



## **APPRAISAL GUIDELINES**

### **Preparing for the Appraisal Meeting:**

Both parties should prepare for the review meeting beforehand if a successful outcome is to be achieved.

Points for the appraisers and appraisee to consider include:

- How well the individual has performed since the last meeting and what they have achieved, with examples or other evidence;
- How successfully objectives and development plans from the last meeting have been implemented;
- Factors that have helped or hindered performance;
- How the appraisee has responded to challenges;
- Current learning and development and support needed;
- Potential actions that could be taken by either party to develop or improve performance;
- Potential directions the individual's career might take;
- Potential objectives for the next review period.

It may also help for the appraisee to consider what they most enjoy about the job and how they might want to develop the role. For appraisers it will also help to consider what feedback, positive as well as negative, they would like to give.

In some instances it may be helpful to guide appraisals through a self-assessment process encouraging them to assess and analyse their own performance as a basis for discussion and action. This can improve the quality of the appraisal discussion as individuals will feel more actively involved in the process.

### **What a Good Appraisal Looks Like:**

A constructive appraisal meeting is one in which:

- Achievement is recognised and reinforced;
- Appraisers listen actively to what appraisee's say;
- There is scope for reflection and analysis;
- Performance and behaviour analysed, not personality;
- The whole period is reviewed and not just recent or isolated events;
- The meeting ends positively with agreed action plans to improve and sustain performance in the future.

A bad appraisal meeting:

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- Focuses on a catalogue of failures and omissions;
- Is controlled by the appraiser;
- Ends with disagreement between appraiser and appraisee
- Leaves the appraisee feeling disengaged or demotivated by the process.

### **Appraisal Skills:**

All managers expected to carry out performance appraisal should have some training. Ideally this should not just include the skills of performance appraisal but also the reasons for it, in particular how the process aligns with business strategy and value creation and fits into the wider strategic process of performance management.

Nonetheless, the skills to carry out an effective appraisal are crucial. In particular, this means that appraisers need to ask the right questions, listen actively and provide constructive feedback.

Asking the right questions:

It is important for appraisers to ask both open and probing questions.

Open questions are general rather than specific; they enable people to decide how they should be answered and encourage them to talk freely. Examples include:

- How do you feel things have been going?
- How do you see the job developing?
- How do you feel about that?
- Tell me, why do you think that happened?

Probing questions dig deeper for more specific information on what happened or why. They should indicate support for the individual's answer and encourage the appraisee to provide more information about their feelings and attitudes, while they can also be used to reflect back to the individual and check information. Examples would be:

- That's very interesting. Tell me more about .....?
- Why do you say that?
- Have I got the right impression? Do you mean that .....?

Listening:

To be a good listener during the review meeting, appraisers should:

- Concentrate on the speakers and be aware of behaviour, body language and nuances that supplement what is being said.
- Respond quickly when necessary but not interrupt.
- Ask relevant questions to clarify meaning.
- Comment on points to demonstrate understanding but keep them short and not inhibit the flow of the speaker.
- Not interpret without clarification with the appraisee on any of the above.

## **Giving Feedback:**

Feedback should be based on facts, not subjective opinion, always focusing on evidence and examples.

The aim of feedback should be to help employees understand the impact of their actions and behaviour. Corrective action may be required where the feedback indicates that something has gone wrong, but wherever possible, the appraisee should be given the opportunity to shape this and it should not be dictated. Feedback should be used positively to reinforce the good aspects and identify opportunities for further positive action, as much as to discuss weaknesses.

Giving feedback is a skill and those without training should be discouraged from doing so. Feedback will work best when:

- Individuals are given access to readily-available information on their performance and progress
- Feedback is related to actual events, observed behaviours or actions
- Events are described rather than judged
- Feedback is accompanied by questions soliciting the individual's opinion why certain things happened
- Individuals are encouraged to come to their own conclusions about what happened and why
- There is an understanding about what went wrong and an emphasis on 'putting things right' rather than censuring past behaviour.

## **Setting Objectives**

Individuals achieving their agreed objectives will help the Council achieving its own. Both appraisee and appraiser will need to have considered the specific job role and how it contributes to the overall performance of the Council. Objectives must be discussed and mutually agreed with each person.

It is key to remember that objectives should not be the routine tasks that are the requirement of the role (unless it is a training role). An objective may however be to improve certain skills or attend training to develop in order to meet the requirements of the role; not carry out the task itself.

Each objective set should be SMART:

- SPECIFIC – there must be a full understanding of what is expected, if there is any doubt then the objective ought to be rewritten;
- MEASURABLE – in terms of quantity, quality, time and cost. It enables progress to be measured and useful feedback to be given, by both appraisee and appraiser;
- ACHIEVABLE – it must be an achievable objective or it may act in demotivating the staff member. If there is concern, reframe it or break it down to achievable parts;
- RELEVANT – it must be relevant to the job function and the Council's overall aim;

- TIME-FRAMED – having timescales as to when each objective needs to be started, reviewed and completed helps plan workloads and increased the chances of achieving them.

When phrasing an objective consider using the following format:

Beginning – use an active verb – e.g. reduce/increase/develop/produce/research

Middle – what might be achieved – e.g. project costs/internal processes/alternative methods

End – end with a measure – e.g. by 20% over the past year/by the end of November

Build milestones to track progress and give each objective a priority.