

Tendring Parish Council

APPRAISALS POLICY

Introduction

Appraisals are used in organisations to help employees achieve and fulfil their potential and for the employer to continue to monitor performance to achieve its goals and improve the quality of the products/services which it provides. An appraisal interview is an opportunity to take an overall look at work content and volume, look back at what has been achieved, agree objectives for the future and consider what development needs the employee may have for the year ahead.

The main purposes of the appraisal system are as follows:

- a) Performance: to provide a clear statement on how staff are performing, to see whether further progress can be made, and consider what help might be given to build on strengths.
- b) Responsibilities: to record present and future responsibilities.
- c) Personal development: to look at future work and identify opportunities for development and training, to benefit the staff member's career and to maximize the contribution to the Parish Council.
- d) Communication: to ensure that ideas and views are shared.
- e) Future work: to plan work priorities and objectives for the next year and consider solutions to problems.

An appraisal should be a light touch with an Agenda; it should not introduce any items not previously discussed.

KEY FEATURES

An appraisal should take into consideration the following factors:

- a) Openness – the Council should provide guidance to employees on the appraisal scheme which it wishes to use. An appraisal should be open from both parties perspective and an employee should be privy to all comments made by an employer during or after an appraisal process. It is usual to provide the employees with details of the appraisal process, including any documentation to be used, well in advance of the process commencing.

- b) Confidentiality - the appraiser(s) and appraisee only will see the appraisal record. The fact that an appraisal has taken place will be reported to Full Council but the contents will remain confidential.
- c) Consistency – whatever scheme the Council chooses to implement, all staff should be appraised according to the same scheme. It is also desirable that the same process is continued over a period of years so that comparisons can be made across timescales.
- d) Objectives – objectives which are set during the appraisal should be objective and understood by both appraisers and appraisee and be based upon actual conduct and performance rather than personalities or subjective criteria.
- e) Forward-looking - the main value of reviewing past performance is to identify matters which can be built upon, problems that can be tackled by the Council or by training, and new opportunities.
- f) Positive - problems, difficulties and mistakes should be discussed openly so that solutions can be found, training offered or defective systems improved.
- g) Two-way conversation - appraisees are encouraged to contribute frankly in assessing their performance and goals.
- h) No surprises – it is poor practice to introduce new information, particularly of a critical nature at an appraisal interview. If there are issues with conduct of performance then they should be raised with the employee at the time they occur, not held back to handle at an appraisal session.
- i) Contractual – any employee who is working under the National Agreement NALC:SLCC Model Contract will have a clause which states that there will be an annual appraisal which the employer will be obliged to undertake.

PROCEDURE FOR APPRAISALS

- a) Feedback: the Staffing Committee Chairman obtains anonymous written feedback from all Councillors, including those on the Staffing Committee, and the Clerk, if applicable. These are used to write a report which is sent to the employee before the appraisal to allow an informed, constructive discussion at the appraisal. This feedback is retained in personnel files in case of a Freedom of Information request.
- b) Agree a date: the Council and employee should agree between themselves a date for the appraisal to take place. It is advisable for at least 5 days preparation to be allowed. The date is often set at the previous performance review meeting which may have been

months before, in that way all parties to the process have a commitment to the date/time.

- c) Documents: the appraisee and appraiser should have at least the following documentation to hand at the appraisal:
 - job description
 - written objectives set previously (if any)
 - record of previous appraisal (if any)
- d) Preparation: both the appraisee and appraiser should spend time planning what they want to discuss. The appraiser should be familiar with the council's own strategic objectives for the coming year to ensure that the appraisal contributes to the council's own direction.
- e) The venue: both parties should be agreeable to the venue of the appraisal, which should ideally be in a quiet place and away from other distractions. It can be held online if all parties agree.
- f) The interview: it should be conducted by the appraiser(s) in an informal atmosphere. The appraiser should begin by explaining the scope of the interview and then encourage the appraisee to comment on performance, training, development and future objectives and to suggest solutions to any problems. The appraiser must take notes. The appraisee may also make a written record of proceedings, should they wish.
- g) Writing up: the appraiser should write up a report of the interview and give a copy to the appraisee at the conclusion of the appraisal or as soon as possible thereafter.
- h) Signature: the completed form should be given to the appraisee to consider, adding any comment and to sign it and the appraisee should then return it to the appraiser.
- i) Records: the appraiser will give one copy to the appraisee to keep for his or her own records and one will be placed in the central confidential personnel records held by the Clerk, including their own personnel record.
- j) Follow up: the appraiser is responsible for ensuring that any further action is taken as agreed at the appraisal.

