

PROCEDURE FOR THE APPROVAL OF ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS & OFFICERS AT CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND OTHER EVENTS (INCLUDING ALL INTERNATIONAL EVENTS/VISITS)

Principles

1. The Council recognises that the attendance of Members and Officers at appropriate conferences, seminars and other events can make a valuable contribution to the organisation. It is crucial that the Council is represented at local, regional, national and international events in order that Members and Officers can maximise the benefits which can be gained from contributing to policy debates; learning from best practice; developing professional relationships with other Members and Officers and promoting Cardiff in all aspects of our work.
2. This guidance note outlines the procedures which the Council has adopted in relation to the approval process and attendance at conferences, seminars and other events. Further examples of what are defined as 'other events' (where specific costs are incurred in advance – e.g. accommodation, travel, delegate fee) include:
 - Business meetings linked to international networks or projects;
 - Civic visits to other cities;
 - Best practice site visits to other cities/local authorities; and
 - Cultural & sporting events.
3. The Council is committed to the highest levels of probity in local government and wishes to deal in an open and accountable manner with the attendance of Members and Officers at conferences, seminars and other events (including international events/visits) where there is a cost to the Council in terms of delegate fees, travel arrangements, accommodation bookings and subsistence claims.
4. An application form will need to be completed in order to gain advance approval for attendance at conferences, seminars and other events, which will usually take place outside the Council's boundaries and which may also lead to subsequent expenses claims being made for 'out-of-county' subsistence. However, an application form will also need to be completed in advance for approval of attendance at 'in-county' conferences, seminars and other events where a delegate fee is payable.
5. It is important that completed application forms satisfy the required criteria for approval and attendance by any Member or Officer at conferences, seminars and other events. Attendance will be approved on the basis that attendance will be of benefit to the Council and appropriate budget provision is available.

Members

6. All Members are required to use the application form [4.C.242](#) and should seek to provide as much information as possible when completing **Part 1** of the form.
7. All Members must complete and sign **Part 2** of the form. A single application form may be completed if more than one Member attends a specific conference, seminar or other event, but Part 2 of the form will need to be signed by each Member.
8. **Part 3** of the form must also be completed if Members are seeking approval to attend an international event/visit.
9. The Democratic Services Manager will be responsible for maintaining a published register of all applications and approvals, using the information contained on the completed form.

No expenditure on advance costs should be incurred and no subsistence or travel allowance will be paid following the event unless approval has been given in advance.

Officers

10. The application form [4.C.243](#) will need to be completed only by the **Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, Directors, Assistant Directors and Chief Officers**.
11. **All Officers** will need to complete the application form [4.C.243](#) when seeking advance approval to attend international events/visits.
12. A single application form may be completed if more than one Officer attends, which should be approved by an appropriate senior manager. The application form [4.C.243](#) will also need to be completed by an Officer(s) if they are attending an event with a Member.

No expenditure on advance costs should be incurred and no subsistence or travel allowance will be paid following the event unless approval has been given in advance.

Approval Process

13. All applications will require **Part 4 (Approval of Application)** of the form to be completed.
14. Applications by Members will be subject to approval by the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer.
15. Applications by Officers will be subject to approval by authorised signatories as set out in the table below. Where Officers of different grades are attending the most senior required signatory would provide approval for all attendees.

Attendance within the UK by:	Approval by:
Any Member	County Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Chief Executive	Corporate Director Resources <u>or</u> County Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Corporate Director	Chief Executive
Director	Chief Executive <u>or</u> Corporate Director (as appropriate)
Assistant Director or Chief Officer	Corporate Director

Attendance outside the UK by:	Approval by:
Any Member	County Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Chief Executive	Corporate Director Resources <u>or</u> County Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Corporate Director	Chief Executive
Director	Chief Executive <u>or</u> Corporate Director (as appropriate)
Any Other Officer	Corporate Director <u>or</u> Director

16. Following approval, copies of the application forms should be forwarded, as appropriate, to the Democratic Services Manager for registration purposes. The Democratic Services Manager will be responsible for maintaining a published register of all applications and approvals, using the information contained on the completed form.

Arranging Attendance:

17. The advance booking arrangements for Member attendance at a conference, seminar or other event, where there is no Officer support from an appropriate service area, will be coordinated by Democratic Services.
18. Service areas are expected to make their own booking arrangements for Officer attendance at conferences, seminars and other events, but should liaise with Democratic Services if an Officer is accompanying a Member.

