

## EXPENSES AND TRAVEL POLICY

Date updated: March 2017

**Employees are expected always to adhere to the Council's policy when submitting claims for the payment of expenses or travel.**

**This guide is not exhaustive. Managers or employees should consult their Group Finance section if there are any doubts about what may be claimed.**

**Where a claim is disputed, final decision will rest with the Director of Human Resources or his/her appointed representative.**

### **BUSINESS PURCHASES**

Employees may not claim for consumables, equipment, stationery, etc., as the Council has contracts for the supply of most items, e.g. stationery, computer equipment, desks, pens, etc., and it is not normally appropriate for staff to purchase items outside of these contracts and claim reimbursement. **Staff must check whether a supplier contract exists before incurring expenditure personally on goods or equipment required for business use.**

The following is a list of examples where items are **NOT** eligible to be reimbursed by the Council:

- Tea / coffee / milk / biscuits / sandwiches, etc., for the office or for meetings
- Kitchen equipment, including kettles, cutlery, etc.
- Christmas/birthday cards and other cards for staff
- Christmas decorations (other than in public areas)
- Food and drinks for office parties/leaving parties
- Items of a 'personal' nature such as brief cases, fountain pens, etc.
- Gifts for employees (other than through a recognised Council-wide scheme for long service)
- No item of clothing other than that issued to uniformed officers should be supplied, irrespective of how it is obtained. As a guideline, if an officer has a choice on the style, colour, brand and is not required to wear it on a regular, specified, basis to carry out their normal duties it is not a uniform or protective clothing. If the officer can choose when to wear it then it cannot be deemed to be a uniform or protective clothing.

## **TRAVEL**

### **(a) Public transport (Bus/Coach/Rail/Tram)**

The cost of travelling expenses on public transport for bus, coach, tram, or rail may be reimbursed where an employee has undertaken a journey for work purposes for the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham.

The cheapest form of transport must be used wherever possible and this will normally be public transport. When in doubt this should be discussed with your manager to agree which mode of transport is cheapest and most practical in the circumstances. For longer journeys, particularly where more than one person is travelling, a car may be cheaper than train, provided the driver is an authorised car user and has appropriate valid car insurance.

The Council will only reimburse 2nd class rail travel costs. 1st class rail travel costs will not be reimbursed, instead the employee may only claim the equivalent 2<sup>nd</sup> class costs. Officers must always have regard to using the most economical form of transport on Council business, provided it does not seriously hamper the performance of employee normal duties or disadvantage the Council in the discharge of its responsibilities.

Where the employee has a season ticket / travelcard that covers all or part of the journey, only *additional* costs that have been incurred may be reimbursed.

*Details of date, where the journey was from and to and the purpose of the journey must be recorded and all original tickets/receipts attached to the claim for manager approval. If using a single ticket on the London Underground you should exit through the gate (if possible), rather than the automatic barrier, to retain the ticket.*

### **(b) Commercial vehicles**

No expenses will be reimbursed in respect of the use of commercial vehicles on Council business. Employees must consult their manager in the unlikely event that a commercial vehicle may be required on Council business.

### **(c) Car Travel**

An employee in receipt of an essential car user allowance or a Council car loan would be expected to use their car for business travel, rather than public transport, where this would result in a lower cost to the Council. In this case the appropriate mileage rate will be paid via the payroll system. Employees who are not authorised car users must consult their manager prior to using their car on official business.

**Travel from home to the employee's normal workplace(s) must always be deducted from the total journey mileage claimed. The Council will not authorise the payment of any mileage in respect of a journey between home and your normal workplace(s).**

Any employee using their car for official business use must check that they are insured for business use, and must check with their insurer if uncertain.

### **ENTERTAINMENT / HOSPITALITY**

Council staff must act scrupulously in ensuring that any entertainment or hospitality cannot be considered as an inducement to confer favours, make decisions, or act in any other way which may bring (or be construed as bringing) the Council into disrepute. Disciplinary action will be taken in any situation where an employee has acted contrary to this instruction.

All hospitality given or received must be recorded in a Gifts and Hospitality register which will be held in each Department by the Director's office. Details required on the register must include the type of gift/hospitality received, the cash equivalent value (if known), when it was received, reason for receipt, whether the Director has approved it, etc.

Where the provision of hospitality is appropriate on Council business and has been approved by the line manager, it should normally be provided within Council premises, and the borough's recognised caterers used wherever possible. In some circumstances it may be more appropriate for catering to be provided externally provided there is clear business justification for doing so and has been approved by line managers.

The entertaining of third parties (contractors, suppliers, clients, members of the public, businesses) is not permitted.

### **OVERNIGHT HOTEL ACCOMMODATION**

Staff must obtain their manager's prior written approval when proposing to stay in any hotel accommodation overnight as may be required in the performance of their duties. Any 'extras' (e.g. morning newspaper) must not be reclaimed and must be refunded by the employee if the Council settles the account direct.

Reasonable overnight hotel accommodation costs may be claimed when staff must work at official meetings or events that run late into the evening, and it is either not possible or reasonably practical for them to return home.

In the case of conference hotels, the use of nominated hotels (where the organisers have negotiated discounted rates) should be used. In other circumstances employees should reasonably ensure that the most cost-effective accommodation is used, bearing in mind the cost to the Council taxpayer.

*The original hotel bill itemising the accommodation costs must be attached to the claim. Details of the date, place and reason for stay must be stated. Meals purchased separately from the accommodation must be included separately on any claim form.*

## **MEALS (excluding hospitality or entertainment)**

### **(a) General conditions**

The Council's rules for claiming additional meal costs incurred in the performance of official duties are described below. The following rules must be observed:

- No claims will be paid without the original receipts being presented.
- No claims may be made for alcoholic drinks or other incidental expenses taken with the meal (e.g. newspaper)
- Only additional costs that are incurred can be claimed, up to the maximum permitted daily amount.
- Details of date, place, and reason for being away from the normal workplace must be stated on the claim.
- Copies of receipts must always be retained by the claimant for later inspection.

### **(b) Lunchtime meals**

The Council will only consider reimbursement of the cost of a lunchtime meal where an employee is on official duties and is required as part of those duties to travel outside the greater London area for a minimum period of five hours and does not return to their workplace before 5pm. Claims may only be made for any additional costs incurred, up to a maximum of £5 per day.

### **(c) Evening meals**

The Council will only consider reimbursement of the cost of an evening meal where an employee is on official duties outside the greater London area and is unable to reach their normal place of residence before 9pm. Claims may only be made for any additional evening meal costs incurred, up to a maximum of £5 per day.

## **OTHER EXPENSES**

### **(a) Car Parking**

Car parking charges may be reimbursed if the employee is away from their normal workplace on Council business. Details of the date, along with the reason for being away from the normal workplace, must be indicated on claim form (e.g. external meeting). Original receipts must be attached to the claim. However, if a parking meter has been used, the employee must indicate this on their claim form.

### **(b) Parking or Speeding Fines**

No parking or speeding fines can be claimed as an employee expense.