

Staff Report

Report To: Corporate Services Committee
Report From: Christine Gilbert, Deputy Treasurer
Meeting Date: May 8, 2025
Report Code: CR-25-056
Subject: Policy AF015 Council Expense Policy Update (Formerly CrS-HR40 Council Budget Policy)

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CR-25-056 respecting Policy AF015 Council Expense Policy Update (Formerly CrS-HR40 Council Budget Policy), the Corporate Services Committee recommends that City Council direct staff to bring forward a by-law to:

1. Approve the updated Council Expense Policy (Policy AF015), substantially in the form attached to the report; and
2. Rescind the existing Council Budget Policy (CrS-HR40).

Highlights:

- The Policy has been renamed to more clearly reflect its purpose as governing members of Council's individual expense claims, not the City's overall budget.
- The annual expense allocation per member of the Council has remained the same as the previous policy, as this amount seems to be sufficient for members of Council while also remaining fiscally responsible.
- Having the budget defined in the policy clearly defines the current level of service and sets the budget for that level of service. This allows Council to approve the chosen budget amount once, rather than consider the matter during each year's budget cycle.

- This report and corresponding policy are, therefore, the Council's opportunity to inform future level of service expectations which translate into the amount included in each year's operating budget.
- The revised policy aligns with requirements under the Municipal Act and other City policies.
- Additional clarity has been provided on eligible and ineligible expenses as well as expense submission, approval and reporting processes.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

[Strategic Plan](#) Priority: This report supports the delivery of Core Service.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts.

Previous Report/Authority:

Council Budget Policy (CrS-HR40) was originally approved on April 9, 2004, and last updated on November 22, 2010 through a report from the Council Remuneration Committee.

Background:

The City's current Council Budget Policy (CrS-HR40) has been in place for over a decade without formal review. While it has guided how members of Council access annual funding for conferences and other municipal duties, the title and structure of the policy no longer reflect its specific purpose or modern best practices.

Analysis:

The updated policy, renamed Council Expense Policy (AF015), better reflects its true intent — governing the rules, limits, and processes associated with Members of Council's individual expense claims for conducting Council business. The former title ("Council Budget Policy") caused confusion by implying it related to the broader City budget or Council's oversight of City finances.

The revised policy outlines:

Staff Report CR-25-056: Policy AF015 Council Expense Policy Update (Formerly CrS-HR40 Council Budget Policy)

1. An annual \$3,750 allocation per member for eligible expenses;
2. Specific rules for travel, conferences, per diems, and approvals;
3. Definitions for reimbursable vs. ineligible expenses;
4. Annual reporting and alignment with statutory requirements;
5. Clear submission timelines and documentation expectations.

The policy retains flexibility by allowing Council, through resolution, to approve exceptions under unique circumstances.

Financial Implications:

There is no change to the existing financial impact; the \$3,750 allocation per Council member is already included in the approved operating budget for 2025. This amount would be included in future operating budgets until the Policy was reviewed or Council directed a change to the budgeted amount.

Communication Strategy:

Once approved, the updated policy will be shared with members of Council and impacted employees, including the City Clerk, City Manager and Accounts Payable department. Finance staff will support implementation and provide clarification as needed.

Consultation:

Other Council Expenses Policies within Grey and Bruce Counties

Kate Allan, Director of Corporate Services

Tim Simmons, City Manager

Attachments:

1. CrS-HR40 – Council Budget Policy
2. AF015 – Council Expense Policy - DRAFT

Recommended by:

Christine Gilbert, Deputy Treasurer

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Christine Gilbert, Deputy Treasurer at cgilbert@owensound.ca or 519-376-4440 ext. 1223.