

Councillors Expenses - 2016 - 17

Posted by Newsline - 08 Dec 2016 19:51

WE are continuing our annual review of councillors expenses and are pleased to report that some have taken on board our criticism (2015) of using a car when they could have rested on a train at much less expense to the public. A few have now stopped claiming for short local journeys and others are now sharing taxi's.

However on looking at this years FOI disclosure we can see that, in our opinion, at least three are claiming for something that they are not entitled, including a member of the Audit Committee.

One is claiming for journeys of 1.6 miles, and one appears to be breaking the rules entirely in respect of travel.

Tomorrow.....

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Re: Councillors Expenses - 2016 - 17

Posted by Newsline - 11 Dec 2016 18:41

Just to provide you with a flavour of what we have discovered, a small potted sample in no particular order.

There appear to be councillors who cannot count.

Cllr Gordon McCaskill resides on Morven Drive, Williamwood.

He has claimed mileage in respect of attending various meetings etc.

One such travel claim was from his house to Netherlee Pavilion in respect of a Residents Association Meeting, distance claimed 6 miles return.

According to the AA web site the mileage is actually 3.2 return.

Claim from home to Barrhead Council Offices 14 miles return, AA say it is 9.2 return.

However bizarrely in another claim for travel to the same location the claim is for 12 miles.

Claim for return trip to OLM school 6 miles return, AA say it is 3.6 miles return.

Claim for return to ENNA allotments 6 miles return, AA says it is 3.6 miles return.

Claim to Glw airport, 24 miles yet on another occasion it is 26 miles. (17.8 the AA say the journey is)

Now unless he got stuck in the Paisley one way system where did the extra two miles come from.

Now mistakes and errors can happen , however is that not why council officers are there, to check and approve councillors claims.

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Re: Councillors Expenses - 2016 - 17

Posted by Newline - 11 Dec 2016 19:07

Cllr Hay makes regular claims from his place of employment (not council related) to council headquarters at Eastwood Park, usually 12 miles one way.

He claims 5 miles one way in respect of travel from his home at Stewart Street, Barrhead to Eastwood Park.

The following is from the Scottish Government.

Therefore it would appear to us that these claims for 12 miles should have been restricted to 5.

How long has been going on, why have staff not advised the Cllr, do they not know the legislation.

What is Lorraine McMillan and Caroline Innes doing about this, or is their focus only on 'photo shoots'.

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Re: Councillors Expenses - 2016 - 17

Posted by Newsline - 11 Dec 2016 19:24

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Re: Councillors Expenses - 2016 - 17

Posted by Newsline - 11 Dec 2016 19:29

Conservative, Labour and SNP hold 'group meetings' which are only open to their own political group.

It would appear that there are only three Cllrs who claim travel expenses to go to these 'private group meetings'.

Kenny Hay

Charlie Gilbert

Barbara Grant

We would have to suggest that these 'group meetings' are political and absolutely nothing to do with official council business. Although some may put up arguments against this view it would appear that 17 other elected members take the view that they should not be claiming for these meetings.

We will continue when we have examined the remainder of our material although we can see at a glance that Cllrs are still travelling to the likes of Edinburgh by car, when rail or bus would be a much cheaper option.

We told McMillan and Innes last year... look after the pennies, but it appears that they have not listened.

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Re: Councillors Expenses - 2016 - 17

Posted by ErnHW Ltd - 13 Dec 2016 09:49

E-Mail out

Good Morning,

I request a review of how East Renfrewshire Council have handled my request for information.

My request was as follows.

Good Morning,

Could you oblige and please send me all recorded information in connection with councillors expenses for the period 5th April 2015 to 31st October 2016 including claim forms and receipts.

I would like the information provided as electronic copies.

I understand that it is my right to receive your response within 20 working days of receipt of this request.

Kind Regards

Tom

I then received this reply. My reasons for requesting a review are as follows.

I requested the following specifically,

All recorded information including claim forms and receipts.

I note that Cllr Waters made claims in respect of travel by taxi, as did Cllr Lafferty.

I have not been provided with their Members travel and subsistence expenses claim forms in respect of these journeys.

I note that Cllr Fletcher refers on one of his claim forms to 'receipts attached'.

I have not been provided with these receipts.

In addition I have not been provided with any receipts in respect of taxi journeys.

I am aware that last years FOI resulted in provision of printed sheets headed up Eastwood Taxis and these included the start and finish time of the journey in addition to the information disclosed on the council spreadsheet on this occasion.

I would have to suggest that there must be additional material that I have not been provided with in respect of taxi journeys.

I understand that it is my right to have a response within 20 working days.

Kind Regards

Tom Taylor

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Re: Councillors Expenses - 2016 - 17

Posted by Newsline - 13 Dec 2016 11:22

A sample monthly expenses form, (page 1 of 2) we have redacted the Cllrs name.

If ever there was a system open for potential abuse then this is it.

Why did this Cllr have to attend HQ on 17th June 2015, no reason given on the form submitted, yet it has been signed as checked, and has a second signature approving the claim.

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