

Surrey Heath Borough Council Human Resources

Expenses Policy and Procedure



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Expenses Policy and Procedure

1 Introduction

The aims of this policy are:

- To ensure that employees are correctly reimbursed for valid business expenses incurred whilst on Council business. Staff should not be placed at a financial disadvantage whilst undertaking Council work nor should they gain financially at the expense of the Council.
- To clarify which travel and type of expenses the policy allows staff to claim for.
- To keep costs to a minimum and to reduce carbon emissions by encouraging staff to use the most cost effective and sustainable method of transport whilst undertaking Council business.

2 Scope

The policy applies to all workers of Surrey Heath Borough Council, including those on fixed term contracts.

The policy covers all business expenses irrespective of the method of payment used, including payments made by cash, credit card, or sales invoice.

3 Policy Statement

This policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with the following policies and all other relevant policies which apply:

- Car and Road Users Procedure
- Information Security Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

Council workers should be correctly reimbursed for legitimate business expenses and which should be treated appropriately for tax purposes. The policy sets a framework for claiming expenses and ensures employees act reasonably when incurring expenses and are considerate of cost. Before incurring any expenses consideration should be given to whether your training or Council business could be undertaken using the virtual tools available.

All claims must, wherever possible, be supported by appropriate invoices and/or receipts, agreed in advance if possible and be verified and approved by line managers or budget holders. All claims submitted by CMT members

must be authorised by the Head of Paid Service, in the absence of the HOP the Executive Head – Finance (151 Officer) or Executive Head - Transformation may authorise claims. All claims submitted by the Head of Paid Service must be authorised by Executive Head – Finance (151 Officer), in their absence the Executive Head – Transformation may authorise. Staff should generally claim for their own expenses and not for other Officers should the situation arise, for example claiming for another Officers meal allowance because you have eaten together at a Council event/business.

The Audit & Standards Committee will receive an annual report with details of expenses claimed by senior management (Tier 1 and 2 officers).

Any abuse of the policy will not be tolerated and the Council may take disciplinary action against any employee found to be in breach. Claims will be subject to review by internal audit from time to time.

All claims should also be claimed for in accordance with Council's Financial Regulations. Wherever possible claims should be submitted promptly, and within three months of incurring the costs. All claims should be supported by valid receipts and/or business invoices. All claims are subject to the appropriate rate of VAT being deducted. Claims will be subject to line manager or budget holder approval before being paid and claims may be subject to internal audit inspection.

4 Equality Assessment Policy

The Council's Equality Scheme demonstrates its commitment to equality internally and externally and ensures that all sections of the community are given an opportunity to contribute to the wellbeing of the community. An equality impact assessment has been carried out on this Policy and Procedure. This policy will also support those employees with protected characteristics in relation to the implementation of the procedures.

The Council ensures that consultation is representative of the community and that consideration is given on how to consult hard to reach groups and will positively learn from responses.

5 Travel

5.1 Prior to incurring any travel expenses whilst on Council business permission should be sought from your line manager in the first instance.

5.2 *If you are required to travel on Council business from your normal place of work as stated in your terms and conditions of service to other locations using your own vehicle or public transport you are entitled to claim for the cost of your travel. If your normal place of work should change due to the requirements of the role please advise HR. If you use your own vehicle you*

can claim for business mileage. If you use public transport you can claim for the cost of the fares subject to the conditions being met in this policy.

5.3 *Homeworking* – Current HMRC guidance only allows home to workplace travel to be treated as being travel between two workplaces (therefore not taxable) in **very limited** circumstances. In particular, it makes a distinction between those who work at home by choice and those who are required to do so by the employer.

5.3.1 If you are working from home occasionally and are required to visit a Council site or client you may claim for business mileage but you will need to deduct your normal daily commute mileage. If you have to attend a site or travel on Council business due to an emergency for example to attend a 'dangerous structure' you may claim business miles for the entire trip without having to deduct your normal commute mileage. ([*reviewing wording on claims made outside normal working days/hours e.g. weekend and bank holidays](#))

5.4 *Geographical Area* – Due to the varied nature of the roles within the Council some employees may not have a permanent place of work and instead are required to regularly attend a number of Council buildings/sites within a geographical area. Should this apply to your role the Surrey Heath boundary will be defined as your normal place of work. If you are unsure whether the geographical area applies to you please speak to HR.

Please find below examples of where the geographical area applies and where it does not apply:

Example – Geographical area applies

Henry lives in Bracknell and is a Planning Manager for Surrey Heath Borough Council. He is responsible for covering many sites across the borough of Surrey Heath, and only attends Surrey Heath House occasionally. The whole borough becomes his usual workplace and for the purposes of commuting the nearest Surrey Heath boundary becomes his usual workplace.

