

## Shenstone Parish Council

(including the wards of Stonnall, Little Aston and Shenstone Wood End)

Clerk of the Council  
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## APPRAISALS POLICY

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### Introduction

Appraisals are used in organisations to help employees achieve and fulfil their potential and for the employer to continue to monitor performance in order to achieve its goals and improve the quality of the 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 ones 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.

### 1. WHO APPRAISES WHOM?

The Council should ascertain the appraisal structure i.e. who appraises whom? This usually correlates with line management structures as those in direct line management positions will be best placed to appraise an employee. It is usual for a Chairman of the Employment Committee and Chairman of the Parish Council to take responsibility for appraising the Clerk. It is not appropriate for the whole council to take part in the appraisal interview but views from stakeholders such as the staff, contractors, contacts, members of the public as well as the elected members can be sought to give a comprehensive summary of the Clerk's performance.

## 2. 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, ideally by way of an employee handbook as introduced during an Induction period.
- b) Confidentiality - the appraiser(s) and appraisee only will normally see the appraisal record and this is certainly best practice for the fact that an appraisal has taken place to be reported to council but for the contents to 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 their form 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.

## 3. PROCEDURE FOR APPRAISALS

- a. 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.
- b. 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).

- c. Preparation: Both the appraisee and appraiser should spend time planning what they want to discuss. The appraisal format should form the basis of the appraisal. A self-appraisal form is useful to be completed by the appraisee and sent to the appraiser prior to the appraisal. The appraiser should also be familiar with the Council's own strategic objectives for the coming year in order to ensure that the appraisal contributes to the council's own direction.
- d. 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.
- e. 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 should take notes.
- f. Grading's/ratings: The matter of Ratings is often a difficult issue when designing appraisal systems. The most important outcome of an appraisal is that a conversation takes place between employee and employer reflecting on the past and looking to the future. The inclusion of grading's/ratings to summarise the achievements of the year can sometimes become an end in themselves and by distilling the work of a year down to an A,B,C or a 1,2,3 rating can be counterproductive and leads staff to concentrate on the wrong aspect of the process. If grading's are to be used the following examples can be deployed; achieved - not achieved; fully achieved - mostly achieved - partially achieved - not achieved; outstanding – good – satisfactory – unsatisfactory; 12-3-4-5; A-B-C-D-E; (this list is not exhaustive)
- 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 make three copies of the signed form and:
  - Give one copy to the appraisee to keep.
  - Keep one copy for his or her own records.
  - One for the central confidential personnel records.
- j. Follow up: The appraiser is responsible for ensuring that any further action is taken as agreed at the appraisal.

#### **4. 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

## 5. 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 objective 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.

## 6. 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 Employment Committee)
- b) Review of Self Appraisal Form, 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 JD 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.

## Getting the most out of the Appraisal Interview

The appraisal interview is a significant form of communication between an employee, their line manager 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 your 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. The GROW model is a useful approach to exploring aspirations and direction when Training and Development as discussed:

G	Goals	What do you want?
R	Reality	What is happening now?
O	Options	What could you do?
W	Way	Forward what will you do?

### Final Comments

The appraisee and the appraiser will have the opportunity to consider the appraisal record and add any comments.

### Deficiencies /Unsatisfactory Performance

Any deficiencies or unsatisfactory performances noted will result in an action plan agreed between the appraiser and the appraisee. Continuing deficiencies or unsatisfactory performance will result in a review of that individual's competence to continue to carry out their particular type of work. It may be appropriate for such discussions to lead to a separate disciplinary process for poor performance but a disciplinary sanction is not an automatic outcome from a poor appraisal. The council's disciplinary procedure needs to be followed if the committee undertaking the appraisal believe that measures have been taken to assist the employee achieve but the role is still considered beyond the employee's capability.

## 7. 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 around 6 to 8 main objectives, any more can be over-stretching. It is good practice to have one personal development objective within the set agreed in order to encourage CPD (Continuing Professional Development) to occur.

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

- 1) **Specific:** the objective should refer to a particular task or piece of work or specific aspects of behaviour or performance.
- 2) **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.
- 3) **Agreed:** The objective should be agreed by appraisee and appraiser
- 4) **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.
- 5) **Timed:** All objectives should have a date by which they are to be achieved.

