

STAFF ANNUAL APPRAISAL POLICY

1. Aims

The aim of this policy is to provide guidance for those who carry out annual appraisals of staff. It describes, in a chronological order, the arrangements for preparing, conducting and reporting upon appraisals.

This document also identifies the annual appraisal forms and provides instructions on their completion.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the performance appraisal process are to provide a platform for the appraisers and appraisees to review aspects of the individuals job performance on an annual basis, as follows:

- To review past performance over the previous year, including the achievement of set objectives and any constraints on progress, with a view to identifying solutions.
- Discuss the employee's strengths and identify any areas for improvement and development within the current role. The objective is to equip each individual with the wherewithal to perform their job to the best of their ability and gain maximum job satisfaction.
- Take the opportunity to communicate the Council's future plans, how the individual fits within them and can make the best contribution possible towards their achievement. Against this identify the employee's future ambitions, plans and long-term potential.
- Setting of objectives for the forthcoming year arising from the Council's Work Programme, projects, personnel development and team development, where appropriate.

3. Related Documents

- Staff Annual Appraisal Self Assessment Form
- Staff Annual Appraisal Form

4. Introduction

Each year, appraisals will be carried out at a meeting between the line manager (appraiser) and the employee (appraisee). The Clerk's appraisal will be carried out by the Council Chairman and a the Chairman of HR Committee and, if that is the same person, then another Councillor from the HR Committee. Each of the other members of staff will take part in an appraisal with the Clerk.

The intention of the review is to create a space where the appraisee and the appraiser can discuss various aspects of the employee's role, their performance within the role and the Council as a whole. The appraisals are to both take stock of the previous six months/year and to motivate the employee to take on the challenges of the coming year. Dialogue throughout the year between the appraiser and the appraisee will inform the content of the meeting. The outcome of the discussions

should be a clear plan for both participants in terms of action to be taken. This is to ensure that the appraisee is enabled to achieve their full potential in the work that they carry out for the organisation.

It is important that the appraisal scheme focuses upon some clear objectives so that the effort it demands from both the appraiser and the appraisee can be directed towards specific outcomes. The benefits of appraisal in terms of improved communication and enhanced performance, both for the individuals involved and for the organisation, will be achieved only by the continuous commitment of all those involved in the scheme.

Employees should be made aware of the purpose of the appraisal process, how it will be run and what is expected of them. If they are not already aware and familiar with this particular process, a presentation to all the appraisees will be required.

Note: Appraisals are not a pay review and are therefore not an opportunity to discuss pay. Determining pay is a separate process.

5. Planning Appraisals

Each year the Clerk will prepare a schedule so that each member of the team, including the Clerk, are allocated a time around January for a staff annual appraisal meeting and an interim review about six months later. Each participant will add the meetings to their diaries to ensure that the time is reserved. Staff annual appraisal meetings will be held between the issue of the Council's work plan for the coming year and the sign-off of the budget. This is to ensure that objectives are aligned with work plan activities and that there is sufficient funding for in the budget for the training identified.

Note: The identification of training needs is not a guarantee that funding will be made available during the budget approval process.

The appraisal interview schedule will start with the Clerk and continue down the hierarchy in order that communication of Council's objectives can be effectively delivered. It is important that these objectives are considered when discussing performance and development with each individual. This is so that the appraisees remain clear about the importance of their work within the context of the organisation's objectives and that any planned development is relevant to the organisation's needs.

All staff with over six months' service will be included on the appraisal schedule. New staff, who are still in their probationary period, will be seen as normal for their probation review meetings and will be set objectives covering the period to the next appraisal cycle.

It is important to choose meeting times convenient for the appraiser and the appraisee, when it is likely that the demands on both individuals are less than usual. This is to ensure that both parties can focus on the appraisal and be 'present' in the meeting, rather than being distracted by workload and imminent deadlines.

The location of the appraisal must be in a room where the meeting can be held without disturbance. For the duration of the meeting, it is important that the employee is the focus of the line manager's attention and that neither are distracted by their computer, telephone or visitors.

6. Appraisal Forms

The appraisal forms are designed to prompt appraisers and appraisees to focus on the correct agenda in line with the objectives of the appraisal scheme.

Appraisal forms are available on the Council's intranet. They are downloadable so that appraisers and appraisees can choose whether they prefer to complete documents electronically or as hard copy.

7. Review Preparation

Before their appraisal, appraisees will complete an Annual Appraisal Self Assessment form. The form is designed to prompt appraisees to give some thought to the areas that the appraisal meeting will address. When complete, they will send or pass it to the appraiser at least one week ahead of the appraisal meeting to enable the necessary research and preparation.

The appraiser must have the necessary facts about the appraisee's performance at the time of the appraisal interview. Prior to the appraisal, the appraiser may approach councillors and appropriate others, not necessarily within the Council, for their written feedback. They should regularly work or have contact over work, with the person being appraised. Feedback may take the form of an e-mail but however it is communicated in writing it must be factual and contain at least one specific example for each point made. Having specific examples will be particularly important if you need to discuss aspects of an appraisee's performance that are not wholly satisfactory. Feedback gained in the course of normal business may also be valid and can be utilised.

