

The City of Edinburgh Council

10:00am, Thursday, 21 November 2019

International Travel and Conferences

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To agree the process for elected member and officer international travel as set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report.
- 1.2 To agree that international travel by elected members that incurs no cost to the Council does not require approval.
- 1.3 To agree that elected members attending conferences at a cost to Council is dealt with as outlined in paragraph 4.1 and notes that where there is no cost to the Council, elected members don't require to seek approval.
- 1.4 To note that the Council Business Travel and Accommodation Guidance is currently being reviewed with a view to reducing the overall carbon impact of the Council's international travel.
- 1.5 To agree that that the overall carbon impact of the Council's International travel is reported annually to the Policy and Sustainability Committee.
- 1.6 To authorise the Chief Executive to make any changes necessary to the Scheme of Delegation to implement these decisions.

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Report

International Travel and Conferences

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report sets out the approval process and financial and carbon thresholds for international travel by elected members and officers. The approval process for conference attendance by elected members is also clarified.

3. Background

- 3.1 In August 2019 the Policy and Sustainability Committee agreed a report on international activity. It was agreed that a further report would be provided on the monetary and carbon thresholds for international travel.
- 3.2 The approval process for international travel and conferences was last revised by the Finance Committee on 30 July 1996.

4. Main report

Conferences

- 4.1 Currently elected members require approval to attend any conference whether it is based domestically or internationally. This was introduced to ensure that the potential costs of attendance were monitored and kept within reasonable levels of expenditure. It is proposed that this requirement is maintained, except where there is no cost to the Council. Approval of all conferences that require expenditure should be agreed at the Policy and Sustainability Committee, to ensure a corporate overview of elected member conference attendance.

International Travel

- 4.2 Committee approval is required for all elected member overseas travel, while all officers' overseas travel is approved by officers under delegated authority. It is proposed that the approval process for elected member and officer international travel is consolidated. This would mean changing the approval process so that international travel for officers which costs over £3000 per person or £5000 for any one trip involving more than one person and all elected member international travel which has any direct cost to the Council would be approved by the Policy and

Sustainability Committee. Officers' international travel below the threshold can be approved by the Chief Executive under delegated authority. Elected Member international travel that has no direct costs to the Council requires no approval.

- 4.3 International travel should only be agreed in line with the principles detailed in the report to the Policy and Sustainability Committee on 6 August 2019.

Carbon Thresholds

- 4.4 The Council's Business Travel and Accommodation Guidance published in August 2018 recognises that there is a need to travel to carry out Council business but states that travel outside the UK should on principle, only be taken in exceptional circumstances. Carbon impact is currently considered as part of the overall cost benefit assessment.

- 4.5 Within this process, the Council must be clear; that the business travel is necessary; the type of transport used is the most efficient; and that we have tried to minimise the environmental impact.

- 4.6 The guidance further states that the Council will always seek to make sustainable transport choices by prioritising low emission modes of transport. This means that in addition to an assessment of cost and journey times, CO2 emissions are quantified and considered when choosing the type of transport.

- 4.7 The guidance is currently being reviewed and will take account of this report. It will also consider extending its scope to include elected members to ensure a consistent Council approach.

- 4.8 It is further suggested that the cumulative carbon impact of the Council's international travel is reported in the annual update on international activity considered by the Policy and Sustainability Committee.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The new arrangements will be issued to all elected members and executive directors.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The financial cost of international travel and conference attendance will be required to be contained within the appropriate budgets.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The carbon impact of international travel and conference attendance will be required in future reporting to the Policy and Sustainability Committee using [UK Governments Conversation Factors for greenhouse gas reporting](#).

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Policy and Sustainability Committee 6 August 2019 – [Edinburgh International Activity Report](#)
- 8.2 Finance Committee 30 July 1996 – Members' Expenses

9. Appendices

Appendix One – Council's Business Travel and Accommodation Guidance

Business Travel and Accommodation Guidance

Council statement on business travel

We recognise that you may need to travel to carry out Council business. As a public body, we need to demonstrate that all business travel's necessary, that the type of transport used is the most efficient and that we have tried to minimise the environmental impact of the journeys made.

Author	Scope
Employee Relations, Human Resources	This guidance applies to all Council employees, including agency workers engaged to provide services for the organisation
Purpose	Review period
This document sets out our business travel ethos and the rules around travelling on Council business.	Human Resources will review this guidance periodically to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose. Agreed November 2016 and reviewed June 2018.

