

Dover District Council

Resident Involvement Expenses & Incentives Policy

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Responsible officer(s)	
Author	
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Related documents	

1. Introduction

Dover District Council (DDC) values residents' time and insight and is committed to supporting residents to get involved in the monitoring and influence of housing services.¹

In doing so it is important residents are not out of pocket as a result of getting involved and feel their contribution is valued. This policy harmonises expense rates and identifies expenses that can be claimed by residents and how DDC will use incentives to maximise engagement.

This policy applies to tenant and leaseholders (which, for the purpose of this document, are referred to as 'residents') of Dover District Council .

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- 2.1 Residents have a clear and transparent procedure for eligible expenses that can be claimed for residents
- 2.2 There is a consistent approach across districts and housing services
- 2.3 There is a harmonised and simple method of claiming expenses
- 2.4 We support equality and the involvement of under-represented groups
- 2.5 We cover all resident involvement activities arranged by DDC
- 2.6 We cover all groups formally recognised by DDC

3. Expenses that can be claimed

The eligible expenses that can be claimed are:

- 3.1 Travel expenses
- 3.2 Care expenses
- 3.3 Subsistence expenses

Residents can apply to be reimbursed for eligible expenses (i.e. the actual cost) they have incurred as a result of attending a meeting or event arranged or agreed by DDC as set out in this Policy.

¹ [Homes and Communities Agency, Tenants Involvement and Empowerment Standard](#)

4. Travel expenses

DDC encourages its residents to use the most economical form of transport. Public transport should be used wherever possible and car/taxi sharing is encouraged.

DDC recognises that for some residents, especially those living in rural areas or with a physical disability or impairment, travel by taxi may be the only realistic option.

Wherever possible, DDC staff or authorised residents will pre-arrange travel through DDC account(s) to reduce the need for residents to pay for taxi or train travel and claim it back.

DDC will consider venue locations and attendees when arranging meetings/events to reduce travel costs where possible or appropriate.

All mileage claims are paid at the current [HM Revenues & Customs \(HMRC\) mileage rates](#) as set out in Appendix 1

4.1 Travel by rail and bus

- 4.1.a Where possible, staff will pre-book national rail journeys for residents. When booking, both staff and/or residents should purchase the best value ticket, taking into account any mobility issues. For reimbursement a receipt must be provided for all journeys.
- 4.1.b Bus journeys will be reimbursed with a valid ticket. If the ticket is needed for a return journey staff will arrange to take an image of the valid ticket.
- 4.1.c Where possible, staff will reimburse public transport expenses up to the value of £25 at the meeting attended. Expense claims over this value will be paid via BACs payment.

4.2 Travel by taxi

Arrangements for taxi travel should be made locally by either an DDC member of staff or authorised engaged resident using a DDC approved taxi firm. Sharing of taxis is encouraged and expected wherever possible.

4.2.a Eligibility for a taxi is as follows:

- A physical disability or impairment that means the resident cannot use public transport or drive a private vehicle
- Where/when public transport is not available or practical. We recognise that this may be the case for:
 - I. some of our rural communities not serviced by public transport

- II. if the meeting venue is not on or in reasonable walking distance of a public transport route
- III. if the time taken to get to a meeting using public transport is unreasonable.
- When group travel by taxi is more cost effective than individual fares

4.2.b Exceptions will be considered by DDC on an individual basis

4.2.c For reimbursement a receipt(s) must be provided for all journeys.

4.3 Private car use

4.3.a Car mileage claims will be made at current HMRC rates. Currently 45p per mile for cars and vans. To encourage car sharing an incentive for each additional passenger (excluding driver) can be claimed. This can be claimed an extra 5p per passenger, per mile

4.3.b The maximum claim for a single day's journey is 50 miles each way. Any mileage likely to exceed 50 miles each way should be agreed by DDC in advance of the journey.

4.3.c Any congestion and toll charges will be reimbursed on a journey by journey basis and details should be attached to any claim form.

4.4 Motorcycle use

4.4.a. Residents travelling to DDC events/meetings by motorcycle can claim mileage at the current HMRC rate. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) mileage rate currently 24p per mile for motorcycles. The additional passenger incentive does not apply to motorcycles.

4.5 Car parking fees

4.5.a Car parking fees will be reimbursed with a valid parking ticket or image of the ticket. Parking fees can only be claimed for the period of the meeting or event attended including a reasonable time to get to the venue.

4.5.b Parking or speeding fines and clamping charges will not be reimbursed.