Note: It is important that the appraiser separates fact from opinion in feedback received, particularly where the feedback is negative.

The appraiser should also review the appraisee's job description and previous appraisal form, taking note of objectives set and any training agreed. The appraisee's self-appraisal form must be reviewed. It provides advance notification of the appraisee's views and opinions about their performance, future development and any contentious issues that the appraisee wishes to raise.

In addition to the appraisee's performance, the appraiser should consider aspects of the appraisee's behaviours. For example: has thorough knowledge of the job, uses initiative to solve problems, exercises sound judgement, works to high standards, maintains a high work rate, can be relied upon to deliver on commitments, works well as part of a team, takes responsibility for problems and is accountable for actions

8. The Appraisal Meeting

Mobile phones must be muted or better still left outside the room. It is important that the appraisee is the focus of the appraiser's attention for the duration of the appraisal. Failure to devote the meeting to being with the other person demonstrates a lack of respect that is likely to be offensive.

It is also important that the appraisee can leave the review feeling that they have been given the time and opportunity to have their say. Equally the appraiser must not leave the meeting without having delivered adequate and accurate feedback to the appraisee, especially where there are any negative connotations.

When addressing negative feedback, under normal circumstances, it should not come as a surprise to the appraisee because the appraiser should have already addressed any issues and not 'saved them up' for the review meeting.

The appraiser's purpose in delivering negative feedback is to state the facts so as to open up a discussion on the issue and gain the appraisee's acknowledgement of the problem. The appraiser can then set tangible objectives for improvement, agreed with the appraisee and establish if any support is needed that can be provided by the organisation.

The appraiser must record the issue, the improvements required, objectives set, timescales and any significant points from the discussions, such as support requested by the appraisee.

The Annual Appraisal Self Assessment form is to be used as the basis of the discussions and it is recommended that the appraiser goes through each of the discussion points on the form in turn.

As the format of the meeting is a discussion the appraiser is to encourage the appraisee to speak about each point by asking open ended questions before the appraiser gives their feedback and picks up on points raised by the appraisee.

To add value for the Council, when identifying individual training, development and career needs, discussions should focus upon genuinely assisting the appraisee in acquiring the relevant skills, knowledge and behaviours (competencies) for them to perform well in their current role. Opportunities for advancement or alternative work may also be on the agenda.

When setting objectives for the coming year, they should be related to the appraisee's job, career and skills that both supports the direction of the Council and development of the appraisee. Objectives supporting the Council may come directly from the work programme for the coming year or may be supporting another's objectives taken from the work programme.

Objectives should be limited to a maximum of five to ensure that the appraisee has sufficient time to work through them and complete them to the best of their ability. They must be defined in a SMART manner, meaning:

- Specific – clearly defining what is to be done and the end result expected, to avoid misinterpretation.

- Measurable – where possible, so that progress and completion can be assessed.
- Achievable – completion is within the reach of the appraisee but is still challenging.
- Realistic – practical and representative of objectives set by the organisation.
- Time Bound – when the objective or defined progress towards it has to be achieved.

Objectives must be agreed with the appraisee.

9. Completion of The Appraisal

The Annual Appraisal Record form must be completed as a faithful record of a summary of the discussion that took place at the appraisal meeting. The action summaries should be used as a planner so that any agreed outcomes are followed up conscientiously. The assessor will make notes during the appraisal and complete the form in handwritten or typed format after meeting. The back of the form may be used to make any additional notes, where there is insufficient room on the front.

Note: Where it is not obvious, entries on the back of the form must identify the applicable discussion point to which they refer.

After the review meeting when the form has been completed, the appraisee will be given the form to read, sign and date, as confirmation that it is an accurate record of what was said. If the appraisee does not accept the comments made or objects to the way that the appraisal was carried out, then after further discussions they have the right not to sign and date the form. The issues will be referred to the Chair of the HR Committee, or Deputy Chair if the Chair is unavailable, for investigation and final decision. The appraiser will always sign and date the form.

The Town Clerk's Appraisal will be "approved" by HR Committee as required by Standing Orders and completion of the Appraisal reported to Full Council.

Performance against objectives, timescales, support provided and any improvement actions, will be formally reviewed at the next appraisal meeting. However, the appraiser should carry out one or more informal interim progress reviews.

Filing the Appraisal Forms

The appraisal forms contain information confidential to the appraisee and the Council. In some cases, data collected may include special categories of data e.g. information about an employee's health. When conducting an appraisee's appraisal, the organisation processes personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy. The Clerk will retain the forms securely between appraisals.

Data collected as part of the operation of the appraisal process will be held securely and kept for no longer than necessary. It will be accessed by and disclosed to individuals only for the purposes of managing their appraisal. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data

breach and should be reported in accordance with the Council's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the organisation's disciplinary procedure. in which case more stringent rules apply.

The appraisee is entitled to a copy of the appraisal forms upon request.