**Staff Expenses Policy**

**1. Introduction**

This policy is written to clarify how and when to claim expenses when carrying out the work of Workington Town Council. This includes how travel should be assessed and what should be included in supporting documentation.

The aims of the policy are:

* To ensure that expenses incurred by Workington Town Council staff are reimbursed in a fair and timely manner.
* To ensure that costs and expenses are controlled by the Council.

**2. Travel**

The Council will only reimburse legitimate business travel costs free of tax. “Business travel” is defined as any journey you make as a requirement of your duties of employment and the costs can include tolls, parking, ferries and subsistence but not parking, speeding or other fines which remain the responsibility of the driver. This also applies to employees using a hire car, where the car is hired by the Council for that persons use.

All claims must be certified by an authorised signatory, usually the Chief Officer/RFO. Under no circumstances will uncertified claims be accepted for payment.

Supporting documentation, such as receipts, must be submitted with claim forms.

The following points should always be considered in respect of journeys:

1. Is the journey necessary – could it be avoided with a telephone call or Teams/Zoom online meeting?
2. Is another employee undertaking the same journey – can travel costs be shared?
3. Can a council-owned vehicle be used for the journey?
4. Is it cheaper to hire a vehicle than to pay for mileage?
5. Can the destination be reached easily by public transport? Would it be cheaper?

It is the responsibility of the authorising officer to ensure the claim is completed fully and correctly.

**Mileage and travel**

**Essential User Allowance**

The following roles within the Council are classed as essential users: Chief Officer/RFO, Estates Team Leader, Projects and Events Officer and Senior Business Support.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Essential Users** | 451-999cc | 1000-1199cc | 1200-1450cc |
| Lump sum per annum | £846 | £963 | £1,239 |
| Per mile first 8,500 | 36.9p | 40.9p | 50.5p |
| Per mile after 8,500 | 13.7p | 14.4p | 16.4p |

An annual lump sum allowance is payable on a monthly basis to those employees where the duties of their post are such that it is essential to have a car at their disposal whenever required and without which they would be unable to work effectively.

Essential car users are required to have their car available for work, insured for business use, in roadworthy condition and to maintain their driving licence. Loss of a driving licence by an essential user may have serious consequences for their employment depending upon whether or not alternative arrangements can be made for the employee to effectively carry out their duties.

Essential car users who join or leave the Council’s service part way through a year should receive the allowance on a pro-rata basis.

Where the employee’s car is out of use due to mechanical fault, or the employee is absent from work, then the lump sum should be paid for the remainder of the month the car first became unavailable, and for a further 3 months thereafter. For the subsequent three months the lump sum will be paid at half rate and, if the car is still out of use after this 3-month period, the allowance will then be withdrawn.

Under no circumstances should an essential user allowance continue to be paid if the employee has been banned from driving, or if the employee ceases to have access to a vehicle for business use.

In respect of one vehicle, only one lump sum will be payable. Where a vehicle is shared, each claimant is entitled to the business mileage claimed at essential user rate.

**Casual User Allowance**

Any employee who is not designated as an essential user and who uses their car to carry out official duties will be paid at casual user rate.

Please refer to your contract of employment to determine the amount per mile you are entitled to claim for. Staff may not claim for mileage incurred on journeys to or from their home to their workplace.

Staff may claim for mileage from their normal place of work to meetings or other events which they are required to attend in the course of their duties.

Where there is more than one person travelling to the same venue, unless there are more than four people travelling to that venue, the use of more than one car will not be authorised unless special circumstances dictate that this is not practical.

Parking charges may be claimed (but not penalties). Under no circumstances will the Council pay any fines arising out of Road Traffic offences. Staff should ensure they have relevant car insurance cover for business use.

Taxis shall only be used when essential and with prior approval by the Chief Officer/RFO.

**Motorcycle Allowances**

Employees who are authorised to use their motorcycles for travel on official business will be entitled to claim the casual or essential user mileage rate, depending on their role within the Council.