Example 2 – Geographical area does not apply

Sally lives in Wokingham and is a Building Control Manager for Surrey Heath Borough Council. Sally is responsible for covering many sites across Surrey Heath but she also attends Surrey Heath House on a regular basis several times a week. Although much of her time is spent visiting sites/clients across the borough, Surrey Heath House is her permanent workplace. So her normal travel between home and the office becomes an ordinary commute which would need to be deducted from any business mileage claims.

5.5 It is noted that the first and last journeys of every working day, i.e. home to your place of work and your place of work to home, are classed as normal commuting and you cannot claim business mileage.

- 5.5.1** If you travel to a different location as a detour on your way either to or from work you can claim for the mileage minus your normal commuting distance. For instance, if you normally travel 8 miles to work and a detour to another location means that your mileage from home to work is 12 miles you are entitled to claim the 4 miles above your normal commuting mileage.
- 5.5.2** Business journeys may be taken by the quickest, rather than the shortest route. If there is any doubt about the most direct route this can be checked using the route planner on the AA or RAC websites.

There is a standard procedure for claiming mileage and this can be found [here](#).

- 5.6** Business mileage is currently paid at the standard rates approved by HMRC, as below:

Types of Vehicle	Business mileage rate payable per mile up to 10,000 business miles per tax year	Business mileage rate payable per mile over 10,000 business mile per tax year
Car or Van (including plug-in hybrids, pure hybrids, and electric cars)	45p	25p
Motorbike	24p	24p
Bicycle	20p	20p

It is the responsibility of every worker to minimise the cost to the Council when travelling on official Council business. Trips should be planned where possible to take advantage of special fare reductions and to minimise the time spent away from the office. Car sharing should be considered where appropriate.

6 Driving Document Checks

It is the responsibility of each individual to ensure they are eligible to drive for official Council business and that should their circumstances change the Council is promptly notified of any change that could affect their ability to drive. The employee must hold a valid driving licence, their vehicle must be roadworthy and fully registered and the employee holds comprehensive motor insurance that provides for business use. Driving documents such as an insurance certificate, MOT and a valid driving licence must be shown to the relevant Council officer annually. Please refer to the Council's Car and Road Users policy for more details.

7 Use of Public Transport

- 7.1 Public transport should be considered where it is both practical and a cost effective means of travelling. Furthermore the most environmentally effective means of transport should also be considered. Normally employees would be expected to travel using standard or economy fares. First class travel is not normally permitted without the express written consent of the relevant line manager/budget holder and only by exception. Arrangements should be made in advance to take advantage of any cheaper fares. Weekly or season tickets will also be considered should this offer a more cost effective method of travelling.
- 7.2 You can claim travel expenses if you elect to travel by public transport for Council business providing your claim is supported by a valid receipt. You can claim for the full cost although if you normally commute to work by public transport you should deduct the cost of your normal journey from the claim. If you use a combination of your own vehicle and public transport for a business trip you are entitled to claim for both. For example if you drive from home to a station and then take a train you may claim for the full amount of the train fare and for any mileage above your normal daily commute plus any parking costs.

8 Air Travel

Where attendance is required abroad for Council business, the policy allows employees to travel by air where it is more cost effective to do so. Air travel should occur only by exception and on a case by case basis. Prior approval must be sought from appropriate CMT members and written approval must be obtained in advance of travel. Reimbursement will not be made without this. Where possible flights should be booked well in advance and budget airlines and economy class should be used.

9 Travelling by Bicycle or Motorbike

The policy allows you to travel by bicycle or motorbike. You can opt to travel by bicycle or motorcycle if this is practical and you are able to use these methods of transport.

10 Taxis

Should alternative public transport not be available travelling by taxi for official Council business is permitted, as long as journeys are reasonable and employees have checked any alternative arrangements in the first instance. Officers safety is paramount to the Council, with this in mind Officers may claim for taxi fares in the evening to ensure they are not traveling on public transport late at night. As an example should a Officer arrive back at their local train station at 9pm it would be deemed reasonable to claim for a taxi home. Wherever possible written approval should be sought from the relevant line manager/budget holder however it is appreciated this may not always be possible. Taxi fare reimbursement will only be made when they are supported by detailed receipts.

11 Fuel

Fuel cards are available to those workers driving Council provided vehicles should your job role be eligible for one. For workers without fuel cards the Council will reimburse you for the costs of buying fuel should you need to purchase it whilst on Council business. You cannot claim for both fuel and mileage at the same time.