1. Definitions.....	2
2. Principles.....	2
3. Compliance	2
4. Booking travel and accommodation	3
5. International travel.....	4
6. Transport options	4
7. Expenses.....	7

1. Definitions

Term	Description
Business journey	A trip you must make to do your job or to attend or where it has been agreed for you to travel, e.g. to a development course
Mobile worker	Employees and agency workers who do not have a fixed place of work and travel from their home to their first appointment and from their last appointment to their home. Only mobile workers can claim mileage for their journeys from their home to their first appointment of the day and the end of the day, within the Edinburgh City boundary.
Commute	This is the journey you make from your home to your place of work. No employee can claim for their normal commute.

2. Principles

Term	Description
Necessity	You should only travel if it is necessary to carry out Council business and always seek to find alternatives that avoid the need to travel.
Transport choices and sustainability	You need to consider journey time, cost and CO ₂ emissions when choosing your type of transport. To help you choose the most environmentally sustainable, cost effective and efficient travel options, please consider the Council's Sustainable Travel Plan. (See section 4.)
Booking travel	All travel tickets and accommodation must be booked through the Council's approved travel service provider. This means we will get the greatest benefit from our travel contract. If you don't use our travel service provider and make your own travel arrangements, then we will not reimburse your costs. In emergency circumstances where travel has been cancelled, e.g. a train, then contact the travel provider who will advise on any refunds and re-bookings

3. Compliance

All employees must follow this guidance and where this is abused, it may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that the guidance is applied correctly and ensuring that all travel they authorise is justified. Travel authorisation and spend may be subject to audit and therefore relevant evidence should be retained.

4. Booking travel and accommodation

You must book all business travel and accommodation online, through our approved travel provider. If you're travelling with colleagues, you can book your travel together, as you can book up to eight rail tickets and four air tickets in one booking. You can only book travel up to a certain price limit. The limits are noted below and depend on your grade.

This table sets out the steps that you must follow when you're considering making a business journey and when you want to book business travel or accommodation.

How to book travel		
Task	Action	Remember
1. Identify the need to travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Purpose✓ Dates and times	There are technology options, such as Skype, for having virtual meetings.
2. Get approval to travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Search the portal to see options available✓ Consider the need for travel with indicative costs✓ Get approval from your manager before you book travel	Before you book any business travel, discuss your plans with your manager. You need to get their approval before you can proceed. This must be approved by a Head of Service.
3. Book travel online	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Look for the best value✓ Book in accordance with the price ranges set out in the appendices✓ Booking confirmation is received by email; retain this✓ Ticket received by email or picked up at ticket office	

4.1 Booking travel guidance

All travel must be booked using our travel booking system.

Register

If you want to book business travel, you must register on the online portal and adhere to the terms outlined in the guidance.

Booking

The system flags up travel options as red, amber, or green. Those marked green are within your cost limit.

You can only book options that are flagged as amber in exceptional circumstances. If the only options available to you are amber, you will have to discuss that with your manager and get their approval before you book.

You will not be able to book options flagged as red.

Reporting

The travel system is reported on regularly for audit purposes and to monitor levels of activity. Where the verification process has not been followed, this will be reported to the relevant manager and any appropriate action taken in line with our disciplinary policy.

The Council's travel provider will send a weekly invoice along with a report of travel expenditure. This report will be uploaded to our accounting systems and departmental cost centres will be allocated their relevant expenditure.

5. International travel

You're only allowed to travel outside the UK in exceptional circumstances and pre-approval is required from The Chief Executive or relevant Executive Director. The Chief Executive is required to authorise international travel for Executive Directors.

All flight tickets must be the cheapest available and once selected, final approval is required by the relevant Executive Director.

It's your responsibility to make sure that you meet the entry requirements for any country that you visit on Council business, including any visas needed.

