Purpose

This policy sets out the Council's role on Councillor Allowances and Reimbursement.
Along with the Council's rules on how employees can claim for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties for the Council. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that employees are properly reimbursed for legitimate business expenses and to ensure that these expenses are treated appropriately for tax purposes. It does not apply to councillors.

COUNCILLORS

Council Commitment

Whilst there is no provision in law enabling parish councils to pay individual councillors a wage commensurate with work done by that individual nevertheless the council notes and recognises the time commitment of councillors as well as the many incidental costs, they incur in carrying out council business. Such incidental expenses include:-

1. the use of their homes
2. telephone calls from home landlines and mobile phones
3. stationary, printing and IT costs
4. use of car, motorcycle or bicycle.
5. cost of care for dependants whilst fulfilling duties.

Please note that this list is indicative and not meant to cover every circumstance in which incidental expenses may be incurred.
Corfe Castle Parish Council will pay a basic members allowance to elected members intended to compensate for time taken on council business and these incidental costs, except that travelling expenses incurred on council business as specified below can be the subject of a specific claim.

Legal Context

The provision of members allowances are made under Section 100 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 Part 5. The Council is not allowed by Law to pay a basic allowance to Co-opted Councillors. Co-opted Councillors are entitled to claim expenses as set out in the policy.

Parish Basic Allowance

The basic parish allowance is set in line with recommendations from Dorset Council Independent Renumeration Panel.

The recommended maximum Parish Basic Allowances is dependent on the size of a parish and is expressed as a percentage (in CCPC's case 2%) of the Basic Allowance for Members of Dorset Council (DC Basic Allowance 2022/23= £13,591.32). Therefore, Corfe Castle Parish Council's basic allowance for elected Councillors is set at £271.82.

An elected member may choose to receive all or part of a basic allowance and they would do so by submitting this request in writing to the Clerk. There is no provision of an allowance for Co-opted Councillors.

The allowance is paid annually, and the Clerk requests it is applied for by March 31st for payment in April.

Chairman's Allowance

Dorset Council recommends a differential payment to the Chairman of the Parish Council at 4% of DC's basic allowance, therefore, the Corfe Castle Parish Council basic Chairman's allowance is set at £679.56.

Travelling Allowance

Any Councillor (elected or co-opted) shall be entitled to be paid a travelling expense in respect of travelling undertaken in connection with the duties sent out below and only for journeys outside the parish boundaries.

To claim expenses for travel in their own vehicle, Councillor's vehicles must be insured for business purposes and the Clerk must see evidence of this prior to paying expenses.

Councillors may be reimbursed for expenses for travel when carrying out duties approved by the council, or anything of a class so approved for the purpose of, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the council or any of its committees or working parties. This includes attendance at training courses.

Approval for the attendance at events referred to above will normally be approved in advance at a full council meeting, however in emergency situations or if the details of the event are published between meetings, expenses may be approved after the event.

Councillors will not receive expenses for attendance at any meeting of Corfe Castle Parish Council or work within the parish.

The council will pay a travel allowance in accordance with the following:
Cars: 45p per mile
Motorcycles: 24p per mile
Bicycles: 20p per mile
Public transport: lowest available second-class fare only, ticket receipts required Parking cost: actual cost with receipt.

Claims by parish Councillors in respect of parish travelling allowance should be made monthly on the prescribed form supplied by the Clerk and signed by the claimant. All claims to be made no later than 31st March next following the end of a year.

Payments shall be made to each Councillor by Faster Payment Option, monthly in arrears.

Councillor Suspension

If a Councillor is suspended or partially suspended from their responsibilities or duties as a member of an authority in accordance with Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 or regulations made under that part, then:

- the part of the basic or Chairman's allowance payable in respect of the period for which they are suspended or partially suspended may be withheld by or repaid to the council and
- any travelling allowance payable to them in respect of the responsibilities or duties from which they are suspended or partially suspended may be withheld by the council.

Councillors elected for part of a year.

