

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL REGULATORY – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Elected Members' Use of Provost's Car and Taxis for Official Business

The Provost car is available for use by prior booking. Bookings are made via the Provost's Secretary (tel. 01389 738697). The Secretary will enter the reservation in a diary kept for that purpose.

Since there is only one official car to serve the Council, a protocol has to be applied for use of the car. The priority list is as follows:

- Provost
- Depute Provost
- Bailie (when performing civic duties)
- Council Leader
- Depute Council Leader
- Senior Councillors
- Service/Committee Conveners
- Councillors

The Provost will have first call on the car and its driver. Where the Provost has not made a pre-existing booking of the car, it can be booked on behalf of another Councillor.

If the car is already reserved for the Provost at the required time, contact should be made with the Provost's Secretary or Senior Democratic Services Officer (tel. 01389 737186) to help make alternative arrangements. The Council has accounts with Clydebank and Dumbarton TOAs and these would be the first alternative. In appropriate circumstances another option is to hire a second car, assuming that a driver is available.

If another person on the priority list has booked the car for a particular occasion and it is subsequently required by the Provost or Council Leader, who would normally have received priority for the booking, contact should be made as soon as possible with the Provost's Secretary or Senior Democratic Services Officer to investigate suitable alternatives. Please note, however, that at very short notice it may be impossible to hire another car and release a second driver, so the use of a taxi may be unavoidable.

One week's notice should be given wherever possible of a need for the car. Drivers are Council Officers who have other duties, therefore notice is needed as it may be necessary to change shifts or re-roster to accommodate driving duties.

Where two or more Councillors of equal priority wish to use the car, priority will be given to use for civic events, then for ministerial visits, then attendance at meetings of outside bodies.

In case of urgency arising in relation to an official engagement, Councillors may make direct contact with the taxi firm. The telephone numbers are below and

Councillors must state at the time of booking that the journey should be added to the relevant account (see below). Invoices for journeys will then be sent to the department for payment.

CLYDEBANK TOA – XXXXXXXXXXXX (quote ‘xxx account’)
DUMBARTON and ALEXANDRIA TOA – XXXXXXXXXXXX (quote a/c no. xxx)

Approved Use of the Provost’s Car

Councillors are only allowed to reclaim travel expenses or use of the Provost’s car for duties which are “wholly or necessarily in the performance of their duties as a Councillor”. This is in accordance of HMRC advice on the tax treatment of such payments. The key tests to be applied are:-

- Would I have needed to do this journey if I was not a Councillor?
- Was the expenditure necessary? In other words, was it necessary to go at this time, to that place and was a cheaper method of transport available?

Reclaiming of Taxi Fares paid by Councillors

Travel by taxi on approved duties will be reimbursed at the car mileage rate of 45p per mile. In the absence of a Councillor using his/her private car, taxi fares paid by Councillors (i.e. not on taxi account) are reimbursed in full only if there is no suitable alternative public transport available. This is applied to circumstances where a meeting finishes late in the evening or transport is required to catch an early flight or train but could apply also to circumstances whereby a Member’s personal or business commitments leave insufficient time to travel between venues using public transport, such as where a Member’s disability means that use of public transport is unsuitable. Outwith these constraints, if a Member used a taxi, e.g. so as to be able to socialise after the meeting, we would reimburse travel at the car mileage rate (or public transport rate if the Member does not have a car).

Publication of the Costs of Member’s use of the Provost’s Car

The Council is now required to publish annually any use of the Provost’s car by a Councillor in the annual publication of that Member’s expenses. The costs of such usage are to include not only a share of the purchase or leasing costs of the car, depreciation, servicing and petrol but also a share of the costs of the driver. The cost of this is £26 per hour. This means that use of the Provost’s car is not a particularly cheap method of transport in comparison to other methods of transport. In relation to the Provost, Depute Provost and Bailie, the annual publication records their usage of the car against a separate line for civic usage. All other Councillor’s usage is recorded against them personally meaning that usage of the car may give a misleading impression of high travel costs by that Councillor.

If the driver is required to wait to pick up the Councillor (e.g. where the event is outwith West Dunbartonshire) the hourly costs of the driver will also have to be included for such a waiting period, unless the officer is undertaking other duties. Where a number of Councillors and Officers use the car together these costs are split amongst those using it