6. Transport options

6.1 Airplane

Destination	Details
UK	<p>Domestic air travel is only allowed in exceptional circumstances, for example if it's not practical to travel by train; it is the least expensive option; or flying is the only way to get to your appointment and back in a day.</p> <p>You must get pre-approval from your Executive Director before you book any flights. Air travel must be on the lowest cost fare available.</p>
International	<p>As with domestic air travel, an Executive Director must approve all international air travel before you make book any tickets, and you should try to get the best deal possible.</p>

6.2 Rail

Destination	Details
UK	<p>Rail is the preferred travel mode for longer distance UK travel and it must be the lowest available fare i.e. off-peak; standard class.</p> <p>Please try to book rail travel as far in advance as possible to get the best price available.</p> <p>Rail travel by sleeper train is permitted and can be used where this is less expensive than an overnight stay and travel costs combined. Our preferred travel provider will be able to give you quotes.</p> <p>First class rail travel is only permitted if the cost is the same as a standard ticket, which can happen on occasion. Otherwise, first class travel is not permitted and will not be reimbursed by the Council if it is used.</p>

6.3 Car

Type

Details

Private vehicles

You can only use your car and claim mileage for Council business if you are an authorised car user. There is information on the Orb about [how to become an authorised car user](#).

Use of private vehicles may only be considered if public transport is not available or unsuitable (e.g. you must transport equipment) or it's more cost-effective.

Authorised users can claim mileage allowance, based on current HMRC mileage rates for business travel. [The current rates are on the Orb](#).

Mobile workers who do not have a fixed place of work can claim mileage for the journey from their home to their first appointment, as well as the rest of their journeys during the day. They can also claim for the journey from their last appointment back to their home at the end of their working day, within the city boundary or from the city boundary if you live out with.

If you are travelling outside Edinburgh, you will only be able to claim up to the equivalent standard class rail journey cost. If there is no equivalent public transport available, [HMRC mileage rates](#) will apply to the whole journey.

If you are an authorised car user, the vehicle you use for Council business must be kept in a roadworthy condition. This includes ensuring valid MOT/Vehicle Excise Licence, insurance which explicitly covers vehicle use for business purposes, and a valid and current, driving licence.

Authorised car users must inform their line manager if they get any driving licence endorsements at the time they get them. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

Pool cars

The Council has a car pool at Waverley Court. Information on costs and how to book a pool car can be found on the Orb.

Pool cars can only be used within Edinburgh city boundaries. This is because breakdown/accident recovery is limited to within our boundaries.

City Car Club

The City Car Club is an independent car club operator. The Council has block booked many vehicles for Council use from 8am-6pm, Monday to Friday. If you are a member of the Car Club, you can use these vehicles at a cheaper rate than the public. You can find out more about the City Car Club on the ORB.

Hire cars

There are a small number of cars at Waverley Court that you can hire for a day or a half-day. You can get more information on this from the Orb.

If you're travelling to other cities on business and need a car while you are there, you can book that in advance using MyTravel.

6.4 Taxis

Taxis should only be used where all other, less expensive modes of transport are unavailable or unsuitable. You need pre-approval from your Head of Service for all taxi journeys. Guidance on how to pre-book taxis is in Appendix 1.

The following are examples where it might be appropriate to use a taxi:

- ✓ if there's no other suitable means of public transport;
- ✓ if you have heavy luggage or equipment with you;
- ✓ if it's cheaper to take a taxi for either the whole journey or combined with other forms of transport;
- ✓ if there's no public transport available at the time you need to travel;
- ✓ if using a taxi is a reasonable adjustment in relation to a disability;
- ✓ where management agree that using a taxi is necessary for your health and safety.

Taxi	
Destination	Details
Edinburgh	<p>Taxi journeys for travel within Edinburgh must be booked through the Passenger Operations during office hours. There is more information about this at Appendix 1.</p> <p>You will not be reimbursed for any taxi journeys that have not been booked through Passenger Operations unless your Head of Service has approved this.</p>
Outside Edinburgh	<p>If you are on Council business out with the city and a taxi is the only option, then this should be pre-approved and submitted through expenses, approved by Head of Service.</p>

Bicycle	
Points to note	Details
Council business	<p>If you want to use your bicycle to travel on Council business, you need to get your manager's approval and become an authorised bicycle user. Complete the form on the Orb and send that to your manager for them to approve. Only authorised bicycle users can claim bicycle mileage allowance. Details on this are on the Orb, including the current mileage rates.</p>
Insurance	<p>Personal injury, theft, or damage to bicycles whilst on Council business isn't covered by any Council insurance policy. You must make sure that you have the right cover yourself.</p>

