

Travel, Meal and Accommodation Expenses

(Financial Procedure 5)

Eligibility for

- mileage and other travel expenses
- meals
- accommodation

At a glance... when you travel on Council business, we want to make sure that your business mileage and other expenses are reimbursed fairly, consistently and in a way that recognises our accountability to the public.

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Who is this policy for?

This policy is for

- All employees of Central Bedfordshire Council, except those based in schools and
- Managers who are responsible for applying this policy in their own areas

This policy does not apply to journeys eligible for payment under the Council's [Excess Travel Policy](#).

What else should I read?

You should also read the Council's [Code of Financial Governance](#) and [Financial Scheme of Management](#), both of which are part of the Constitution of Central Bedfordshire Council.

What do we mean by *business mileage*?

Business mileage means mileage travelled as part of your job. This includes activities such as visiting customers, attending meetings on behalf of the Council, or taking part in business training events.

It does not include journeys between home and your usual workplace, or miles travelled for [professional development training](#).

Are you driving?

If you drive on Council business, you must have a valid driving licence – and if you drive your own vehicle you must ensure that

- ✓ your insurance covers you for business use
- ✓ you have a valid MOT certificate for your car (if applicable) and
- ✓ you are displaying a valid tax disc for your car

You will be asked to certify this on every expenses claim you make.

1. Travel Expenses

Planning your journey

The Council will reimburse travel expenses only for journeys that are necessary and authorised by your line manager. You must have travelled in the most economic way that is compatible with the service you are delivering.

When you travel by public transport, the Council will reimburse the actual cost of your journey. You must produce a receipt.

When you travel by car, motorcycle or bicycle, the Council will reimburse your business mileage.

If your journey does not start at your usual workplace, you may claim

- The business mileage you actually travel, *less* your normal daily return mileage between work and home or
- The business mileage you would have travelled if you had started and ended your journey at your normal workplace,

whichever is smaller.

If you are eligible to [claim excess mileage](#) and your total *business mileage* for the day is less than your maximum daily excess mileage, you must claim all your mileage for that day as excess mileage.

If you and another employee are travelling by car to the same destination, you should share the journey. Only the driver may claim business mileage.

Business mileage

You should record your business mileage, using the shortest distance between two locations. This information is available from the Council's [Standard Miles by Shortest Route](#) or [Google Maps](#).

If your journey is unavoidably longer than it should have been – perhaps because the police have diverted traffic – you should claim for the actual business miles you travelled and explain the discrepancy in the notes in Employee Self Service (ESS).

For each journey you must round your mileage to the nearest mile. Round up part miles of 0.5 or greater and round down part miles less than 0.5.

You must claim your business mileage at the [correct rate](#), which will depend on the business mileage you have already claimed in this financial year.

If you have a leased car attached to a legacy scheme, you must use this car to travel on Council business. You are entitled to claim your business mileage at the [leased car rate](#) for your scheme.

If you claimed significant business mileage last financial year, you may also be eligible for the [business mileage related lump sum](#).

You need a VAT receipt

When you claim your business mileage, you must submit a valid VAT receipt for the fuel.

The receipt should be dated a little before the first journey and should be for enough fuel to complete all the business miles claimed. Depending on the number of business miles you are claiming for, it may be necessary to include more than one VAT receipt.

The Council will not pay your mileage claim without a VAT receipt for fuel.

Parking

If you need to pay for parking, you can claim for parking fees. You must produce a VAT receipt at the time of your claim.

Fines and penalties

You cannot claim for parking fines, or speeding or other penalties.

2. Meal Payments

To be eligible to receive a meal payment

- You must have bought the meal outside the County of Bedfordshire and
- you must present a VAT receipt for the meal with your claim

Each meal claim is subject to [an upper limit](#), which depends on the time of day you ate the meal.

Breakfast	Before 10 am
Lunch	10 am – 4.30 pm
Evening Meal	After 5 pm

These rates are revised from time to time.

Different rates apply if you are travelling for training.

You should not claim a meal payment if the Council has already provided or paid for a meal, for example at a conference where meals and beverages are included.

3. Accommodation Expenses

In general, if you need accommodation when travelling on Council business, it will be booked and paid for through our partners, [Expotel](#).

In exceptional circumstances, if you have booked and paid for a hotel yourself, you may be able to reclaim this expense. The expense must be necessary and agreed by your authorising manager. Your choice of accommodation must be the most cost-effective available.

Overnight accommodation claims are subject to [an upper limit](#), which is revised from time to time.

You must provide a VAT receipt with your claim.

4. Submitting your Claim

You must use Employee Self Service to submit your expenses claim unless HR have exempted you from ESS.

You need a VAT receipt

You need a VAT receipt or invoice to support every part of your claim, and you should claim for the total amount you paid, including VAT.

If you didn't receive a VAT invoice, or your receipt doesn't specify VAT – perhaps because the supplier was not VAT registered – you must not add VAT to your claim.

Deadlines to claim

You should submit your expenses claim as soon as possible after your journey. If you travel regularly on Council business, you should submit your expenses claim at the end of each month.

You must submit all expenses claims within three months of incurring the expense. The Council will not reimburse your expenses after that deadline unless your circumstances are exceptional, for example you have been on long term sickness absence.

Complete and accurate

When you submit your claim, you must be satisfied that it is both accurate and complete.

From time to time, the Council checks the accuracy and appropriateness of claims even after they have been paid.

If you submit an inaccurate or false claim, or if you apply for a payment that you are not entitled to, you may be liable to disciplinary action which may lead to your dismissal.

[Detailed guidance](#) is available for submitting your claim and having it approved and paid.