There are three steps in setting effective objectives:

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

## 8. PRACTICAL TIPS

Research shows that using appraisals leads to improved performance and better employment relations. So why is appraisal met with procrastination or abject fear in Councils? a dreaded task in the calendar! It need not be so ... here are practical steps to enable you to undertake appraisals without tears.

- 1) Performance Management is a continuous cycle of objective setting, feedback, development and review.
- 2) Feedback, positive and negative, is most effective when delivered shortly after the task. Good people managers talk regularly to employees discussing the status of goals/priorities and giving feedback. The annual appraisal meeting then becomes a summary of these discussions thus avoiding any year-end surprises.
- 3) It's a two-way process and exchange of ideas should be incorporated into the formal process.
- 4) Training for all involved in appraisal enhances success. In many organizations managers are not allowed to appraise without training. This can be contentious within Councils, so ...
- 5) Establish a committee - at least if a Employment Committee is formed with defined Terms of Reference this gives Members parameters. Committee Members should be regularly encouraged to train, self-develop and reflect on their own performance.
- 6) Ensure the council defines what is performance? Is the job description being fulfilled? Are the objectives **SMART** i.e. **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic** and **Timebound**? Set no more than about 6 objectives annually.
- 7) Emphasis should be on performance, improvement, development and motivation.
- 8) Appraisal meetings are not the forum for criticism or admonishment. The disciplinary code exists if punitive outcomes are sought.
- 9) Don't let administration drive the process. Appraisal is not simply a tick-box exercise – this just encourages a shallow dialogue once a year.
- 10) Performance Management should be embraced as a fundamental part of the strategic planning for the council.

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## STAFF APPRAISAL FORM

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### 9. STAFF APPRAISAL FORM

Section 1: Employee to Complete this Section

(Use your job description and previously agreed objectives to complete this section of the form.  
Please review your job description to ensure continued relevance)

Name:

Post:

Date Appointed to Current Job:

1) Performance Over the Review Year

- How would you describe your overall performance in the past twelve months?
- Which parts of your job have you performed most effectively?
- Which parts of your job have not gone so well?
- State any part of your job description that you are not doing.
- State any areas of work which are not in your job description.

2) Your Skills and Expertise

- What are your key strengths in your job?
- What additional skills and expertise have you gained over the period?
- Do you possess skills and strengths not fully used in your job?

3) Development Needs

- What parts of your job do you find most difficult and why do you find them difficult?
- Has a lack of a particular experience or skill affected your performance?
- What additional training have you undertaken during the review period? How effective has this training been?
- What additional training or experience would now be of benefit to help you achieve future targets/objectives?



## 10. Objective/Target Setting

(Use your job description and any Council's aims and objectives to consider what you intend to achieve next year)

- What potential individual objectives/targets do you want to discuss with your appraiser?
- What potential objectives/targets have high priority?
- Describe any particular help and/or support you feel you need to achieve your objectives/targets.

Section 2: Appraiser to Complete This Section

Name(s)

Date of Appraisal:

Period Covered From:

To:

Consider what the employee has written in Section 1 and make comments in this section (Section 2). When you have completed the appraisal interview and agreed objectives, training and development plans the overall summary and plans for the following year should be summarised in Section 3. You should obtain the employee's comments and signature in Section 4 and give the employee a copy of the full document for their records.

1. Agreed Objectives (although there are no set number of objectives those set should cover key aspects of the employee's job and have direct relevance to any Council aims and objectives).

1.

2

3

4.

5.

2. Comments

- Comment on identified main achievements (add anything else that was done particularly well).
- Comment on work or anything else which has not gone well.
- Comment on any tasks that should no longer be in the job description and any that should be included.
- Give your overall assessment of the employee's performance during the last twelve months (include strengths, weaknesses and any constraints to their work and the outcome of specific agreed objectives).

Section 3: Future Plans

(this section provides an opportunity to record objectives for the coming year, agree training/development plans)

1. Agreed Objectives (although there are no set number of objectives those set should cover key aspects of the employee's job and have direct relevance to any Council aims and objectives.

1.

2

3

4.

5.

2. Training/Development actions

Section 4: Employee Comments

(Employee to comment on the completed form and appraisal process)

Signature of Appraisee \_\_\_\_\_

Signature(s) of Appraiser(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Last Reviewed: Review Due: