



BIRCHWOOD TOWN COUNCIL EXPENSES POLICY

Introduction	2
Purpose	2
General procedure	2
Homeworkers	3
Travel	3
Training	3
Overnight accommodation	5
Meals	5
Entertainment/gifts	5
Annual events	5
Expenses that will not be reimbursed	6
False claims	6

February 2023

Introduction:

Birchwood Town Council (BTC) is generally guided by The National Association of Local Council's Model Expenses Policy; which has been adapted for Birchwood Town Council.

Birchwood Town Councillors do not, as a general rule, claim any expenses. The Chair has an allowance during their year in office, which is paid to enable them to fulfil their duties. The allowed range of the Chair's Allowance is set by a Warrington Borough Council Independent Remuneration Panel. This was last updated in November 2018.

The Chair's Allowance figure of £1,000 has not changed since 2005.

The cost of a training course in relation to their role as a Councillor will be paid on behalf of a Councillor following agreement and resolution by the Council.

Other 'expenses' tend to be reimbursements paid to staff who have purchased something that is for Council use. These are agreed with Officers prior to purchase and the proper receipts / invoices are kept, presented for approval and recorded either in the petty cash record or in the 'cash book'.

Purpose

The policy below sets out 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.

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, employees must obtain approval in advance from the Clerk / RFO for the expenditure. The Clerk and RFO must obtain the approval of the Chair.

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

Where you are submitting a VAT receipt, it should show:

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

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 / the Chair. The Council reserves the right to withhold any payment where prior written approval has not been given.

The Council may return an expenses claim form to you without payment if it is completed incorrectly or lacks supporting evidence. The Council may reject any claims if they lack supporting evidence.

The Council will pay claims for authorised expenses by petty cash, or 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 / the RFO / the Chair before incurring the expense. The Council will accept email as written approval where it is required in this policy.

Any queries in relation to this policy should be directed to the RFO / the Clerk / the Chair.

Homeworkers

If you are a Homeworker, your normal place of work as stated in your contract will be your home. The Council will reimburse all reasonable expenses incurred by Homeworkers in the course of their duties upon receipt of satisfactory claims.

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

Alternatively, the Council will agree with Homeworkers a suitable sum to cover use of their own equipment.

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).

Training

When attending training courses all employees will be able to 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 that time spent on training is working time.

Some training can be very expensive and as a condition for funding training, if an employee is leaving the Council to take on employment with another organisation within a year of completion of the training, or should an employee not complete the training course, the Council requires full repayment of all costs incurred for any training course in excess of [200.00]. Repayment of costs reduces to [50%] reimbursement in the second year.

Travel

Employees and managers should consider whether or not travel is necessary or if there are more appropriate means (for example tele-conferencing or video-conferencing) of attending an event, course, etc.

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

Once completed, you should submit your travel expense claim form to the Clerk / the Chair for approval. Once approved the claim form should be sent to the RFO for payment.

Rail

You may claim for standard class rail fares only. Where possible, rail journeys should be booked well in advance to benefit from any discounts for early booking.

Use of your 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 the Chair in the case of the Clerk), 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 / diesel 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.

If you use your own electric cars for business use, the tax-free Mileage Allowance Payments (MAPs) set by HMRC are currently the same as those for petrol and diesel cars, i.e. 45 pence per mile for the first 10,000 miles, and 25 pence per mile for any additional mileage. Plus, you can also claim 5 pence per mile for each passenger that travels with you on a business trip.

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 £150 maximum in a major city and £120 elsewhere. 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.

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 the Chair in the case of the Clerk). 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 between your home and usual place of work (except in exceptional circumstances for early morning/late night transport as set out above);
- the cost of any travel undertaken for personal reasons;
- the cost of any travel for your partner or spouse;
- 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 he or she accompanies 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.