Members' Allowances & Expenses Policy

Members' Allowances

Felixstowe Town Council does not currently pay a basic allowance to its Town Councillors. Councillors may claim reimbursement of eligible expenses incurred in carrying out approved Council duties in accordance with this policy.

Mayor's Allowance

Section 15(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that a parish council may pay its chairman such allowance as the Council considers reasonable for the purpose of meeting the expenses of the office. This provision applies within the statutory framework for town councils.

Felixstowe Town Council provides an annual allowance to the Mayor as a contribution towards the expenses associated with the Mayoral office. The allowance is approved annually by resolution of the Town Council and reviewed as part of the Council's budget-setting process. It is processed through the Council's payroll, with the applicable tax and National Insurance treatment determined in accordance with HMRC requirements.

The Deputy Mayor does not receive a separate allowance under this policy. Where the Deputy Mayor attends an official engagement on behalf of the Mayor, eligible expenses may be claimed directly from the Council in accordance with this policy, subject to the usual authorisation and evidential requirements.

Expenses Policy

Town Councillors and employees may claim reimbursement of reasonable expenses necessarily incurred in carrying out authorised Council business, subject to this policy, the Council's approved budget and its Financial Regulations.

Eligible duties include:

- Attendance at Council meetings, committees, working groups and meetings of outside bodies to which the claimant has been appointed by the Council.
- Authorised site visits and employment-related meetings or proceedings.
- Approved conferences, seminars, training and other professional development.
- Approved meetings of other councils and their committees.
- Authorised attendance at courts and other relevant proceedings.
- For the Mayor, attendance at official engagements to which an invitation has been received through the Council offices.
- For the Deputy Mayor, attendance at an official engagement on behalf of the Mayor where requested or authorised by the Council.

Expenses must be reasonable, relate directly to the authorised duty and not be reimbursed from another source. Prior approval must be obtained where required by this policy. Where prior approval is impracticable, the circumstances must be recorded and the claim authorised retrospectively by an appropriate person who is not the claimant.

Making and approving claims

Claims must be submitted to the Town Clerk within two months of the expenditure, using the Council's prescribed process. Receipts or other appropriate supporting evidence must be provided, except where an expressly authorised fixed-rate allowance applies.

Claims must identify the purpose of the expenditure, the date, the relevant Council duty and, where applicable, the journey undertaken. Claims will be checked and authorised in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and scheme of delegation. No person may authorise their own claim.

Reimbursement is limited to eligible expenditure actually incurred, except where a fixed-rate allowance has been expressly authorised under this policy. Tax and National Insurance treatment will be determined in accordance with the applicable HMRC rules.

Travel and subsistence

Travel and subsistence will be reimbursed in accordance with the rates and conditions set out below. Rates will be reviewed periodically, having regard to relevant HMRC guidance, the Council's financial position and the nature of the duties undertaken.

1. Mileage rates

Members and employees using their own vehicles for authorised Council business may claim mileage at the following rates:

Vehicle	Rate
Cars and vans – first 10,000 business miles in the tax year	55p per mile
Cars and vans – business miles over 10,000 in the tax year	25p per mile
Motorcycles	24p per mile
Bicycles	20p per mile

An additional passenger payment of 5p per mile may be claimed for each fellow councillor or employee carried in a car or van on authorised Council business. The payment is subject to the applicable tax and National Insurance rules.

Mileage claims must record the date, purpose, journey and distance travelled.

The Council will review mileage rates periodically, having regard to HMRC's approved mileage allowance payments and any changes to the Council's approved rates.

2. Public transport, parking and other travel costs

Travel by public transport will normally be reimbursed at standard-class rates on production of tickets, receipts or other appropriate evidence.

Necessary parking charges, tolls and other reasonable travel costs may be reimbursed where they relate to authorised Council business and are supported by appropriate evidence. Parking penalties and fines will not be reimbursed.

3. Overnight subsistence

Where a Member or employee is required to stay away from home overnight on authorised Council business, reasonable subsistence costs may be claimed, subject to the following provisions:

- A fixed allowance of £25 may be claimed for each 24-hour period away, subject to the conditions of this policy and the applicable tax rules.
- Alternatively, where actual subsistence expenditure is claimed, reasonable costs of up to £45 per 24-hour period may be reimbursed on production of receipts.
- The cost of overnight accommodation is excluded from these limits and should normally be arranged and paid for directly by the Town Council.
- No additional meal allowance may be claimed for expenditure already covered by the overnight allowance or reimbursed separately.

For journeys extending beyond a complete 24-hour period, the applicable day subsistence rates below may be claimed for the additional period.

The fixed allowance and actual-expenditure arrangements are alternatives and must not be claimed cumulatively for the same period. All payments remain subject to the applicable tax and National Insurance rules.

4. Day subsistence

Where an authorised duty requires a Member or employee to be away from home or their normal workplace, additional subsistence costs may be claimed in accordance with the following maximum limits:

Period away	Maximum allowance
More than 5 hours, up to and including 10 hours	£5
More than 10 hours, up to and including 15 hours	£10
More than 15 hours	£15

Where the claimant returns home after 8.00 pm, an additional dinner allowance of £10 may be claimed, provided that the additional expenditure is reasonably incurred and has not already been covered by another allowance or the provision of a meal.

These are maximum limits, not automatic payments. Claims must relate to eligible expenditure and comply with the applicable tax rules. The different day-rate bands are alternatives and are not cumulative.

5. All-inclusive events

Where an authorised event or meeting provides all meals and subsistence, a £5 incidental-expenses allowance may be claimed for each 24-hour period to cover minor out-of-pocket costs. This allowance is payable in place of the overnight and day subsistence allowances set out above.

The allowance is intended to cover incidental expenses only and does not constitute reimbursement of meal costs or other subsistence already provided. No additional claim may be made for meals or refreshments supplied as part of the event.

Payment remains subject to the applicable tax and National Insurance rules.

6. Receipts and tax treatment

Receipts or other appropriate supporting evidence must be provided for actual expenditure claims. Fixed-rate allowances may be claimed without individual receipts only where expressly permitted by this policy.

All claims must relate to authorised Council business, be reasonable and not be reimbursed from another source. The applicable tax and National Insurance treatment will be determined in accordance with HMRC requirements. The rates specified in this policy do not, by themselves, establish that a payment is tax-free.

Stationery for use on Council business

Stationery required for authorised Council business should normally be obtained through the Town Hall. Personal purchases will not be reimbursed unless specifically authorised.

Dependants' Carers' Allowance

This allowance reimburses costs incurred for care arranged by a Councillor for a dependant, including care for the Councillor's children, to enable the Councillor to attend formal meetings of the Council or other approved official events.

The allowance is set at the prevailing Real Living Wage rate adopted by the Living Wage Foundation for outside London at the time the care is provided, and is payable for care costs up to a maximum of 15 hours per week.

In exceptional circumstances, reimbursement of higher costs may be permitted where the care provided is particularly specialist in nature, subject to appropriate evidence and authorisation.

Claims must relate to care costs actually incurred and be supported by appropriate evidence. All payments will be subject to the applicable tax and National Insurance rules.

Other expenditure

Expenditure not expressly covered by this policy may only be incurred where it is within the Council's statutory powers and approved budget and has been authorised under the Council's Financial Regulations, scheme of delegation or a specific resolution of the Council. Nothing in this policy authorises expenditure outside the Council's statutory powers.