

# Elected Member Professional Development

This policy covers elected member attendance at conferences, courses, training, professional development, and related travel. This policy follows the guidance set out in the Auditors General's Controlling sensitive expenditure: Guide for public organisation: [Controlling sensitive expenditure: Guide for public organisations \(oag.parliament.nz\)](https://www.oag.parliament.nz)

1. There are considerable responsibilities arising from the roles of Mayor and Councillor, and there is a clear need to be able to provide professional development training to support these important roles.
2. As such, Elected Members are entitled to payment of actual and reasonable registration, travel, accommodation, meal, and related incidental expenses (including travel insurance) incurred in attendance at conferences, courses and training programmes held both within New Zealand and overseas, subject to related expenditure being accommodated within existing budgets.
3. All travel and accommodation arrangements for Elected Members are to be made by Council support staff with Council's preferred travel agents at the most economic cost available (where possible) at the time of booking. Any travel overseas requires the approval of Council. This section does not apply if all travel related costs are being met privately or by an outside party.

## Group Training for the Mayor and Councillors

4. Group Training, particularly for newly elected members following the triennial elections, may be required from time to time. Funding for this professional development will come out of the general elected members budget for training, travel courses and conferences. Approval for this training is to be given by the Mayor.

## Councillors on Representative Duties

5. Where the Council has formally appointed a Councillor to an external organisation, the Councillor may attend meetings, conferences or seminars held by the relevant external organisations with prior approval from Council, provided the expenditure involved can be met within the general elected members budget for training, travel courses and conferences.
6. Where the Council has approved Councillors to attend other meetings, conferences, events, or functions as the Council's formal representatives then funding to meet the costs of such attendance will come out of the general elected members budget for training, travel courses and conferences.
7. This expenditure does not fall within the Councillors' discretionary allocation of \$12,000 per triennium.

## Individual Professional Development for the Mayor and Councillors

8. The Mayor and Councillors will be provided with a discretionary allocation of up to \$12,000 per triennium from the relevant travel and conference budgets, to be used for the Mayor's and Councillor's attendance at conferences, courses, and individualised training programmes.
9. The prior approval of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee is required for all travel by the Mayor on local authority business within New Zealand that is to be paid for by the Council.
10. Attendance by all Councillors at conferences, courses and training programmes requires the prior written approval from the Mayor for all travel by Councillors on local authority business within New Zealand that is to be paid for by the Council.
11. This discretionary budget allocation:
  - Is non-transferable; and
  - Is to cover fees, travel, accommodation, and meals; and
  - Is to be used for conferences, courses or training programmes that must contribute to the Councillor's ability to carry out local authority business.
12. The definition of training is at the absolute discretion of the Mayor, but in considering any application the Mayor must follow the principles and procedures provided by the Auditor General on sensitive expenditure.<sup>1</sup>

## Community Board Members

13. Community Board Chairpersons or Community Board Members attendance at conferences, courses, seminars, and training programmes require the prior approval of the relevant Community Board and is required to fall within Community Board budget parameters.
14. Where a Community Board Member is to be the Council's representative at an event, the prior approval of the Council is required instead of the Community Board.

## Procedure for approving sensitive expenditure

15. Sensitive expenditure should be approved only when:
  - a) the person approving the expenditure is satisfied that it is for a justifiable business purpose that is consistent with the public organisation's objectives, and all of the principles (as set out by the Auditor General) have been adequately met;
  - b) approval is given before the expenditure is incurred, unless it is for small amounts (for example, taxi fares) and allowed in the organisation's policies;
  - c) the expenditure will be within budget and where delegated authority exists;
  - d) approval is given by a person who is senior to the person who will benefit (or might be perceived to benefit) from the sensitive expenditure. Where that is not possible,

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<sup>1</sup> Sensitive expenditure is any spending by an organisation that could be seen to be giving private benefit to staff additional to the business benefit to the organisation. Office of the Auditor General (2020)

this should be recorded, and any such expenditure should be subject to some form of monitoring.

## Breach of allowance and expense rules

16. An alleged breach of allowance and expense rules is to be considered under the Code of Conduct.

## Policy owner

17. This policy is owned by the General Counsel/ Head of Legal & Democratic Services.
18. For the Mayor and Councillors this policy is administered by the Councillor Support Officer, Team Leader Business Support/EA to the Mayor and the Executive Assistant to the Deputy Mayor.
19. For Community Boards this policy is to be administered by the Manager Community Governance for each Community Board.

## Policy review

20. This policy will be reviewed prior to each triennium and the Council may direct a review of this policy at any time.

Policy adopted by the Council on 16 October 2024

Note: For the remainder of 2024/2025 financial year Councillors will use the unspent allocation from their \$4,000 individual discretionary allocation for 2024/2025. For the 3-month period from 1 July 2025 until the October 2025 local body election the individual discretionary allocation is \$1,000. All Councillor training requests are to be approved by the Mayor.