

POLICY NUMBER	-	1.20
POLICY SUBJECT	-	1.20 – Councillor Training and Professional Development Policy
ADOPTED	-	15 September 2020 (CMRef 82609)

1. POLICY PURPOSE

Provide a framework for councillors to meet their statutory obligations for training and to undertake professional development to enhance their effectiveness.

2. POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to all Councillors.

3. POLICY

3.1 Mandatory Training

A Councillor must complete the course Council Member Essentials training which consists of five modules, within a period of twelve months beginning on the day on which the Councillor is elected. A Councillor is exempt from the requirements if they have passed the following courses within a period of five years ending immediately before the day on which the Councillor commences their term of office:

- Council Member Essentials;
- 52756WA Diploma of Local Government (Council Member);

Or

- The Councillor passed the course LGASS00002 Council Member Skill Set before 1 July 2019 and within a period of five years ending immediately before the day on which the Councillor commences their term of office.

The mandatory training is valid for five years so a Councillor will only be required to undertake the training at every second election. If a Councillor completes the Diploma of Local Government and as part of that, completed the five modules of the Council Member Essentials, they meet the requirements of the Act. They are still required to undertake the Council Member Essentials training at every second election.

If a Councillor is undertaking the Diploma of Local Government and they do not complete all five modules of the Council Member Essentials as part of that study, they will need to complete those units not covered in addition to the Diploma to meet the requirements of the Act. They are still required to undertake the Council Member Essentials training at every second election. Councillors have a responsibility to complete training in accordance

with legislation. Non-compliance is an offence under the Local Government Act 1995 and punishable by a fine not exceeding \$5,000. The Shire must prepare a report for each financial year on the mandatory training completed by Councillors during the financial year. The report must be published on the Shire's website within one month after the end of the financial year to which the report relates.

3.2 Professional Development

In addition to mandatory training, Councillors are encouraged to identify their individual continuing professional development needs to enhance their effectiveness and address skill gaps as required. When determining their professional development activities, the Councillor should consider the current or future strategic direction and activities of the Shire and its priorities and the skills that will be needed to assist with decision making. Council supports the training and professional development activities of Councillors to be able to attend;

- The annual WA Local Government Association Local Government Week Convention;

and

- Up to three separate training events including training courses, seminars or workshops with accumulative total of up to three days per financial year. Councillors are encouraged to share with Council learning and insights from training and conferences. For the purposes of this policy, the following are not classed as training:

- Advocacy and lobbying;
- Invitations for the Shire to accept or present an award; and
- Invitations to the Shire from partnership organisations.

WA Local Government Association Local Government Week Convention

Council supports the attendance of Councillors and partners to the annual WA Local Government Association Local Government Week Convention. All costs for Councillors and an accompanying person for accommodation, meals, Partners Program and Conference dinner will be met by Council.

Shire President Development

The role of Shire President is involved in advancing community cohesion and promoting civic awareness, as well as promoting partnerships with other stakeholders.

To enable the skill development of the Shire President in this role, Council supports additional training and professional development activities.

Advocacy and Lobbying

The Council recognises the importance of advocacy and lobbying to higher levels of government and other stakeholders to increase the Shire's funding eligibility and opportunities, and to highlight priority projects. The Shire President (and CEO) will represent the Shire in advocacy and lobbying activities. The Shire President may delegate another Councillor to attend where appropriate.

Interstate events

The Council will consider attendance at interstate events where there are demonstrable benefits to the Shire.

A proposal should be lodged with the Chief Executive Officer who will submit a report to the Council for consideration.

Unless otherwise resolved by Council, a maximum of two Councillors shall attend an interstate professional development event.

International events

In general the Shire does not support international travel. The Council will however consider proposals where there is demonstrable benefit to the Shire in so doing.

All proposals for overseas travel are to be considered at an open meeting of Council and a resolution made as to whether the travel is to take place.

Proposals are to include:

- Who is planned to take part in the travel;
- Proposed itinerary and expected duration;
- Objectives for undertaking the travel, including an explanation of what benefits will accrue from the exercise with an approximate budget; and
- Detailed costs, including a statement of any amount expected to be reimbursed by the participants.

After returning from the trip, a detailed report is to be provided to Council outlining the achievement of objectives and the benefits to the community that have occurred as a result of the travel.

3.3 Approved training providers

Mandatory Council Member Essentials training is required by the Local Government (Administration).

Regulations to be proved by:

- North Metropolitan TAFE
- South Metropolitan TAFE
- WA Local Government Association (WALGA)

Other training and professional development activities shall generally be limited to the following:

- WA Local Government Association (WALGA) conferences;
- Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) conferences;
- Australian Institute of Management;
- Australian Institute of Company Directors;
- Institute of Public Administration Australia
- Special 'one off' conferences called for or sponsored by WALGA or ALGA on important issues;
- Accredited organisations offering training relevant to the role and responsibilities of Councillors;

- Other local government specific training courses, workshops and forums, relating to topics on understanding the roles and responsibilities of Councillors, meeting procedures, decision making etc;
- Professional Industry training and conferences that would be of benefit to Council; and
- Conferences or study tours that address the initiatives and projects that have been outlined in the Shire of Merredin Strategic Community Plan or Shire resolutions.

