

EM1. Conferences and Ongoing Council Member Professional Development Policy

Policy Objective

To provide council members with equitable access to ongoing professional development to develop and maintain skills and knowledge relevant to their role as provided by legislation.

Policy Statement

In recognition of the complexity and demands on council members in undertaking their role, the Shire is committed to providing appropriate resourcing to support undertaking mandatory training as required by legislation, other professional development/training and to enable attendance at conferences relevant to their role.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with Policy EM7 'Attendance at Events'.

To ensure each council member is provided reasonable opportunity to participate in ongoing, professional development (as well as mandatory training), a budget provision will be included annually for council members for planning purposes to meet the costs of registration, travel and accommodation for ongoing professional development.

Professional development includes (but is not limited to):

- Mandatory Elected Member training as provided by legislation;
- Study tours;
- West Australian Local Government Association and Australian Local Government Association conferences;
- Special 'one off' conferences called for or sponsored by the West Australian Local Government Association and/or Australian Local Government Association on important issues;
- Annual conferences of the major professions in local government and other institutions of relevance to local government activities;
- Councillor Induction Programs;
- West Australian Local Government Association Elected Member Training and Development;
- Training relating to the role of council members; and
- Other local government-specific training courses, workshops and forums, relating to such things as understanding the roles/responsibilities of Council Members, meeting procedures etc.

Approval of Attendance

If attendance by council member/s for professional development is considered in the best interest of the Shire, and where appropriate budget provision remains to facilitate attendance, the CEO will prepare details for council to consider for the relevant members attendance at the event as detailed within the 'Approval of Attendance' sections of this policy.

Approval will not be granted for training or continuing professional development in circumstances where statutory provisions do not permit it, such as during the last three months of a council member's term or upon notice resignation to the Chief Executive Officer.

Approval of Attendance – General

The CEO will prepare an agenda item for council to consider, relating to attendance at professional development, detailing the following information:

- Who is providing the ticket to the professional development (the Shire, the organiser of the event or a third party);

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- The location of the professional development in relation to the local government (within the district or out of the district);
- The role of the council member, CEO when attending professional development (participant, observer, presenter);
- Whether the professional development is sponsored by the local government;
- The benefit to the district of council representation at the professional development;
- Which council member and / or officer should be authorised to attend the professional development; and
- The cost to attend the professional development and availability of funding within adopted annual budget.

Decisions to attend events in accordance with this policy will be made by simple majority.

Approval of Attendance – Short Notice

Where the timing of receipt of an invitation and the professional development itself does not provide an opportunity for council to consider attendance at professional development (such as when received at short notice), the CEO shall:

- a) Prepare an agenda item in accordance with 'Approval of Attendance – General' and circulate to the council via email;
- b) Email correspondence is to set a reasonable period of notice for elected members to respond (not less than 24 hours);
- c) If no objections are raised within the set notice period by an elected member to the CEO, it will be taken by the CEO the elected member agrees with the recommendation;
- d) Decision to attend professional development at short notice will be made once agreement has been received from a simple majority of all elected members; and
- e) Decision is to be presented for noting at the next ordinary meeting of council.

The council may also delegate attendance to professional development to another council member or the CEO or another officer after a decision has been made, by a circular email from the CEO explaining the proposed change. The subsequent process shall be as described at (b), (c) and (d) above.

Payments in Respect of Attendance

For an invitation to attend professional development where a ticket is provided with no charge, the local government may contribute to appropriate expenses for attendance, such as travel and accommodation, for events outside the district.

For any professional development where a member of the public is required to pay, the council will determine whether it is in the best interests of the local government for a council member or the CEO to attend on behalf of the council.

If the council determine that a council member and/or the CEO should attend a paid professional development event, the local government will pay the cost of the ticket and appropriate expenses, such as travel and accommodation for events outside the district, and the cost of the ticket for events within the district.

Any ticket purchased or additional travel / accommodation costs for the partner or family member of the local government representative is not paid for by the local government.

Study Tours

A study tour is designed to enable council members (and staff) to travel intrastate, interstate and/or overseas to research and study specific issues fronting Council.

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Details of study tours are to be arranged in advance so that suitable provision can be included in each year's budget. When no details of study tours have been arranged, or arrangements are incomplete, an appropriate amount may be included in the budget to cover the cost of an annual study tour.