TIMING

The appraisal interview will be conducted annually and will usually coincide with the anniversary of the appraisee joining the Council OR be at some agreed time which suits the council at which point all employees are appraised. The latter can assist with planning training in the light of budget reviews.

INTERIM REVIEWS

An interim review may be conducted between annual appraisals, often at the half year point or upon completion of a major project or where the council's strategy/overall objectives change requiring review of all employees' objectives. There is no requirement to complete formal appraisal documentation at these reviews. However:

- agreed action points should be noted by the appraiser and a copy given to the appraisee;
- the appraisee's objectives may be revised.

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS AT APPRAISAL

Appraisers and appraisees could use a checklist in preparing for, conducting, and recording the appraisal interview.

a) Basic Information : name, department, job title, date joined council, date appointed to current post (may not need be so formal for small councils where parties know each other well but can still be useful if there has been a change in elected members or changes to the Staffing Committee)

b) Example questions which could be used are as follows:

- Which aspects of the job have been accomplished well?
- In which aspects of the job could the appraisee have performed better?
- What influences have made the job difficult to perform?
- What strengths does the appraisee bring to the job?
- What are the goals for the next review period?
- What training and development would help to achieve these goals?
- What skills and knowledge relevant to the role/career aspirations would the appraisee like to gain in the future?
- What improvements to the Council or the department can the appraisee suggest?

c) Review of Job Description

Does the current Job Description adequately reflect the job the employee is actually being asked to do? Are there changes required? If so this is the right point to be making these observations.

d) Training and Development

The appraisee and appraiser should jointly identify training needs. Concentrate first on the areas of skill and knowledge needing development, and only after that on training solutions. Recommendations should relate to needs identified in reviewing past performance and/or to new objectives or additional responsibilities.

e) Getting the most out of the Appraisal Interview

The appraisal interview is a significant form of communication between an employee, their immediate boss and their employer. The basic purpose of any form of communication at work is to produce some form of action or activity. The Appraisal interview will cover a review of the employee's objectives and attainments, a discussion about skills and knowledge as applied in the workplace, feedback from others in the organisation or significant external contacts, feedback from the employee to their line manager/elected members, future challenges and development needs and will seek to set new objectives for the coming year.

SETTING OBJECTIVES

Objectives provide framework for the coming year's work. They should be agreed between appraiser and appraisee. The objectives need to reflect the employee's job description and the council's own objectives derived from its strategic and business plans. Such targets are sometimes referred to as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Often objectives will set a higher standard for performance than before, designate additional responsibility or assign new projects. It is usual to aim for no more than 6 main objectives, any more can be over-stretching. It is good practice to have one personal development objective within the set agreed to encourage CPD (continuing professional development) to occur.

Effective objectives should be **S.M.A.R.T.:**

- a) **Specific:** the objective should refer to a particular task or piece of work or specific aspects of behaviour or performance.
- b) **Measurable:** There should be measures (quantitative or qualitative) which are clearly agreed and understood; these will enable progress and achievement to be monitored and recognised.
- c) **Agreed:** The objective should be agreed by appraisee and appraiser.
- d) **Realistic:** The objective should be designed to be challenging for the appraisee but should not be so demanding that there is a high likelihood of failure.
- e) **Timed:** All objectives should have a date by which they are to be achieved.

There are three steps in setting effective objectives:

- a) Select the part of the job to which the objective will relate.
- b) Agree what is the end result to be achieved within that area.
- c) Settle how the end result will be achieved and the steps that the appraisee will need to take: these are standards of performance.