Travel:

19. It is expected that the most cost effective form of transport will be used by both Members and Officers and the method of travel must be stated on the application form. Tickets must be obtained by the relevant service area through the Council's contracted travel agent and should be ordered and paid for via SAP. Under no circumstances should tickets be purchased personally by the Member or Officer travelling with costs being reimbursed through payroll or Imprest (petty cash) accounts.

Air Travel

It is expected that Members and Officers will travel in economy class. Discounted advance purchase flight tickets should be purchased wherever possible in order to reduce costs.

Rail Travel

It is expected that all rail tickets purchased will be second class. Discounted advance purchase rail tickets should be purchased wherever possible in order to reduce costs.

Road Travel

If the attendee chooses to travel by car, and this is justifiable in terms of travel time and cost, then travel allowance for mileage expenses will be payable at the normal rate and can be claimed in the normal way – i.e. for Members using the appropriate expenses claim form or for Officers via DigiGov. Pool cars should be used where these are available.

Accommodation:

20. It is expected that delegates will, subject to cost and availability, stay at the conference hotel or at a hotel of a similar standard which is located as close as possible to the conference, seminar or event venue.

Reservations will usually be made on a bed & breakfast basis. Wherever possible, accommodation should be reserved in advance through the Council's contracted travel agent or the nominated conference accommodation bookings agency, and invoiced directly to the Service Area responsible.

21. Accommodation for Members should be reserved in accordance with the maximum limits for subsistence allowance for overnight stays in London or outside Cardiff, as set out in the Council's Schedule of Member Remuneration.
22. Any incidental items (e.g. newspapers, telephone calls, subsistence) should be paid for separately and receipts retained for the reimbursement of expenses, where appropriate.

Subsistence:

23. Attendees may claim for subsistence allowance in accordance with the Council's Schedule of Member Remuneration and the approved scheme for Officers. Subsistence will be payable for any meals which are not provided as part of a conference, seminar or other event or included as part of overnight stays reserved on a bed & breakfast basis.

Incidental Costs:

24. Whilst it is recognised that most travel arrangements will be made in advance and refreshments will be provided at most events where a delegate fee is payable, it is recognised that, on occasion, Members and Officers may need to incur some incidental costs (e.g. taxis, local public transport tickets) as part of their attendance. This is particularly relevant to Members and Officers who are attending international events/visits where they may require appropriate foreign currency to be provided in advance in order to cover any such incidental costs.
25. It is important that such expenditure is maintained at a reasonable level and is carefully recorded with receipts in order to avoid any possible allegations of impropriety. As it is not possible to identify such incidental costs in advance of any event, and it would not be fair for individuals to be financially disadvantaged by paying from their own pockets, in particular when travelling as part of a group delegation, the Council will make arrangements for a limited cash advance to be provided, where appropriate.
26. If any Member or Officer anticipates the need for such a cash advance, they should apply in writing to the appropriate budget holder, detailing the anticipated requirement. Any cash advance should be made and administered via Imprest (petty cash) accounts and will be subject to strict limits, currently set at £50 per day, and it is essential that a record of all expenditure (and supporting receipts) is retained. Any balance must be returned to the Council.

International Events/Visits Assessment Criteria

27. The Cabinet Support Office must be informed of all approved attendance at an international event/visit by Cabinet Members.
28. For all international events/visits, a copy of the completed application form must also be sent to the Media Office immediately following approval in order for Officers to advise what action may be appropriate at that stage and to liaise with relevant Members or Officers.
29. Approval of attendance at business meetings linked to international networks or projects should refer to a previous decision agreeing to the participation of the Council in a specific network or project and be accompanied by any additional documentation which provides details of future meetings that Members and/or Officers will be required to attend (e.g. project brief, schedule of meetings), together with details of any related funding provision for a specific network or project.

Event Evaluation

30. It is the responsibility of Members and Officers to provide feedback following approved attendance at all conferences, seminars and other events, including international events/visits, in order for the Council to assess not only the value for money of attendance at the event in terms of the related costs, but also the wider benefits to the Council.
31. Members are requested to advise the County Clerk and Monitoring Officer or Democratic Services Manager of any conferences, seminars and other events which did not meet their expectations, as set out in their original application form. This will assist in the future consideration of any similar applications to attend such events, particularly in terms of assessing the value for money of the delegate fee set by conference or event organisers.
32. Likewise, Officers should advise the Senior Officer(s) who approved their own attendance at any conferences, seminars and other events.