



DRAFT POLICY AND GUIDANCE 2016/2017 Appraisal Year Only

Performance Appraisal and Learning and Development Review

1. Getting Started

This guide is for ALL Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Council employees, permanent or temporary. It gives you the information and tools you need to make the most of the performance appraisal discussion. Each section focuses on a different stage of the performance appraisal.

2. What is a Performance Appraisal?

Performance appraisal is a two way discussion; when carried out well, it actively involves employees, helping them to understand what is expected of them. By setting agreed objectives and regularly reviewing progress, employees become responsible for their own performance. The process should be used to enable positive engagement between an employee and their manager to improve performance and provide appropriate support. It involves the following:

- Recognising achievements
- Considering development needs
- Monitoring and reviewing performance
- Setting clear objectives
- Reviewing achievement against objectives

The process should be robust, honest and fair, remembering that performance reviews should reflect all levels of performance, both good and poor. The process is formal and, is likely to be audited on a regular basis to ensure the process is utilised appropriately.

The key elements are an annual (end of year review and target setting for the new appraisal year) and a six monthly -mid-year review, combined with other more informal discussions such as one to one meetings, and team meetings.

There should be no surprises at the end of year review as performance monitoring should be a regular activity for managers, and performance should be reviewed throughout the year at appropriate times, and dealt with in accordance with all informal and formal mechanisms. Development should also be done in the same way.

Performance appraisal will be a key element in ensuring that:

- The Council's overall aims and objectives are translated into employee activities;
- The impact of organisational change is managed at a personal level;
- Every employee understands clearly what their role is and what they are expected to achieve;

- Personal development needs are identified;
- There is an opportunity for employees to discuss issues that prevent them from doing their job;
- There is a clear mechanism for all employees to suggest innovation, improvement and development of their role ;
- In addition to continuous feedback during the year, all employees also receive detailed feedback on their performance;
- The corporate learning & development plan is properly informed.

3. Who Should have an Appraisal?

Every employee at both Councils should receive a performance appraisal, which includes a mid-year review. Agency employees should have a meeting to ensure that targets are set and monitored even if no formal appraisal review takes place. New employees on probation will receive an appraisal during their first month of employment. With the increase in partnership and shared working, some team members may not be employed by either Cherwell or South Northamptonshire and therefore it is important to ensure that as a manager, performance is reviewed regularly and feedback is given to the employing agency.

4. Maternity/Sickness Absence/Other Family Leave

There may be occasions when the performance appraisal needs to be deferred. For example, if someone has recently returned from maternity leave and there is insufficient information about their performance to conduct a meaningful discussion. This does not mean that the discussion should never happen, but a new date arranged. Should there be any entitlement to incremental progression this will be dealt with following the performance appraisal taking place.

5. New Starters

For new starters, objectives should be set and key competencies identified during the induction period, and no later than one month after the employees start date.

The self-assessment of current competencies based on the Role Competencies Profile should be made during the induction period ideally but no later than the end of the probation period once self-assessment has been rolled out in June 2016.

6. Staff Who Change Posts

For those staff who change posts during an appraisal year then both posts will need to be appraised, at the beginning and end of the post. So a setting targets and assessing targets form should be completed for each post so that a full year has been appraised.

Administration Officer – Previous post			
Start Date	Set Targets	End Date	Assess Targets
1/4/16	1/4/16	31/7/16	31/7/16
Senior Administration Officer – Current post			
Start Date	Set Targets	End Date	Assess Targets
1/8/16	1/8/16	31/3/17	31/3/17

7. Career Grades

Staff in career grades should be appraised in accordance with this policy, even though incremental progression will be based on the agreed career grade schemes.

8 When Should Performance Appraisal Happen?

Normally during February/ March each year, managers should ask employees to consider and note for discussion:

- Their performance over the last year
- Any notable achievements
- Achievement against last year's objectives

