

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Corporate Services
Date	Tuesday, January 14, 2025
Subject	City Council Expense Policy

Recommendation

1. That the updated City Council Expense Policy, included as Attachment-1 to report 2025-06, be approved.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This report recommends that City Council approve an update to the [Mayor and Council Expense and Education Policy](#). An updated copy of the Policy, now titled the City Council Expense Policy, is included as Attachment-1. For simplicity, the Policy will be referred to as the City Council Expense Policy throughout this report.

Key Findings

An updated City Council Expense Policy is necessary following the approval of a \$12 thousand communications budget for City councillors as part of the 2025 budget. The proposed Policy introduces rules and procedures for communications expenses, in addition to existing permitted expenses for educational programs and attendance at municipal government events.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The proposed City Council Expense Policy supports the Lead with Accountability objective of the Foundations pillar of the Future Guelph Strategic Plan and specifically the 'review the continued effectiveness of Council processes and its advisory committees' sub-objective.

Future Guelph Theme

Foundations

Future Guelph Objectives

Foundations: Lead with accountability

Financial Implications

None.

Report

Beginning in 2025, City Council has allocated \$12 thousand annually to the Mayor and City Council Office budget for general communications, including townhalls,

public meetings, and public consultations. The current Policy, however, does not allow for the reimbursement of these expenses. Therefore, City staff recommend approving an updated City Council Expense Policy that permits the reimbursement of communication-related expenses so that members of City Council may access the approved budget.

The updated Policy outlines new types of eligible expenses and establishes requirements for the submission of reimbursement requests.

New Permitted Expenses

The revised Policy permits the expensing and/or reimbursement of expenditures for the following activities, if those activities are associated with the statutory role of elected officials:

1. transportation
2. accommodation
3. event and educational program registration
4. meals and incidentals
5. town halls, public meetings or public consultations
6. general communications

Items 1-4 are permitted expenses under the current Policy; items 5 and 6 are newly permitted, based on the approved 2025 budget. These expenditures are defined as follows:

Town Halls, Public Meetings and Public Consultations – Includes meetings hosted/organized by a member of City Council that are open to the general public and held for the purpose of collecting feedback and/or sharing information.

Costs associated with organizing and hosting town halls, public meetings or public consultations are reimbursed at actual costs upon the submission of appropriate receipts. Costs may include, but are not limited to, facility rental and cleaning fees, materials (posters, printouts, markers, etc.), catering and necessary technology (e.g. microphone and speaker rental fees, etc.), etc.

General Communications – Includes the production, printing and distribution of physical or digital newsletters, brochures, pamphlets or similar materials for the purpose of sharing information with the general public and advertising related to town halls, public meetings and public consultations.

Costs associated with general communications are reimbursed at actual costs upon the submission of appropriate receipts. These costs may include, but are not limited to, the production, printing and distribution of physical or digital newsletters, brochures, pamphlets or similar materials for the purpose of sharing information with the public and advertising related to town halls, public meetings and public consultations.

To be eligible for reimbursement, all communications from members of City Council must comply with the following criteria:

- is not misleading or a false representation
- does not contain inappropriate content or language
- does not adversely affect public safety

- does not include violence or hatred
- is not offensive in style, content or method of presentation
- the visual style and content is clearly distinct and separate from official City of Guelph corporate communications
- is appropriate in the context of the proposed display location where applicable (e.g. a playground versus the Sleeman Centre).

Allocation of Funds

All members of City Council, excluding the Mayor, are allocated an equal share of the approved budget for educational programs, attendance at municipal government events and communications. The City Clerk may approve requests that exceed the allocation assigned to an individual member, but the Mayor may not approve spending which exceeds the overall budget.

Approvals and Dispute Resolution

Members are responsible for submitting expense claims that comply with the City Council Expense Policy and the City Clerk is responsible for approving expense claims which are submitted in compliance with the Policy. In the event of disputes or extraordinary circumstances which may arise regarding the interpretation of the Policy, the City Treasurer will meet with the City Clerk and the member submitting the claim and make every reasonable effort to resolve the matter.

Disputes or extraordinary circumstances that cannot be resolved will be referred to City Council for final decision.

Election Related Expenses

The City Council Expense Policy explicitly prohibits the use of City funds for any election related purposes/activities as defined in the [Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Policy](#).

Financial Implications

None.

Consultations and Engagement

None.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Draft City Council Expense Policy

Departmental Approval

Shanna O'Dwyer, Acting General Manager, Finance/City Treasurer

Glen Lombard, Acting General Manager, Communications and Customer Service

Report Author

Dylan McMahon, Acting General Manager, City Clerk's Office/City Clerk

This report was approved by:

Dylan McMahon
Acting General Manager, City Clerk's Office/City Clerk
Corporate Services
519-822-1260 extension 2811
dylan.mcmahon@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Trevor Lee
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Corporate Services
519-822-1260 extension 2281
trevor.lee@guelph.ca