Where entitlement to an allowance is based on a part of a year, allowances shall be paid on a pro-rata basis.

Publication of allowances and expenses paid.

The council will publish the allowances and expenses paid as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year by posting on its notice boards and publishing on the council's web site.

Reimbursement of expenditure

Items purchased specifically at the direction of the council and the purchase authorised in accordance with Financial Regulations, will be reimbursed. Councillors should obtain a VAT receipt in the name of the council and submit it with the signed reimbursement claim form.

Payments shall be made by BACS or cheque in arrears.

STAFF

Council Commitment

Corfe Castle Parish Council will ensure that no employee is financially disadvantaged when representing the council. In this respect the council will make reimbursement of the expenses incurred by the Clerk while performing duties required by the council.

General procedure

The Council will reimburse you for actual expenditure that is incurred wholly, necessarily, and exclusively in connection with authorised duties that you undertake in the course of your employment. To claim for expenses, you must use the Council's expenses claim forms and set out the reasons why the expense was incurred on the claim form. If you are unsure whether an expense can, be claimed, you must seek prior written authorisation from the Clerk or in the case of the Clerk from the Chairman & Vice Chairman.

Expenses will not be paid unless supporting evidence is provided, together with a completed expense claim form. This should include original receipts or invoices with the date and time of the transaction (unless you are claiming for mileage).

When claiming for travel expenses on public transport, you should enclose the tickets showing the departure point and destination of your journey, where possible. Credit and debit card statements will not be accepted. Where you are submitting a VAT receipt, you should set out:

- the name and VAT registration number of the retailer or service provider;
- the goods and services provided; and
- the amount of VAT payable.

Once completed and signed, you should submit your expense claim form to the Clerk or in the case of the Clerk to the Chairman & Vice Chairman for approval. Once approved the claim form should be sent to the RFO for payment.

Expenses claims must be submitted within 30 days of the expense being incurred. If this is not practical, written approval for any extension will be required from the Clerk or in case of the Clerk from the Chairman & Vice Chairman. The Council reserves the right to withhold any payment where prior written approval has not been given.

The Council may return an expense claim form to you without payment if it is completed incorrectly or lacks supporting evidence.

The Council will pay claims for authorised expenses by BACS transfer into the same bank account into which your salary is paid.

In general, you should not incur expenses other than in the categories listed below. However, if you have claims for expenditure other than for those categories listed below, you should seek written approval from the Clerk or in the case of the Clerk from the Chairman & Vice Chairman before incurring the expense. The Council will accept email as written approval where it is required in this policy.

Homeworkers
A Homeworker's normal place of work as stated in their contract will be their home.

The council will provide the following equipment necessary to enable homeworking employees to do their job.

- Desk with lockable drawer (or separate secure document store)
- Laptop or personal computer
- Printer
- Phone with answer service, strictly for work purposes
- Broadband capability, strictly for work purposes

The council should also pay the employee for the costs associated with heating, lighting, etc. HMRC rules allow for some of these expenses to be paid tax-free (see HMRC guidance: www.gov.uk/expenses-and-benefits-homeworking/whats-exempt).

Travelling Allowance
Consideration should be given to whether or not travel is necessary or if there are more appropriate means (for example tele-conferencing or video-conferencing).

Rail
In regard to travel via train, only claims for standard class rail fares will be covered. Where possible, rail journeys should be booked well in advance to benefit from any discounts for early booking.

Use of own car
It may be appropriate and cost-effective to use your own car when travelling on business, for example if you are travelling with other staff or councillors or, where there is limited public transport to your destination, or the journey time is significantly shorter than using public transport. Any use of your own car on business is subject to you:

- holding a full UK driving licence;
- ensuring that your car is roadworthy and fully registered; and
- holding comprehensive motor insurance that provides for business use.

Prior authorisation should be sought from the Clerk or in the case of the Clerk from the Chairman and Vice Chairman, before using your own car on business. The Council accepts no liability for any accident, loss, damage or claim arising out of any journey that you make on business. The Council will not pay for the cost of any insurance policy on your own car.

