 - (e) requests for international travel to be included in the Business Papers and approved by a full meeting of Council with a full written report to Council on return.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4. The Budget already adopted by Council includes provision for the ongoing provision of services and facilities to Councillors on a similar basis to the previous year. The introduction of limits to specific items of expenditure will enable monitoring and control of expenditure to avoid exceeding Budget limits.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

5. The Local Government Act 1993, particularly sections 252 and 253.

CRITICAL DATES / TIME FRAMES

8. Council is required to submit its expenses and facilities policy to the Department by 30 November each year; however, for the financial year 2006/2007 Council must submit a policy that complies with the Guidelines by 28 February 2006.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

9. The draft report will be placed on public exhibition in the One-Stop Shop, Council offices, Neighbourhood Service Centres and on Council's website.

LEANDER KLOHS
Executive Manager