

24 March 2016

New Zealand Tax Payers' Union Inc

Via: requests@taxpayers.org.nz

To whom it may concern

Request for information relating to costs of professional development for elected officials.

Thank you for your email to the Council received on 25 January 2015. Your request was forwarded to the Issues Resolution Office to provide a response.

Further to my letter dated 23 February 2016 granting the request, I can now provide the information requested.

As you asked a number of questions I will address these in the order of your email.

1) "Following the 2010 local body elections, how much money has been spent on professional development and related costs, such as transport and accommodation? Please break down this figure by the costs attributable to each elected official".

Your request covers two trienniums: 2010/13 and 2013/16. The Council has interpreted your question about professional development as covering group induction for all Councillors', workshops, and training throughout a triennium.

For the 2010/13 triennium I am able to provide the title of each training course attended by elected officials. This information is attached as Appendix 1.

However, the information relating to the breakdown of costs of the course and any travel or accommodation is not held in an easily retrievable format for that triennium or in one easily accessible file. As such, because of the way the information was collected and recorded at that time it cannot be provided without substantial collation or research. As such, this part of your request is declined under section 17(f) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

For the 2013/16 triennium I am able to provide fuller information relating to the title, cost and location of the training as this information is held and has been collated in a manner that enables easier retrieval of the information for this triennium. This information is attached as Appendix 2.

2) “Who is responsible for approving professional development programmes for elected officials?”

The Manager of Democratic Services oversees the budget and approves the training provided as part of the new triennium induction.

The Deputy Mayor is authorised to approve elected member attendance at conferences and associated travel within New Zealand provided that:

- It can be funded from the budget approved as part of Annual Plan
- The Deputy Mayor consults with one of either the Mayor or Chair of the relevant Committee prior to approval.

In respect of any overseas travel, The Mayor and Deputy Mayor and relevant Committee Chair are authorised to approve an elected member to travel overseas (whether for the purpose of training, representing the Council, international relations, attending conferences) – and the associated costs (if any) in urgent circumstances, when it is impracticable for the Governance, Finance and Planning Committee to consider the item on an agenda prior to the travel.

3) “Does the Council have an annual budget for the professional development of elected officials? If so, please provide details of how much money was under or overspent since 2010”.

The budget for elected member training is managed by the Manager of Democratic Services.

The budget for professional development for the 2010/13 triennium was \$80,000 in total; with \$30,000 being budgeted for the first and second years respectively, and \$20,000 being budgeted for the third year. During the course of the 2010/13 triennium the budget was underspent by \$30,709.

The budget for professional development for the 2013/16 triennium is again \$80,000; with \$30,000 being budgeted for the first and second years respectively, and \$20,000 being budgeted for the third year. The current spend for the 2013/16 triennium is \$75,054 with \$43,733.64 of that figure being attributable to group induction and training.

The first and second years of the triennium’s are allocated the larger budget as the spending on professional development is generally higher at the start of a triennium as newly elected officials are provided with induction to Council and training.

In the 2013/16 triennium 6 new Councillors were elected and this is reflected in the spend to date.

4) “Have any of these professional development programmes involved overseas travel? If so, please provide details of the programme, the name of the elected official who undertook the programme, and details of any costs associated with the programme”.

I can advise as per Appendices 1 and 2, no elected officials have attended overseas training courses.

If you disagree with the decision to refuse part of your request in respect of the 2010/13 triennium, you can apply in writing to the Ombudsman to have the decision investigated and reviewed under section 27(3) of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Hunter', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ian Hunter

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