12 Accommodation

- 12.1 Employees who are required to stay in overnight accommodation due to work commitments or attendance at a training event will be reimbursed, upon provision of a valid VAT receipt, the cost of the room together with breakfast.
- 12.2 Employees will be expected to choose reasonably priced accommodation that the line manager and HR is comfortable to sign off. The types of hotels employees are expected to choose are Travel Lodge, Ibis, Premier Inns or hotels of an equivalent standard. The maximum claim an Officer may make for accommodation is £200, however in exceptional circumstances with justification it can exceed this amount. Employees are not eligible to claim accommodation if the venue they are traveling to is under a 25 mile radius from their home, however like the above there maybe exceptional circumstances. Items such as telephone expenses, newspapers, bar costs etc are not eligible for reimbursement.
- 12.3 Depending upon the arrival time an employee may claim for an evening meal including any non-alcoholic drinks. Meals or drinks that are provided as part of a package or conference cannot be claimed for. The policy does not cover the cost of alcoholic beverages.
- 12.4 Where the overnight stay is a consequence of a conference attendance or a training event and pre conference or pre training accommodation is necessary, reimbursement will be on the basis of the conference organiser negotiated rate.
- 12.5 Where a hotel booking includes breakfast, lunch or dinner as part of an inclusive package, employees will not be able to claim for any additional meals paid for separately to the inclusive hotel package.

13 Meals and Subsistence Allowance

- 13.1 If you are required to work overtime, or have to travel away from your normal place of work on official Council business a meal allowance is allowed to be claimed for under the provision of this policy, providing the meals are taken away from your home, or where you usually eat, the cost of the meal is actually incurred and you meet the following criteria for each respective meal allowance. Note that claims not supported by valid meal receipts will not normally be reimbursed.
- 13.2 The following qualifying conditions apply when travelling on Council business:
- travel must be in the performance of an employee's duties or to a temporary place of work

- the employee should be absent from their normal place of work or home for a continuous period in excess of 1 day
- the employee should have incurred a cost on a meal (food and drink) after starting the journey.

Breakfast – an allowance ~~of up to £12.00~~ ~~£6.00~~ will be paid where breakfast costs are incurred.

Evening Meal - an allowance ~~of up to £28.00~~ ~~£18.00~~ will be paid where evening meal costs are incurred.

Committee meetings – For those staff required to attend evening committees a meal allowance maybe claimed ~~up to the value of £11.00~~ ~~10.71~~, proof of purchase of the meal/food is required. This meal allowance is not claimable for virtual meetings if at home.

<u>Allowance Type</u>	<u>Allowance Claimable (£)</u>
<u>Breakfast</u>	<u>Up to £12.00</u>
<u>Evening Meal</u>	<u>Up to £25.00</u>
<u>Committee Meetings</u>	<u>Up to £11.00</u>

14 Clothing and Uniforms

The Council will usually provide clothing or uniforms to employees depending on the nature of the work. Occasionally you may have to provide or pay for your own uniform whilst undertaking Council business and the policy entitles you to be reimbursed for these costs.

The costs of claiming for new clothing or uniforms will not normally fall inside scope for tax or NIC liability purposes and details need not be reported in tax returns.

15 Mobile telephones

Where you have been provided with a mobile phone for business purposes the Council will pay costs associated with its use for business purposes. The policy also allows for Council provided mobile phones to be used for making private calls as long as they are occasional, kept short and reasonable. Employees will be required to reimburse the Council for all private calls which exceed the inclusive minutes plan, this also includes calls made to premium numbers. Mobile phone bills are monitored by ICT. Employees provided with a mobile phone will be asked to sign an ICT Mobile Phone Agreement when issued with the device.

For further information regarding the use of mobile phones in the workplace please refer to the [Car & Road User procedure](#).

The policy does not cover you for purchasing, hiring or leasing such equipment of your own, irrespective of whether the equipment is installed in a Council provided vehicle or your own vehicle. The policy does not cover you

for the reimbursement of additional or peripheral equipment such as charging or battery packs, and in-car equipment.

16 Relocation

The policy does not cover reimbursing employees for the costs associated with relocating or moving home whilst employed by the Council. However, in the case of TUPE transfers a relocation allowance will be considered for eligible employees.

17 Professional Subscriptions

The Council will reimburse you for the cost of **one** membership to a professional body per financial year. Your professional subscription must be directly related to your current job. You will need a valid receipt and will only be able to claim for your core membership, not for any optional additional payments. The Council will also cover you for upgrading a professional membership if this is an essential requirement for your role.

18 Childcare and Dependent Carer's Allowance

The Council will reimburse the cost of approved childcare or dependent carer's charges where an employee is asked to undertake work or training on behalf of the Council that would otherwise fall outside the terms of their contract or employment and where no other payment is made. In order to reclaim such costs, employees must have received prior approval and must attach or download valid receipts/supporting documentation to their expenses claim form.

19 Credit card Subscriptions

Where a procurement credit card i.e. a procurement Barclaycard or corporate NatWest card has been provided the Council will pay the initial subscription and any annual membership fee where these are payable. No tax or NIC liability will arise as a result. Council provided credit cards must never be used for personal purchases.