



# WILLAND PARISH COUNCIL

## Expenses Policy

### **Purpose**

This policy sets out the Council's rules on how Council Members (Councillors), employees and approved volunteers, can claim for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties for the Council. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Councillors, employees and approved volunteers are properly reimbursed for legitimate business expenses and to ensure that these expenses are treated appropriately for tax purposes.

### **Councillor's Allowances**

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 apply to those parishes that pay members' allowances. Willand Parish Council makes no provision for allowances but does make provision for reimbursement of expenses as detailed below.

### **Members' and Co-opted Members' Expenses**

Members and co-opted members attending training courses or other events which the Council has requested they attend as the Council's representative(s) will have their travel expenses reimbursed. Mileage will be reimbursed according to the HMRC approved rates. (The HMRC approved rates, currently 45p per mile for 2024/25, are used for private vehicles.)

### **General Procedure**

The Council will reimburse for actual expenditure that is incurred wholly, necessarily and exclusively in connection with authorised duties that an employee or Member undertakes in the course of their duties for the Council. To claim for expenses, the employee, Member, or approved volunteer, must use the Council's 'Expenses Claim Form' and set out the reasons why the expense was incurred on the claim form. Anyone who is unsure whether an expense can be claimed must seek prior written authorisation from the Clerk and or the Council.

Expenses will not be paid unless supporting evidence is provided, together with a completed expense claim form. This should include original receipts or invoices with the date and time of the transaction (unless you are claiming for 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. Where you are submitting a VAT receipt, you should set out:

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

Once completed and signed, you should submit your expense claim form to the Clerk for approval.

The Council will pay claims for authorised expenses by BACS transfer into your nominated bank account.

### **Train Travel**

Prior approval must be sought from the Clerk, or in the case of the Clerk from the Council. 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.

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 fuel 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.

The claim should not include any mileage that you would have incurred if you would have been travelling from home to/from your normal place of work.

### **Use of Motorcycle**

If use of your bicycle or motorcycle is approved, you can claim a mileage allowance of 20p per mile. 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 from the Clerk, or in the case of the Clerk from the Council, and only in limited circumstances when no other form of transport is available.

### **Overnight Accommodation and Meals**

Prior approval from the Clerk, or in the case of the Clerk from the Council, must be given. It is your responsibility to ensure that any hotel reservations are cancelled within the required cancellation period if they are no longer required.

If you are required to be away from home on council business, you may claim for meals as agreed with the Clerk, or in the case of the Clerk from the Council.

Alcohol cannot be reclaimed under any circumstances.

You should supply receipts and invoices for all hotel and meal expenses.

### **Entertainment/Gifts**

The Council has strict rules about offering or receiving both entertainment and gifts. Any gifts, rewards or entertainment offered to you other than small tokens of appreciation, for example cake, flowers or a bottle of wine, should be reported immediately to the Clerk (or the Chair in the case of the Clerk). As a general rule gifts may be retained by employees.

### **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;
- the cost of any travel equal to the distance of your normal travel to work, should you be going to/from your address directly to a location other than your normal place of work;
- the cost of any travel undertaken for personal reasons;
- the cost of any travel for any other person;
- 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 or other 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.

### **Employees Working from Home**

The Clerk's usual place of work is their home address or any other building or site as required by the Parish Council to attend meetings in the Parish of Willand.

Expenses due to working from home may include any of the following:

- Purchase or use of Office equipment
- Purchase of office consumables
- Connection, rental or use of telephone line and Internet/broadband
- A sum to consider the use of space, lighting, heating and electricity due to working from home.

In accordance with HMRC guidance on 'Expenses and Employee Benefits' the Council will pay expenses of £26 per month to the Clerk to assist with the additional household expenses incurred due to working from home. This is the current weekly limit as set by HMRC.

## **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 reclaim the value of the claim made.

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 other than as listed above 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 punitive action where appropriate and, in certain circumstances, may treat a breach of this policy by an employee as gross misconduct, which may result in summary dismissal. In addition, the Council may report the matter to the police for investigation and criminal prosecution.