To claim for petrol expenditure, you should set out the distance of the journey undertaken on your expenses claim form. The Council will pay you a mileage allowance of 45p per mile for mileage under 10,000 miles and 25p per mile for mileage over 10,000 miles, or such other rate as set out from time to time by HM Revenue and Customs. The Council will pay for tolls, congestion charges and parking costs incurred, where applicable.

Use of bicycle or Motorcycle
If use of your bicycle or motorcycle is approved, you can claim a mileage allowance of 20p or 24p per mile respectively. Any use of your own motorcycle on business is subject the same requirements as a car (see above).

Taxis

Any use of taxis will require prior approval and only in limited circumstances. These are:

- where taking a taxi would result in a significantly shorter travel time than using public transport;
- where there are several employees travelling together; or
- where personal security and safety of employees is an issue, for example taxis may be permitted after 9.30pm.

You must obtain a receipt with details of the date, place of departure and destination of the journey.

Overnight accommodation

As a guideline for travel on council business you should book accommodation equivalent to three-star standard or less. You may book hotel accommodation of up to £120 maximum in a major city and £100 elsewhere per night. It is your responsibility to ensure that any hotel reservations are cancelled within the required cancellation period if they are no longer required.

Meals

If you are required to be away from home on council business, you may claim up to:

- £10 for breakfast (if this is not included in the hotel room rate);
- £15 for lunch;
- £20 for dinner; and
- a daily allowance of £5 per night for general incidental costs such as a newspaper or telephone calls.

The maximum amounts above are inclusive of drinks. Alcohol cannot be reclaimed under any circumstances.

You should supply receipts and invoices for all hotel and meal expenses other than for the daily allowance, where no receipt is required.

Training

When attending training courses all employees can claim travel expenses for the difference in the usual home to work costs. Where the training takes place outside contracted daily hours, part-time employees should be paid on the basis as time spent on training is working time.

For course costs and training hours refer to the Training and Development Policy

Entertainment/gifts

The Council has strict rules about offering or receiving both entertainment and gifts. Any gifts, rewards or entertainment offered to you should be reported immediately to the Clerk or in the case of the Clerk to the Chairman and Vice Chairman. As a general rule, small tokens of appreciation, for example flowers or a bottle of wine, may be retained by employees.

Annual events

The Council may decide to hold a staff event, such as a Christmas meal or other celebration. Except where agreed to the contrary, attendance is not compulsory, and you will remain responsible for any expenses you incur.

Expenses that will not be reimbursed

The Council will not reimburse you for:

- the cost of any travel undertaken for personal reasons;
- any fines or penalties incurred while on council business for whatever reason, including penalties for not paying for a rail ticket in advance of boarding the train and penalties or fines associated with motoring offences, including speeding or parking fines, clamping or vehicle recovery charges;
- alcohol; and

- cash advances or withdrawals from an ATM machine.

You are required to pay for any travel costs incurred by your partner or spouse in the event that they accompany you on business. Your spouse or partner must have adequate travel insurance for that journey.

False claims

If the Council considers that any expenditure claimed was not legitimately incurred on behalf of the Council, it may request further details from you. The Council will thoroughly investigate and check any expenses claim as it sees fit. It may withhold payment where insufficient supporting documents have been provided. Where payment has been made to you prior to the discovery that the claim was not legitimate or correct, it may deduct the value of that claim from your salary.

Any abuse of the Council's expenses policy will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to:

- false expenses claims;
- claims for expenses that were not legitimately incurred;
- claims for personal gain;
- claims for hospitality and/or gifts without them having been declared; and
- receipt by you of hospitality and/or gifts from contacts that may be perceived to influence your judgment.

The Council will take disciplinary action where appropriate and, in certain circumstances, may treat a breach of this policy as gross misconduct, which may result in your summary dismissal. In addition, the Council may report the matter to the police for investigation and criminal prosecution.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.