3.4 Approval for raining and professional development

The CEO is to approve Councillors training and professional development applications where:

- The application complies;
- An application is forwarded to the CEO for approval in a reasonable time to meet the registration deadline.
- Training and development is to be held within Australia;
- There are sufficient funds available in the Councillor allocation to meet the costs of attendance,

and

- Approval of attendance at an event does not impede a quorum at any scheduled Council or Committee meetings.

An absolute majority resolution is required to approve a Councillor request to attend training or professional development where:

- The application does not comply; and
- Sufficient funds are not available in the Shire's budget for this purpose.

3.5 Funding

The Shire will provide sufficient funds in the annual budget for Councillors to comply with their mandatory training requirements as elected members.

Funding will include actual costs, including registration, accommodation, meal, travel and incidentals which have been incurred.

Additional funding covering discretionary training and development together with expenses for internal workshops, strategic planning days, whole of Council training and development and internal training programs will be included in the Council training and professional development budget.

3.6 Allowable expenses

Private vehicle

Councillors, who use their private vehicle for conference travel, will be reimbursed for vehicle costs in accordance with the Local Government Officers (Western Australia) Interim Award 2011. Where a vehicle is used instead of air travel, reimbursement will be to a maximum amount equivalent to what it would have cost to travel by air.

Air travel

Where air travel is required, travel requests should be provided at least one month prior to the travel date to allow adequate time for bookings to be made. This will allow the Shire to take advantage of any available discounts for early purchase. The cost of air travel to and from destinations is to be by the shortest most practical route unless additional travel is contemplated before or after a conference.

All air travel is to be by Economy Class, unless otherwise provided for by Council resolution. For trips in excess of six hours, Premium Economy Class can be used if available for those travel legs. Any costs incurred to allocate a seat in Economy Class will be at the expense of the Shire. The cost of any upgrade to Business Class is to be paid for by the Councillor. Councillors must not receive any personal frequent flyer loyalty points for air travel booked and paid for by the Shire.

Accommodation

Accommodation will be booked, where practicable, at the associated venue or, if unavailable, at premises in close proximity to the venue. Accommodation charges, including breakfast, are not to exceed the allowance under the annual Commissioner of Taxation Determination for reasonable expense amounts Table 3 of for accommodation, unless specifically approved by Council.

Hire cars will only be paid for by the Shire if the CEO considers it the most effective means of travel when attending a conference or professional training. Standard taxi fares, or similar, or public transport for reasonable travel requirements, will be reimbursed upon return, on the production of receipts to verify the expense.

If a Councillor decides to extend a stay outside the approved times for the event, or varies the travel arrangements for personal purposes, all additional costs are at the Councillors expense. Councillors must not receive any personal accommodation loyalty points for accommodation booked and paid for by the Shire.

Meals and incidentals

Councillor costs for meals, refreshments and incidentals is not to exceed the annual Commissioner of Taxation Determination for reasonable expense amounts Table 2 Food and Drink and Incidentals.

Accompanying person expenses

Where a Councillor is accompanied by another person, costs for or incurred by the accompanying person including, but not limited to travel, meals, registration and/ or participation in any event program, are to be borne by the Councillor and will not be paid for by the Shire.

3.7 Claiming expenses

Councillors are advised that care needs to be taken in making application for claims for reimbursement of expenses and to differentiate between expenditure incurred in their private capacity and expenditure necessary to fulfil their role as a Councillor.

Reimbursement of expenses is conditional upon adequate evidence of such expenditure in the form of invoices or receipts. All claims for reimbursement must be submitted to the Shire President on the expenses claim form within two weeks of completion of the training. Final claims relating to the financial year must be submitted by 31 July of that year. No back payment of claims relating to prior financial years will be permitted.

3.8 Travel insurance

Travel insurance for Shire related business trips including cover for expenses for overseas medical treatment, emergency medical evacuation, flight cancellations, lost baggage and personal effects will be paid for by the Shire. Councillors must determine whether the benefits and endorsements of the above insurance cover is adequate. Councillors may wish to obtain their own insurance cover, at their own cost, to ensure the benefits and endorsements are adequate for their individual needs.

3.9 Training register

In accordance with the Act the Shire will publish a report on the Shire's website within one month of the end of the financial year detailing the training completed by Councillors. In order to complete the register, Councillors shall, following completion of the training, provide evidence of completion of the training to the CEO. Councillors will be asked to confirm their completion or attendance as applicable prior to the publication of the register.

The register will state:

- Councillor name;
- Each training course or module completed;
- The cost of training and any associated travel and accommodation paid for by the Shire; and
- The training provider or conference name. For reporting purposes, the costs of training completed as a group will be apportioned to each Councillor that was registered to attend.

4. Definitions

- Incidentals; Includes snacks/food that is consumed outside of main meals, official telephone calls, internet and valet parking where public parking is not available.
- Private expenses: laundry, movies, magazines etc.