

COLTON PARISH COUNCIL EXPENSES POLICY

Adopted 16th December 2024

Background

Colton Parish Council is funded with public money for which it is publicly accountable. It will be fair, open and honest in all matters related to how it spends that money.

Councillors are volunteers and not entitled to remuneration for activities undertaken in the fulfilment of Parish Council activities.

The terms and conditions applicable to the Clerk, the only employee of Colton Parish Council, are set down in the Clerk's Contract of Employment.

Both volunteers and employees are bound by the policies and procedures of the Council, including the Code of Conduct and the Principles of Public life

Colton Parish Council is also committed to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion. This includes ensuring that no one is excluded from volunteering for the Council or applying to become an employee of the Council because the expenses they incur for these activities mean that they cannot afford to do so.

Volunteer Councillors are entitled to claim for approved expenses incurred in the course of the Council Duties. Councillors are free to choose whether or not they claim these expenses. Councillors must not be discriminated against if they choose to claim expenses.

Expenses Councillors may claim

Travel between their home to scheduled Parish Council Meetings and scheduled meetings of Parish Council Sub Committees which mean the Councillor incurs a cost.

Travel between home and any training that the Council has asked a Councillor or employee to attend or arranged for the Councillor/Employee.

Expenses Councillors and employees may claim

Travel between home and any meeting the Council has asked a Councillor to attend as a representative of the Council.

Councillors and employees will be expected to access most documents digitally/online and to only print documents either when asked to by the Council, when it is a legal requirement to have a hard copy, or an item needs to be displayed on a PC noticeboard. Councillors who do not have access to a printer for these documents should ask the clerk to provide hard copies of any documents required. Printing expenses where the documents are consistent with the list above may be claimed at the rate of 10p per sheet. Printing costs due to hard copies being the preferred format for a Councillor or

employee will only be paid for where a hard copy is the most suitable format to meet the needs of a Councillor with a disability or literacy related need (these needs should be conveyed confidentially to the clerk so that the Council can ensure it is meeting its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act and the Equalities Act).

Subsistence. It is not the policy of the Council to require members to stay overnight anywhere. If this need arises the Council can make an exceptional decision that this is required and set an appropriate limit ahead of any expenses being incurred.

If Councillors are attending meetings on behalf of the Council, other than scheduled PC meetings, that require them to be away from home for 3 hours or longer. They may claim for a hot or cold drink if they need to break their journey. Please note, as far as possible Councillors should avail themselves of any refreshments on offer at the meeting, if possible, unless a Councillor has health related, cultural or religious dietary requirements not provided for. Alcoholic drinks cannot be paid for by the Council. This policy only applies to people directly involved in Council work. Drinks cannot be bought for other passengers who are not undertaking Council work, unless that person is a carer driving or travelling to enable the Councillor to carry out their responsibilities.

Where possible Councillors are expected to keep expenses to a minimum by e.g. car sharing when travel is required or if using public transport, using the cheapest available public transport.

Councillors and employees may claim the cost of any resources purchased to enable the Council to carry out its work and the cost of delivery for that item to be delivered to the most appropriate address. Where a Councillor or employee identifies resources required to enable them to carry out their role and responsibilities effectively, this expenditure must be agreed by the Parish Council before any item is purchased.

The clerk may claim for consumable resources e.g. paper and printer ink. The expenses must be presented to the Council and recorded in the minutes.

Procedures

Any expenditure, including expenses and purchases, must be agreed by the Council before any money is spent and recorded in the minutes and PC cash book.

If an item is required urgently, this may be delegated to a subcommittee of at least 3 members to include the chair, the clerk, a Cllr with budgeting responsibility or another Council. Any expenditure must be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting of the PC and the resource added to the PC's list of assets. These resources will be the property of the Council.

Where possible a receipt for monies spent must accompany any claim. For mileage a record of the journey undertaken will suffice as there will be a record of the need for this journey in the minutes. Travel will be paid at the standard rate of 45p a mile.

Claims should be made on the proper form. This will be kept by the clerk.

Any claim that does not meet the Council's policy or is unreasonable or excessive will be subject to further scrutiny and may be rejected by the Council.

Any overpayment of expenses or reimbursement for purchases, either identified by the claimant or the Council, must be paid back to the Council. If a Councillor or the clerk is unable to do this a repayment plan may be agreed with that person.

Any fraudulent claims will be taken seriously. If fraud is suspected or detected, the Council reserves the right to:

- take legal advice
- make police reports
- suspend the volunteer or employee, pending investigation

Anyone found to have committed fraud will be required to stand down from the Council and may face legal/criminal proceedings.