

# Watford Borough Council

## Authorised Car and Bicycle Users Allowances Policy

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## **Policy Statement**

- 1.** This policy has been written to complement the National Conditions of Service for Local Government employees, which provides for an allowance to be paid to any employee who is required and authorised to use their car/bicycle for the efficient performance of their duties. It also supports and encourages the local initiative to promote the use of bicycles.
- 2.** This policy details the categories of car/bicycle user allowances payable, the criteria for each category and the conditions that must be met to receive the allowances.
- 3.** Watford Borough Council is committed to promoting a green environment and maintaining the highest standards of health and safety. For these reasons the use of privately owned cars for Council business will be kept to a minimum and the use of any car will be avoided where practical.
- 4.** The allocation of Council car parking permits will give priority to essential users, blue badge holders and car sharers and any remaining spaces will be allocated by a random draw of applicants.

## **Background**

Watford Borough Council wishes to reduce the number of people driving to work and will introduce a pool car arrangement for mileage being incurred for work purposes. The Council wishes to maximise the use of pool cars.

## **Types of Car/Bicycle User Allowances**

### **1. Essential Car User**

The Council will be as flexible as is possible to maximise the use of pool cars (e.g. someone on call, out of hours would be able to take a pool car home in the evening and weekends) Essential Car user Allowance will only be granted in the following circumstances, when:

- A pool car cannot be used to perform a job if the frequency of use results in the pool car being used by only one person.
- A pool car cannot be allocated for the exclusive use of a small number of officers to enable them to perform their job
- It is not reasonable to expect people on call out to use a pool car

Those duly authorised are entitled to claim the essential user lump sum and the mileage rate applicable to the cubic capacity of the car being used. The rates for this are published and agreed on an annual basis and Watford Borough Council make payments based on the two lower bands (vehicles under 999cc and those above 999cc)

Only named persons who can not meet the terms set out in the pool car, casual user or bicycle allowance categories will be approved for essential user allowance. Those authorised as essential users will be advised that the award is for a period not to exceed one year at which point it will be reviewed by the Head of Service. Annual reviews will ensure that the number of essential car users are kept to a minimum of named drivers.

Those approved will be required to demonstrate that they have access at all times to a car that is in a safe and roadworthy condition, fully insured (i.e. cover for business use) and they possess a full current Driving Licence. The possession of a Driving Licence will be an essential requirement for these categories of jobs. The Head of Service is responsible for arranging appropriate checks and the keeping of adequate records on an annual basis.

### **2. Casual Car User**

It is acknowledged that for some employees there is the occasional need to have access to a motor vehicle to carry out duties. Unless the pattern of use meets the essential user category the employee will be classified as a casual car user. Those who meet the casual car users criteria will be expected to use pool cars for Council business. The only exceptions are if one is not available or it is agreed by their line manager that in the circumstances the use of a pool car would not be feasible.

In these circumstances casual users will be entitled to claim mileage applicable to the cubic capacity of the car being used. The rates for this are agreed and published on an annual basis.

Those approved as casual users must hold a full current driving license and for those who use their own vehicle they will also need to demonstrate that they have access to a car that is in a safe and roadworthy condition, fully insured.. The Head of Service is responsible for arranging appropriate checks and the keeping of adequate records on an annual basis.

### **3.Bicycle Allowance**

The use of bicycles is encouraged in preference to cars for environmental and health reasons. The use of bicycles for official Council business is supported when the distances being travelled are not excessive (for guidance an each way journey of 3 miles or fifteen minutes) and where it doesn't cause a reduction in service standards.

Those duly authorised to use their own bicycle will be entitled to claim mileage applicable to the lowest cubic capacity band of the casual car user allowance.

Those approved will be required to demonstrate that they have a suitable safety helmet which must be worn on all journeys undertaken for the Council. In addition bicycle users are advised to make arrangements to insure their bicycles against theft and damage.

### **Criteria for Car/Bicycle User Allowances**

The basic principles of the allowances have been set out and the following criteria should be taken into account when deciding the appropriate allowance.

- The nature of the duties undertaken
- Why and how frequently a private vehicle is necessary
- Whether the frequency and timing of journeys can be influenced by the post holder and to what extent
- The number of miles actually undertaken by the post holder or similar posts
- The views of the Head of Service and service manager

All recommendations for car/bicycle allowances must be made by the service manager and authorised by the Head of Service. (Appendix 1 – Car/Bicycle User Allowance Request Form). In all cases it must be demonstrated that the use of a pool vehicle is not appropriate. Copies of all the approved allowance request forms will be submitted to Payroll who will maintain and update a list of authorised users by category.

### **Pool Cars**

Watford Borough Council will work with a fleet vehicle supplier to make available and maintain sufficient pool cars (and bicycles) to permit the Council to meet its service obligations. Vehicles will be available from the Town Hall, Depot and Radius House. Responsibility for the booking arrangements and return of cars will be managed by named line managers in Environmental, Leisure and Community and Planning and

Development services and in respect of support services and Revenues and Benefits by Facilities or corporate administrators.

All persons approved as pool car users will be required to complete the Car/Bicycle User Request Form and the Head of Service is responsible for assessing whether the allocation of a pool vehicle is more appropriate than use of private vehicle. A copy of the approved allowance request form authorising use of a pool car will be forwarded to Facilities who will maintain and update a list of authorised pool vehicle users.

### **Policy Review**

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated one year after adoption and thereafter on a regular basis by Human Resources.