Study tours will be considered with the following guidelines:

- The maximum attendance at any study tour is to be two council members (and two staff);
- Attendance at a study tour shall only take place where there are appropriate funds provided in the annual budget; and
- A detailed report including recommendations on each study tour is to be submitted to Council for noting.

Booking Arrangements

Registration, travel and accommodation for council members will be arranged through the administration office. In general, all costs including airfares, registration fees, and accommodation will be paid direct by the Shire.

Extent of Expenses to be Reimbursed

Expenses incurred with approved professional development in addition to booking arrangements paid by the Shire, may be reimbursed to elected members as set by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal through determinations published from time to time.

Council members will generally not be reimbursed for the cost of meals or refreshments for other people.

Expenses will generally be reimbursed from the time a council member leaves home to attend an event to the time the council member returns home. Should a council member extend a visit by leaving prior to the time necessary to arrive for the event or return after the time at which the council member could have returned following the event, reimbursements will be paid:

- for the days of the professional development event only; and
- for the cost of travel to and from the airport to the accommodation to be used for the professional development event.

Where a visit is extended, as discussed above, a council member may stay for the period of the extension in different accommodation to that used for the attendance at the professional development event. In such situations, the reimbursement of taxi fares will be to the estimated cost of travel between the professional development event's accommodation and the airport.

The council member will be required to pay any greater amount.

Where an council member attends two professional development events and there is a gap of no more than two days between the conclusion of the first event and the start of the second event, the council member shall be entitled to reasonable accommodation expenses and other allowable expenses during that 'gap' period. If the gap is greater than two days, only two days reimbursement can be claimed.

Payments over \$82.50 without receipts will not be reimbursed.

Payment of Expense Reimbursements

The extent to which a council member can be reimbursed for intrastate and interstate travel and accommodation costs incurred in any of the circumstances referred to in regulation 32(1) of the *Local*

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Government (Administration) Regulations 1996 is set by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal through determinations published from time to time.

Nothing prevents a council member from being reimbursed for any reasonable expense incurred whilst attending professional development events where a council member produces receipts or other sufficient information for the total cost to support their claim.

Reasonable expense may include but are not limited to:

- Meals and non alcoholic beverages for the council member only;
- Transport travel – taxi, Uber or public transport; and
- Entry fees.

Cash Advances

The Shire will not pay cash advances to council members.

Council Member/Delegate Accompanying Person

Where a council member is accompanied at a professional development event, all costs for or incurred by the accompanying person, including, but not limited to, travel, breakfast, meals, registration and/or participation in any event programs, are to be borne by the council member/accompanying person and not by the Shire.

An accompanying person's registration, or accompanying person's program fee, is to be paid to the conference organiser, at time of registration. The Shire will administer the registration and payment process for the accompanying person if the relevant forms and payment are made to the Shire in advance for the accompanying person.

Where the Shire meets an account containing any expenditure or cost incurred on behalf of an accompanying person attending, such expenditure must be repaid to the Shire by the council member/accompanying person within 30 days of being invoiced for such expenditure following the conclusion of the professional development event.

Guidelines for Conference and Training Attendance

Generally, no more than two council members may attend a particular Conference or Training event outside Western Australia at the same time. The CEO or Council may, however, approve attendance by more than two council members if a particular purpose or need arises.

Attendance at Overseas Conferences

A council member may, with prior Council approval, attend an overseas conference. The Council approval must include a specific Council resolution indicating how the conference attendance will be of benefit to the Shire and the council member and detailing any conditions applied.

Report

Upon return from any professional development event as detailed within this policy, where registration and other associated costs are met by the Shire, the attending council member is required to provide a report on their attendance and the benefits to them and the Shire, to the CEO. The CEO is to record these reports in a register to support required annual reporting required by legislation.

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Amendments to this Policy

Amendments to this policy require an absolute majority decision of council, and the amended policy is to be published on the Shire's official website. A local government must review the policy after each ordinary election and may review the policy at any other time.

History:

Policy adopted: 8 November 1999

Policy reviewed: October 2020

Policy amended: 15 December 2025

Previous Policy: EM1. Conferences – Elected Members Attendance and Representation Policy