4.6 Bicycle use

4.6.a Residents travelling to DDC events/meetings by bicycle can claim mileage at the current HMRC rate. This is currently 20p per mile for bicycles.

5. Care expenses

We recognise that some residents are the primary carer for member(s) of their family and to enable them to get involved, we may need to assist with any additional care expenses incurred as a result of attending a DDC event/meeting.

The additional care expense can be claimed by the primary carer to cover the duration of the meeting or event attended as well as reasonable travel times. No care expense can be claimed for care provided by a member of the same household or with parental responsibility.

All types of carer expenses must be agreed in advance by DDC.

5.1 Childcare expenses

- 5.1.a DDC will reimburse agreed resident's additional childcare expenses and recognises this will vary depending on the situation.
- 5.1.b Choosing who should look after a child is a matter for parents or primary carer. DDC must ensure the expense is legitimate and encourage good practice in child protection. DDC will not reimburse cost of unregistered childcare.
- 5.1.c Childcare costs can only be claimed for childcare provided by a registered childcare provider. We will reimburse additional actual costs agreed in advance.
- 5.1.d DDC will not reimburse childcare costs for attendance at events where children are welcome to attend or where in-house childcare is available.
- 5.1.e Childcare costs will be reimbursed for children up to the age of 16 years.
- 5.1.f Childcare costs will not be reimbursed for school age children during school hours.

5.2 Adult care expenses

- 5.2.a DDC will reimburse agreed expenses where a resident has responsibility for the care of another person. We recognise this may vary depending on the situation.
- 5.2.b DDC must ensure the expense is legitimate and encourages good practice in adult care. For these reasons it is preferable that care is provided by a registered carer. DDC will reimburse a resident's care expenses where they are a registered carer for someone.
- 5.2.c Care costs can be claimed for formal care arrangements through a registered care provider. We will reimburse additional actual costs agreed in advance.

6. Subsistence

6.1 Food and drink

- 6.1.a DDC will always try to offer refreshments to residents attending meetings/events that it arranges. This will vary depending on the length of the meeting:
- Tea, coffee and biscuits or cake will be provided for meetings lasting two – three hours
 - A light meal will be provided for meetings expected to last over 5 hours
- 6.1.b DDC will try to accommodate reasonable dietary requirements when advised. However if a resident has complex dietary requirements they may be asked to bring their own food and reclaim the cost as set out in 6.1.c.
- 6.1.c Where refreshments are not provided, food and drink(non-alcoholic) subsistence can be claimed up to the maximum [HMRC subsistence expenses scale rate](#) as detailed in Appendix 1.
- 6.1.d Claims will only be reimbursed at the actual cost incurred and where a valid receipt is provided to support the claim.

6.2 Accommodation

- 6.2.a We will pay for overnight accommodation where we deem it to be necessary or more cost effective than travelling on consecutive days. DDC will aim to book this in advance.

7. Other expenses

From time to time we may involve residents in task and finish projects/groups which result in them incurring expenses that are not detailed in this policy.

- 7.1.a Other expenses will be considered on an individual basis. Residents should contact the Tenant Engagement and Continuous Improvement Officer for clarification and approval before any expense is incurred.
- 7.1.b Other expenses must be supported by times, dates and valid receipts.

8. Expenses which cannot be claimed

The council will only pay for actual costs incurred as a result of tenants and leaseholders becoming involved in the housing service. If a resident receives more from the council than the actual costs they have incurred, this could be considered as a payment, reward or benefit-in-kind for which they may be classed as an employee. This payment could be subject to tax and may impact the resident's entitlement to benefits.

Specifically, the council will not reimburse tenants or leaseholders for any of the following:

- Parking fines
- Speeding fines
- Clamping Charges
- Child or adult care provided by another member of the same household
- The costs of unregistered childcare
- Childcare costs for residents attending events where children are welcome to attend, or events where in-house childcare is available
- Childcare costs for school age children during term time school hours
- The costs of unregistered adult care
- Any expense claims where a valid receipt or mileage claim are not provided to the council
- Any expenses that tenants and leaseholders would have incurred regardless of their attending a council meeting or event
- Any claims made more than two months after the date the expense was incurred or the journey was made
- Loss of earnings for attending a council meeting or event
- Printing or mailing costs (the council will print and distribute documents)
- Equipment costs (the council will supply residents with any equipment they need)
- Internet costs
- Telephone costs (the council may supply residents with pre-paid mobile phones in some instances if they are needed as part of their work, for example if carrying out a mystery shopping exercise)
- Vehicle insurance. If residents use their own vehicles for voluntary purposes, they should be covered by their own regular motor insurance policy, but they should check with their insurer to be sure. Some insurers cover volunteer driving within regular motor insurance policies while others may charge an extra premium or impose a higher excess for volunteer drivers.

