

PERFORMANCE REVIEW POLICY FOR HAZLEMERE PARISH COUNCIL

This Performance Review Policy was adopted by Full Council at its Meeting held on 3 March 2020.

1. It is the policy of Hazlemere Parish Council that staff performance should be reviewed in line with the guidance set out above.
2. All staff should have a review at least once a year, in line with the timetable above. Reviews will supplement, not replace, regular feedback on performance throughout the year.
3. Reviews will be carried out by the Clerk for staff, and by either the Chair of the Staff Committee or a sub-group of that Committee, as agreed by Full Council.
4. Performance will be reviewed against the requirements of the job description and (if appropriate to the role) objectives set in January.
5. Reviews will be documented as set out in Appendix 1 above.
6. Incremental salary increases are dependent on a satisfactory performance review.
7. Records of the performance review are confidential to the staff member and their line manager, although with the staff's permission the Chair of the Staff Committee will be offered sight of them. However, Full Council will be informed whether satisfactory performance has been achieved and any proposed objectives for the year ahead.
8. As a learning Council, Hazlemere Parish Council should review annually the extent to which it has met its own objectives for the year.

Annual Timetable

| | |
|-----------|--|
| January: | Performance Reviews 1st with Clerk, then office staff and ground staff' setting personal objectives |
| March: | Remuneration recommendation consideration from Clerk and Chairman of the Staff Committee by Full Council |
| March: | Review current year's Council objectives in preparation for the Annual Parish Meeting |
| November: | Council objective setting for year ahead at Full Council (Budget) Meeting |

Introduction

Undertaking effective performance management is important for both the Council and for Council staff. Poor performance can very often lead to disputes, lack of engagement, retention and turnover issues, productivity or capability concerns and costly mistakes which have a negative impact on the morale of staff, elected members and other stakeholders in the community and could have legal or reputational impacts on the Council.

This guide is designed to enable elected members and their officers to understand the needs of the Council, refine those into performance objectives, give and receive constructive feedback and plan for relevant and timely training and development opportunities. Having a structured approach to performance management enables the Council to act professionally and lawfully. There is also advice on supporting processes/policies.

When the guide refers to “employer” in the context of this guide it means “the Council”.

The guide is not intended to be a definitive legal guide.

Any explanation of law or policy is correct at the date of publication. Names of relevant government departments and bodies and links to their websites are also correct at the date of publication and may be subject to change.

NALC provides guidance on a variety of the areas covered in this guide which is available to member Councils and can also be obtained from Buckinghamshire Association Local Councils, SLCC advice notes are also available to member Clerks.

What is performance management?

Performance Management is an umbrella term for the entire set of policies and practices an organisation can utilise to ensure that those within the organisation attain their goals. Performance Management is a continuous process which will include the use of objectives and appraisals to set goals and review them at the end of a given time period. Performance Management will also have wider tools such as dispute resolution procedures – disciplinary processes for conduct issues, including a process for serious breaches which are normally considered to be gross misconduct, capability processes for staff who have illnesses/disabilities/other factors which prevent them from undertaking the role to the required standard. A training and development policy is also an important feature of a performance management approach, acknowledging that people may need some interventions to enhance their skills and knowledge to be effective employees. A remuneration policy designed to attract, retain and reward effective employees is also an important feature of managing performance in a Council. This guide focuses on the use of performance reviews to enhance engagement and performance in Council workplaces.

What is Performance Review?

In employment terms a performance review is a process which allows the employer to give and the employee to receive feedback about their achievements, areas for improvement and to set expectations for the coming year. Effective performance reviews should also allow for two-way communication where the employee has the opportunity to give feedback to the

employing organisation. Reviews are used by organisations to monitor performance, to communicate with staff and to engage and motivate staff members towards the corporate goals. The terms Performance Management, Annual Review, and Appraisal are all terms used interchangeably to describe this process. But in their simplest form they are a conversation between employee and employer about what works well and what needs more support, reviewing the past and planning for the future. When they happen on a regular basis they create a cycle of performance management.

Do Councillors have to review Hazlemere Parish Council staff?

Undertaking a Performance Review is good practice and it has identified benefits in motivating and engaging staff which makes for a more effective organisation. Staff who are not given the opportunity for review can become disaffected and work standards could fall or they could leave the job, seeking greater engagement elsewhere. It is the case in some employment contracts in the sector that there is a contractual clause giving rise to a “right” to an appraisal – in such cases the denial of an appraisal process could be deemed a breach of contract and could lead to unwelcome disputes. Appraisals/performance reviews can also provide a basis for considering pay, and can be tied in to the Council’s annual business plan/strategy/objective setting process.

Why do performance reviews matter?

If Councillors do not appraise staff then how do they know whether their performance is at an acceptable standard? What right does the Council have to express dissatisfaction at the behaviour or abilities or outputs of any of the staff if there has not been a performance review process? And what opportunity does the Council have to hear what the employee(s) think of workload or effective procedures or meetings? How else are The Council able to plan and budget for training or the need for more or less resource? Performance reviews are a key to managing performance, employee engagement and corporate planning.

What makes a good performance review?

The key features of an effective performance review process are: Openness and honesty from both parties, a respect for confidentiality to encourage that openness, two-way conversation so that it is not just “top-down” with the management telling and the employee receiving – employees who are given the chance to speak and be heard are so often the people who know what works and what does not and why. However formal yearly meetings need to be supplemented with regular ongoing contact. If there is a message to be delivered it should be given in a timely manner and not saved until the next performance review, particularly if it is to do with poor performance or poor conduct/behaviour/attitude.

Does the Council need to set Objectives?

It is a common feature of performance review processes that objectives are established at the commencement of a review period and reviewed at the end. Objectives are sometimes called Goals or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). In practice there may be two sorts of indicators: the extent to which someone achieves the day-to-day requirements of the jobs: and specific objectives (that are consistent with the job description) related to the strategic

aims of the Council, which might change on an annual basis. Different types of objectives might be relevant to different types of role. e.g. a more routine job might require someone to carry out their daily tasks to a particular standard: a more senior role might be expected to achieve various objectives set in line with the council strategy. Hence objectives assist with expectations management and communication. Objectives should be negotiable and employees should be encouraged to build in personal objectives to their set of targets each year. Objectives need to be: **SMART** – that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable (or Agreed), Realistic and Timely.

Who should get involved?

For staff working for the Council the line manager would be best placed act as the reviewer. For the Clerk to the Council then it is recommended that the Chairman of the Staff Committee undertake the review, or a nominated member of the Staff Committee. An additional committee would be appointed in the event that the Clerk does not feel that the appraisal has been conducted appropriately. Those involved with the review would benefit from being trained in the managerial skill and be familiar with the Council's policy, documentation and the employee's role.

What do the Council need to do to prepare?

It is best practice to set both Council and personal objectives at the start of any review period and to collate evidence of how well they have been achieved. As good reviews are two-way processes it is as much the responsibility of the employee to think about the review period, find evidence of performance, think about the next year's challenges and developments needed to achieve those. A preparation form can be used which prompts these questions, (see appendix). Plan the date, time allocation for the meeting.

What paperwork does the Council need to use?

Reviews do not need fancy forms or engineered grading systems. For the sake of consistency and as a prompt it is a good idea to have a review form onto which the comments and outcomes of the review meeting are recorded which can be placed in the Personnel file as a record of performance.

If there is more than one staff member it is wise to apply the same standard documentation for collection of information before hand and recording of outcomes afterwards. A Job Description for the role is useful as it focusses attention (and may need to be updated) as is a list of the agreed objectives or targets from the commencement of the review period. Reviews can also benefit from preparation from both parties and to that end a self-appraisal self-assessment form can be helpful to prompt reflection on the year's objectives and outcomes before the appraisal meeting takes place. Once completed it is good practice to have the review forms signed and dated by the parties to the discussion and for the employee to have a copy of the papers with a copy being placed in the confidential personnel file as a formal record of the process having taken place. The Chairman of the Staff Committee should be given site of all reviews, but not to take copies due to GDPR.

How often should the Council carry out this process?

Annual reviews in January will be carried out. It is pragmatic in these circumstances to start with the Clerk and work through the other appraisals in the hierarchy cascading messages about performance and future objectives. At the end of a probationary period (usually 3 or 6 months since the start date) for a new staff member it is appropriate for a staff member to be reviewed, for feedback to be given, training reviewed or planned and targets set. More frequent reviews may also be appropriate following disciplinary proceedings. In some cases it is more appropriate to review after key events or projects because to delay the review to year-end can lose some of the immediate impressions. It is common for more project-based roles to be reviewed in this way. One other break from the cycle is if an employee is going off on maternity or other longer-term leave or if the line manager is moving on – it is good practice to schedule a review before their departure. Feedback should also be requested from all Councillors to feed into the review process for all staff.

How should appraisals be noted in the Minutes?

Sometimes there are sensitive or personal matters discussed at reviews and confidentiality is an important aspect of the employment process. To this end, it is recommended that notes are taken by the Chair of the Staff Committee and filed in confidential personnel files and that the Council receives a short report to confirm a) that the appraisal took place on a certain date b) who was involved c) that the actions arising were x,y,z. No other details need to be disclosed to anyone outside of the process itself and all personnel matters should be addressed in a confidential part of the Full Council's meeting. The need to respect confidentiality and adhere to Data Protection rules must be guiding principles in all aspects of people management.

What if the appraisal identifies problems with behaviour or capability?

There should not be any surprises at the review interview, as matters concerning conduct (behaviour or attitude) or capability (efficiency or health-related matters) should be flagged up as soon as they occur. However, this does not always happen for a variety of reasons, so it is possible that where an area of concern occurs the appraisal committee/panel conclude the review and then move into the disciplinary or capability procedure for the Council's employees. It is important not to allow the review to become a quasi-disciplinary hearing because the employee is entitled to notice, to be accompanied and to know the details of any allegations against them (to comply with the ACAS code of practice on dispute resolution). Similarly, if there is a capability concern the appraisal meeting should close for further investigation to be carried out which may include obtaining medical opinion.

What if review identifies a disciplinary matter?

In some cases the review and summary of performance and attitude to work during the preceding months could give rise to a conclusion that the employee needs to improve. The informal approach is to manage this through objective setting, monitoring, with extra training or coaching. Occasionally the matter may need to be investigated more fully and handled as a formal disciplinary matter for either conduct or capability. It is important that a review does not stray into the formal disciplinary because disciplinary processes and actions are covered by an ACAS Code which requires an employer to investigate, inform, meet with the employee,

allow a companion to that meeting and allow a right of appeal after the outcome of the meeting is delivered. Disciplinary concerns should be addressed as soon as they arise and not deferred until the next review. Employers are advised to keep reviews and disciplinaries separate from each other and to seek advice if a performance matter becomes a disciplinary matter. A Council should always be mindful of its adopted Disciplinary Policy and adhere to the process therein when disciplinary concerns arise.

What if the review identified a capability matter?

If the performance issue arises from an inability to perform the work to a required standard due to a medical or disability-related condition the Council will need to consider what responses are appropriate. Considering the provision of additional training or support would be an initial response and monitoring improvement with a defined plan to ensure that improvement was happening and could be sustained. Under the employer's obligations arising from the Equality Act 2010 reasonable adjustments must be considered with regard to an employee with a disability. These will be case-specific and the Council may need to seek specialist support from an Occupational Health advisor, gain reports from the employee's GP or medical specialist or seek input from a charity which supports people with a certain condition, many of which have employment advisors. Consultation and dialogue with the employee about their abilities and preferences and balancing the operational needs of the Council are important in such a situation. A Council should always be mindful of its adopted Capability Policy (if it has one) and adhere to this policy if capability issues arise.

Should reviews be linked to remuneration?

It should be noted that the NJC National Agreement and National Association Local Councils/SLCC Model Contract for local Councils does have a link between a successful performance review and incremental salary increases up to a ceiling of a grade, so without a successful review the increment should not be awarded and can only be awarded with a successful outcome (this does not mean that Councils can avoid increments by denying reviews however and no opportunity to review due to maternity leave or long term sickness). If there is a satisfactory performance review then a Spinal Point increment becomes automatic but it needs to be recorded as a resolution in the relevant Council Minutes. The Clerk should make annual remuneration recommendations for all staff and the Chairman of the Staff Committee should make recommendations for the Clerk to Full Council in March with any increase in remuneration being effective from 1 April.

How does the review fit into Council objectives?

The objectives set by the Council for itself – the corporate plan or strategic vision – is aligned to the objectives set for all officers (and Elected Members) then everyone in the organisation will be pulling together leading energy, motivation and resource to be deployed in the same direction so that all parties can succeed. This is sometimes called “managing for performance”. The Council objectives should be set in November at the Full Council (Budget) Meeting and reviewed by Full Council in March annually.

The start point for Performance Review should be a strategic plan for the Council. From that document separate, aligned plans for each employee can be developed. As projects are delivered or strategic direction changes the objectives will need to be reviewed and redefined. Some objectives for officers will be the same year on year e.g. deliver a balanced budget, satisfy audit requirements, others will be one-off e.g. deliver a Skate Park within budget, on time and to specification.

What are the characteristics of a good review process?

Generally held views tend to report the key features of an effective review process as positive reinforcement, exchange of views, objective (evidence based) not subjective measurement to avoid any unlawful discrimination, listening by both parties, agreement about the future at the end. In effect the review should be a summary of all the feedback given and received over the performance period with an emphasis on future improvement. There will probably be an action plan as an outcome which will include new objectives for the coming review period (ensuring that they are 'SMART') and a reference to training or development needs and how these might be addressed.

What if the parties cannot agree on appraisal outcomes?

It would be disappointing and unusual if a review resulted in a conflict situation and dialogue between the parties is essential to effective working relationships. A personality clash could be diluted by having more than one appraiser. A difference of opinion regarding an achievement of an objective should be resolvable by referral to evidence (particularly if the objective was SMART to start with). As long as objectives are linked to Council objectives it is unlikely that an reviewee can argue that they are inappropriate. If agreement cannot be reached it is good practice to ask both parties to sign the documentation as a record of the conversation, noting their differences. If a Grievance is raised then it is usually best to try to resolve the matter through discussion and mediation rather than asking another person or body to make a judgement on who was right, who was wrong.

Should Councillors have appraisals?

A mechanism for setting, reviewing and feeding back on achievements can be built into the Council planning process and individuals with a 'growth mind-set' will already be asking for input and seeking to do things differently, seeking development opportunities and reflecting on their own performance. Maybe a concept worth considering for Hazlemere Parish Council in the future?

Appendix 1

STAFF REVIEW FORM

Section 1: Employee to Complete this Section

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

Name:

Post:

Date Appointed to Current Job:

1. Performance Over the Review Year

Performance against objectives?

1.1 How would you describe your overall performance in the past twelve months?

1.2 Which parts of your job have you performed most effectively?

1.3 Which parts of your job have not gone so well?

1.4 State any part of your job description that you are not doing.

1.5 State any areas of work which are not in your job description.

2. Your Skills and Expertise

2.1 What are your key strengths in your job?

2.2 What additional skills and expertise have you gained over the period?

2.3 Do you possess skills and strengths not fully used in your job?

3 Development Needs

3.1 What parts of your job do you find most difficult and why do you find them difficult?

3.2 Has a lack of a particular experience or skill affected your performance?

3.3 What additional training have you undertaken during the review period?

3.4 How effective has this training been?

3.5 What additional training or experience would now be of benefit to help you achieve future targets/objectives?

4 Objective/Target Setting

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

4.1 What potential individual objectives/targets do you want to discuss with your appraiser?

4.2 What potential objectives/targets have high priority?

4.3 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 your comments in this section. When you have completed the review 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 and place on their staff file.*

- 1. Draft 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

2.1 Comment on identified main achievements (*add anything else that was done particularly well*)

2.2 Comment on work or anything else which has not gone well

2.3 Comment on any tasks that should no longer be in the job description and any that should be included

2.4 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

(This section provides space for the employee to comment on the completed form and the appraisal process)

Signature of Reviewee _____

Signature(s) of Reviewer(s) _____

Date _____

Appendix 2

Checklist for the Appraiser

Getting started review checklist

- Job Description
- List of objectives (or probationary/induction expectations for new starters)
- List of training undertaken over the review period
- Key achievements examples of work
- Strategic plan for the Council

What you need to arrange

- Set a date and time which suits both parties and allows enough notice for plans to be made and preparation to be undertaken
- Leave enough time for a meeting
- Consider the location and it free from interruption
- Completed Pre-appraisal forms for both parties
- Request feedback from other councillors

Appendix 3

Employment Policies

This table contains a list of suggested policies which may be of use to Councils in support of their Performance Management aims.

Review/Performance Management

Training and Development

Discipline

Capability

Equality and Diversity

Data protection

Further Reading

ACAS at www.acas.org.uk

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development www.cipd.org.uk

Equalities and Human Rights Commission – www.equalityhumanrights.com

IDB/NALC - *Being a Good Employer – a guide for Parish and town Councils* June 2016

Information Commissioner website www.ico.gov.uk

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To be reviewed February 2022