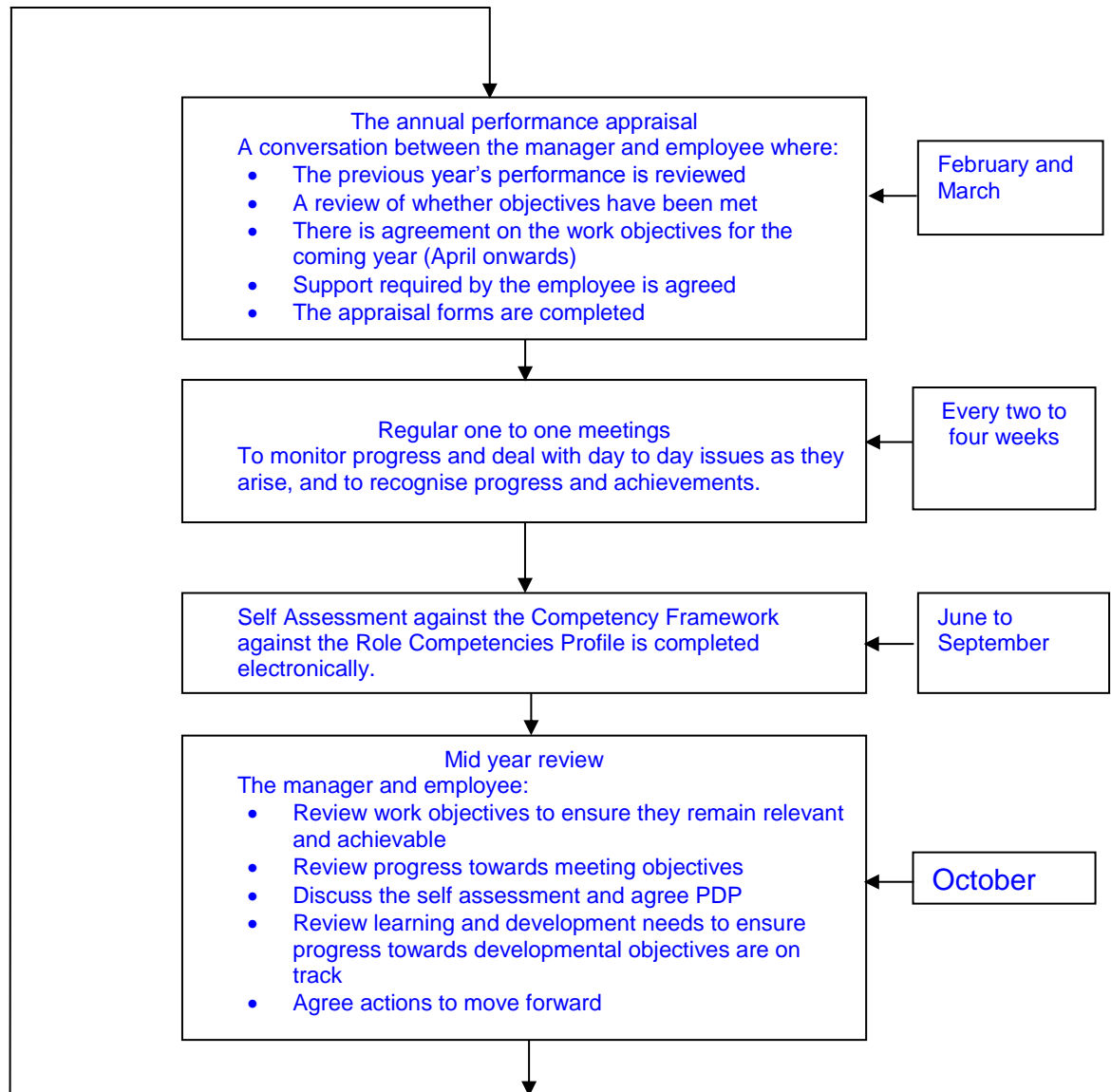
Objectives for the coming year are also normally set at this time, however it should be noted that for 2016/2017 there will be a different appraisal form as competencies will be removed. Standard objectives will also be set for all staff to complete.

For the mid-year appraisal, the self-assessment against the Role Competencies Profile (which will be issued in June 2016) should also be reviewed by the line manager and employee and the Personal Development Plan (PDP) reviewed and amended for the remainder of the appraisal year.

Electronic appraisal forms can be found on the two Councils intranet sites in the HR sections. These will be updated each year with the appropriate information to ensure they are up to date. Three forms exist which include:

1. Target setting – Feb/March/April (if needed);
2. Mid year appraisal – September/October;
3. End of year assessment – Feb/March.

Timescales and actions during the appraisal year.



9. Responsibilities

Too often, appraisals are seen as a one-off annual event unconnected to our everyday tasks. Successful appraisals are the outcome of on-going, regular two-way discussions between the manager and employee during the year.

One way to ensure a positive discussion at the appraisal meeting is for everyone to understand their own role and responsibilities as outlined below.

If you are an Appraiser you are expected to:

Lead individual performance appraisal discussions with staff that you directly line manage. The discussions must include:

- review of past performance;
- an agreed work plan with SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Resourced, Time-bound) which will contribute to the delivery of your local service plan and the overall council plan;
- competency and development needs assessment, with a plan to address agreed gaps;
- ensure employees have sufficient opportunity to respond to feedback and raise points;
- a written record of the discussion (using the appraisal forms) which is signed by the appraiser, appraisee and the reviewer (the reviewer is the appraisers Line Manager and only signs off end of year forms).

Regularly review performance and progress by:

- revising and updating objectives, if necessary and;
- using one-to-one meetings to discuss development activity planned or undertaken.

Give positive and constructive feedback:

- during one-to-one meetings and;
- informally, as part of day-to-day working

Tackle under-performance constructively and promptly by

- giving feedback;
- setting targets for improvement; and
- providing support and development.

Sponsor agreed learning and development activities by:

- allocating time for the activities to be undertaken; and
- evaluating the impact on performance of individual development activities, bearing in mind that the effect may not be immediate.

Ensure that the process is applied consistently and fairly by applying:

- the Council's Equal Opportunities policies, ensuring that issues of equalities and diversity are considered throughout the work objective setting and development planning process.
- sensitivity and judgment when using the appraisal process to meet individual and service needs.