9. Expense claim process

Only DDC residents can claim expenses. (Tenants or leaseholders of Dover District Council)

[Expense Claim Process](#) for residents is detailed in (Appendix 2).

9.1. How to claim expenses

9.1.a Residents will need to complete and sign an [expense claim form](#) or [care expense form](#) and provide a valid receipt. (Appendix 3)

²[Association of British Insurers](#)

9.1.b Expense claim forms are available on request, at meetings and available online.

9.1.c All resident expense claims must be authorised by the Tenant Engagement and Continuous Improvement Officer.

9.1.d Resident expense claims over £100 must be authorised by the Tenant Engagement and Continuous Improvement Officer.

9.1.e Claims must be submitted within two months of the date the expense incurred or journey undertaken. Expenses submitted beyond this timeframe may not be accepted.

9.2 Payment of Expenses

9.2.a **Where possible, DDC staff will reimburse public transport expenses in cash up to the value of £25 (subject to petty cash availability) at the meeting attended.**

9.2.b All other expenses will usually be reimbursed by direct payment into the resident's bank account.

9.2.c When claiming for the first time residents will need to complete a [bank details form](#) (Appendix 4) to tell us their bank details. The details will be held securely and will only be used for the purpose of reimbursing expenses.

9.2.d It is the responsibility of the resident to notify DDC if their bank details change.

9.2.e We will aim to reimburse direct payments within 10 working days following confirmation of our receipt of the expenses claim.

9.2.f Payments may be delayed if claim forms are not fully completed or if

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supporting receipts are not provided.

10. Incentives

DDC value the contribution residents give to the organisation. For tax and legal reasons we will not at any time pay residents or provide regular rewards for their time. DDC will use incentives to reward and encourage involvement, which may include:

- 10.1.a registering for free ad-hoc training opportunities.
- 10.1.b nominations for awards and attendance at award ceremonies (local and national).
- 10.1.c invites to ad-hoc events and conferences.
- 10.1.d occasional use of prize draws to promote and engage higher response to ensure statistic validity or target underrepresented groups.

10.2 **Payment of incentives**

- 10.2.a DDC reserves the right to withdraw incentives if a resident's rent and or service charge account is in arrears. Prize draw incentive(s) may instead be used as a credit on their account. This does not apply to payment of expenses incurred.

11. Monitoring

- 11.1 a All resident expense claims in relation to resident involvement activities must follow this policy.
- 11.1 b It is the resident's responsibility to ensure their claim is accurate and they must confirm this by signing the declaration on their claim form.
- 9.1.f Expenses claims will be checked by the Tenant engagement and Continuous Improvement Officer.
- 11.1.c DDC are subject to further internal audit at any time.
- 11.1.d DDC reserve the right to make checks at any time to verify any claim for expenses.
- 11.1.e Claims may be refused if there is any doubt about the validity of any part of the claim.
- 11.1.f Fraudulent or inflated claims may result in a resident being suspended or excluded from formal resident involvement activities and expenses being repaid.

11.2 HMRC

- 11.2.a The mileage and subsistence rates set out in Appendix 1 will change as and when HMRC guidelines change.
- 11.2.b For tax and legal reasons it is important to reimburse residents' expenses as accurately as possible. Any money paid over and above the actual expense incurred is regarded as income by HMRC and therefore the full amount is taxable.

11.3 Welfare benefits

- 11.3.a DDC will only pay actual expenses incurred and therefore expense claim payments will not usually affect any welfare benefits a resident may receive.

However, it is the resident's responsibility to check with the relevant welfare benefit/taxation agencies for clarification of their individual circumstances.
- 11.3.b DDC will on request provide a resident who receives payments as a result of claiming expense(s) with a letter to provide to the benefit/taxation agencies.

12. Equality and diversity

DDC believe that all our customers, regardless of background or ability, have the same opportunity to get involved. Through the implementation of this policy we aim to treat all customers fairly; showing dignity and respect regardless of where they live, their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, gender, sexual orientation or marital status.

An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out to ensure this policy meets the needs of all sections of the community. This will be published alongside this policy. Full details of the Equality and Diversity Policy are on the DDC website.

13. Policy review

DDC will consult on any changes made to this policy which will be reviewed every 3 years.

Contact details

If you have any queries regarding this document please contact;

Tenant Engagement and Continuous Improvement Officer

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