**Travel by Public Transport**

Employees who are required to travel on Council business (including to/from training courses) by public transport may claim reimbursement of the full cost incurred, subject to production of receipts, tickets etc.

Supervisors should ensure that the most cost-effective method is used for the journey to be undertaken, including journeys within the County. This should include taking advantage of “saver” and advance booking fares.

Internet booking may result in cheaper fares. Where this system has been used, reimbursement of costs will be made upon production of tickets and /or receipts.

**Air Travel**

For some journey’s it may be cost effective to use a low-cost airline flight. The cost of travel to and from the airport (e.g. travel to Newcastle plus Stansted to London and return) must be taken into account.

Air travel may have the advantage of removing the need for an overnight stay and this should also be taken into account.

**3. Subsistence**

* Under normal circumstances subsistence allowance can only be claimed where the officer is away from their normal base for a significant part of the working day. This should be no less than 5 hours and should also be a minimum of 5 miles from base, unless working out of usual contracted hours at an event or meeting.
* Authorised signatories may approve the payment of a lunch allowance where it would be embarrassing or unreasonable for the employee not to have taken the meal.

* Breakfast allowance can only be claimed when the journey commences prior to 7.00 a.m.
* Lunch may be claimed when a non-routine journey results in the employee being away from their base, not engaged in their usual day to day duties, and this involves the period when a lunch would normally be taken.
* Dinner allowance can only be claimed when the journey terminates after 8pm.
* Officers should be reminded, however, that the payment is meant to reflect necessary expenditure, and should not be seen as an allowance or a “perk”.
* Hotel accommodation should be pre-arranged and the cost must be reasonable in the circumstances.

**4. Other Expenses**

This policy provides for the claim and reimbursement of costs incurred by staff that are directly attributable to carrying out their role. There will be no reimbursement of non-tax-deductible expenses as defined by HMRC (appendix 1).

Reimbursable expenses

The following will be reimbursed by the Council at the request of the staff.

* Stationery, postage, photocopying, printing and consumables supported by an invoice/receipt and purchased solely for use on council business.
* A contribution to consumables used by staff in an official capacity (e.g. ink or toner cartridges) will be paid at the discretion of the council when supported by an invoice/receipt.
* Staff have been provided with a mobile phone to use for Council business and should therefore not need to use a personal landline or mobile phone. Should the use of these be needed in exceptional circumstances to carry out council business then costs would be reimbursed if the itemised cost is supported by proof of billing. This does not include a usual monthly contract charge.
* £25 towards the cost of an eye test conducted by a suitably qualified optician. The Council recognises its obligations under the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations 1992 (Amended 2002) and will contribute to the cost of an eye test for Staff as a VDU user. The Council will only contribute towards the costs of an eye test once in any twelve-month period. If an eye test reveals that spectacles are required exclusively for VDU work, a contribution of £75 can be claimed towards the cost of basic spectacles. This policy does not apply to contact lenses. There will be no contribution towards the cost of spectacles with any element of everyday use, in other words the spectacles must be exclusively for VDU use.

**5. How to Claim**

* In order to claim expenses, the staff should use the Council’s standard expenses form.
* The form should be completed by staff and signed by the Chief Officer/RFO or by the relevant level of authority in the absence of the Chief Officer/RFO.
* The claim will then be processed by the Finance Officer, who will then arrange for the claim to be authorised by two Councillors.
* Staff will then receive a BACS payment covering their expense claim.
* Claims for any items by an individual, must be supported by the submission of receipts. The need for this should be kept to a minimum and require prior approval from the Chief Officer/RFO.

**APPENDIX 1**

**Examples of non-tax-deductible expenses.**

* The cost of private travel including all travel between home and a permanent workplace such as an office.
* Household expenses which are not ‘additional costs’ of homeworking.
* Childcare costs such as babysitting when an employee is required to attend evening meetings.
* Payment of any part of an employee’s personal mobile phone or landline bill (including any part of a monthly rental) apart from the actual cost of business calls.
* Payments to compensate for ‘depreciation’ of an employee’s personal computer or other office equipment.
* Round sum allowances intended to meet unspecified expenses.