Bus and coach

Type	Details
Bus	<p>Mobile workers who do not have a fixed place of work can claim for bus journeys they make from their home to their first appointment of the day, as well as the rest of the journeys they make for work during the day. They can also claim for the journey from their last appointment back to their home at the end of their working day. Managers of mobile workers can buy smart cards pre-loaded with 10 single journeys from Lothian Buses via Oracle, which they can give to their employees.</p> <p>If you travel regularly on business with National Express buses, you can now book that using MyTravel. If you are making multiple bus journeys, you can buy a carnet of single tickets, which saves you having to book single journeys every time want to travel.</p>
Coach hire	<p>Passenger Operations will arrange coach, bus, or minibus transport on request. Complete the Coach Hire Request form available on the Orb and send to transport.tender@edinburgh.gov.uk. They will obtain quotes from all the companies that are registered with us.</p> <p>Passenger Operations will advise you of the quotes, and if you wish to go ahead will make the booking on your behalf. On completion of the trip, the contractor will submit an invoice to Passenger Operations, and this will be paid against the oracle code given by the requester.</p>

7. Expenses

Claiming expenses

Type	Details
Accommodation	<p>You must book your accommodation through the Council's preferred travel provider and this needs to be pre-approved by your Head of Service. You can find the limits on how much you can spend on accommodation at Appendix 2.</p>
Meals and other expenses	<p>The Council will reimburse actual expenses you reasonably incur while travelling on Council business, provided you support your claim with receipts. You can only make a claim if you spend more than you normally would if you were not travelling on business.</p> <p>If you have been authorised to use a Council Payment Card, you should pay for meals and other expenses with that. If not, remember to retain your receipts so you are able to claim this back.</p> <p>In such exceptional circumstances, it is vital that you and your service area are aware of the Council's Anti-Bribery Policy and the Employee Code of Conduct, and ensure that the authorisation to purchase alcohol complies with Council policy.</p>

Appendix 1 – How to book a taxi

If you're booking a taxi during the normal working hours (08:30 – 17:00 Monday to Thursday, 08:30 – 16:00 on a Friday) you must book through Passenger Operations.

Our taxi service providers will not accept bookings from anyone other than Passenger Operations during normal working hours.

You can telephone, e-mail or fax them.

Bookings

Type	Action
Immediate bookings	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Call Passenger Operations on 0131 469 29502. Quote your Taxi Pin Number / Contract number3. Name of Passenger4. Pick up Point (must be address, cannot be "at corner of Princes' Street")5. Destination (must be address, cannot be "at corner of Princes Street")6. Details of the journey may be either faxed to 0131 469 2951, or sent by e-mail to taxi.booking@edinburgh.gov.uk
Advance bookings	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Your Passenger Operations Taxi Pin Number/Contract number2. The name of passenger3. Pick-up Point (must be address, cannot be "at corner of Princes Street")4. Destination (must be address, cannot be "at corner of Princes Street")5. Details of the journey may be either faxed to 0131 469 2951, or sent by e-mail to taxi.booking@edinburgh.gov.uk
Out of hours	<p>Out of Hours – (Monday to Friday, 17:00 to 08:30, from 16:00 on a Friday to 08:30 on a Monday and on Public Holidays)</p> <p>An out of hours booking is for an immediate taxi outside normal office hours. In this case, you will be speaking direct to the Taxi Company.</p> <p>This sequence is important, and if any step is missed then the taxi may be refused.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Call CENTRAL RADIO TAXIS on 0131 229 16052. Quote 'Contract CEC171'3. Quote your Taxi Pin Number/ Contract number4. Name of passenger5. Pick up point6. Destination

Appendix 2 - Overnight accommodation limits

If you need to book overnight accommodation as part of your business travel plans, you need to get approval from your manager first. We have limits on the amount you're able to spend

Bus and coach			
Type	Green limit	Amber limit	Red limit
Outside London	£80	£100	£130
Heathrow	£90	£110	£150
London central	£120	£150	£200

You will be able to book accommodation that appears in the green band. If there is no accommodation suitable in the band, you may book accommodation in the amber band, once you've discussed this with your manager.

Appendix 3 – making business travel decisions

If you need to book overnight accommodation as part of your business travel plans, you need to get approval from your manager first. We have limits on the amount you're able to spend.

The following decision-making chart is designed to help you decide if a journey is necessary and to help you make the right choices if a journey is unavoidable.