All line managers will need to confirm appraisals have been completed by providing a copy of the completed appraisal form to the reviewer and the appraisee, with a copy being sent to HR using the Achieve Form provided.

If you are receiving an appraisal, you are expected to take ownership of your development and performance during the year by:

- working towards meeting agreed objectives and standards;
- actively monitoring your own progress against targets and keeping your manager informed of difficulties you may be facing;
- listening to constructive feedback and acting on it;
- participating fully in development activities and assessing the impact they have had on your performance.

Prepare for and participate fully in performance appraisal discussions by:

- gathering evidence about your performance;
- generating ideas for service improvement and your own development;
- reviewing appraisal documentation in advance of the meeting and providing copies to your manager.

If you are a reviewer, you are responsible for:

Reviewing the completed performance appraisals that your subordinate managers have carried out. With each form, you should ensure that:

- SMART objectives have been set;
- performance has been assessed fairly, using evidence;
- the appraisal is of a good quality in that it will effectively contribute to improving performance;
- the process is being carried out and used fairly and consistently; and that equality and diversity issues are considered when setting work objectives and in planning development activity;
- feeding identified development needs into the departmental and individual employee training plan (PDP).

The Human Resources directorate will:

- ensure managers have access to the blank performance appraisal documents and provide advice on how to use them;
- advise and coach managers on the performance appraisal process;
- remind managers of the timetable and monitor implementation; and
- monitor performance appraisals to ensure good quality and consistent application of assessment criteria.

10. How Should We Prepare?

To get the best out of an appraisal meeting, both the manager and employee need to prepare. Remember an appraisal meeting is a two-way discussion and an on-going process, not an annual event. Managers and employees both have responsibilities for ensuring that appraisals are successful. Providing feedback is critical to improving performance.

11. Reviewer's Checklist

Below is a checklist of what to check in each section of the appraisal form to ensure it has been carried out effectively.

- Has the employee received regular one-to-ones e.g. in a six month period a full-time employee should have at least four one-to-ones. If not, how have evaluations of performance been made?
- Are objectives taken from the service objectives plan? If not, objectives should be revisited.
- Are tasks measurable? If not suggest appropriate tasks.
- If mid-year, have comments been added?
- If end of year (Feb/March 2017), has an assessment been made for objectives?
- Have competencies requiring development been identified using a PDP and self-assessment against the RCP (role competency profile)?
- Does the assessment appear fair in comparison to other members of the team?
- Have short-term learning objectives been set to address competency development needs?
- Has the impact of development activities been evaluated (has the activity made any difference to performance)?
- For longer-term development: could the employees' aspirations be incorporated into the future of the service?
- Are there any comments to suggest any issues that may need intervention?
- If you find that the quality of what is recorded is unsatisfactory, you may need to coach the relevant manager to address any issues, and advise that part of the meeting may need to be carried out again.

12. Employee Preparation

Employees should:

- gather evidence about your performance by seeking feedback from colleagues and customers, where appropriate and review your own one-to-one notes; and
- review appraisal documentation prior to the meeting and if deemed appropriate forward to the manager before the appraisal meeting.

13. Manager Preparation

Prior to the appraisal meeting managers should:

- gather evidence to ensure a fair assessment;
- consider what objectives and development should be set for the year ahead;
- review the information provided to you by the employee for self-assessment at mid-year;
- agree a date for the appraisal meetings;
- when providing constructive feedback to an employee, ensure that you have more than one example to support your view. If the particular behaviour only occurred once, this may need to be highlighted but is not necessarily a developmental issue.

14. Sources of Evidence

There are several sources of evidence which you may use to help you make an objective assessment of performance. Some options might include:

WORK SAMPLES – such as project reports, project plans.

OBSERVATIONS – Noted by the employee during the appraisal year.

COLLEAGUES – Information and comments from work colleagues and others (although please note that feedback received from other colleagues should be treated with caution, especially if negative, as an employee is unable to provide first hand evidence of any event or behaviour).

CUSTOMERS – This could be collected in a range of formats but depends on the job undertaken and the customer contact.

15. If an Employee is Under-Performing?

The most effective way to tackle underperformance is to approach the individual as soon as the situation arises. Constructive feedback should be used to highlight the area of concern, and include suggestions on how the situation can be better handled next time. A record of the discussion should be kept, along with the development to be undertaken to improve. You should monitor improvement, and discuss with the employee as necessary.

Discussions about under-performance should not be left until the annual appraisal meeting. The appraisal discussion should contain no surprises or feel uncomfortable for you or your team member.

Where performance or conduct continues to be an issue, it may be necessary to take formal action, and you are asked to discuss this with the HR team.

16. What Should be Discussed at the Appraisal Meeting?

The appraisal discussion focuses on reviewing past performance and setting new work objectives for the coming year. Remember this is a two-way process, with both the manager and employee contributing to ensure the process is both fair and effective.

17. Assessing Specific Objectives

The appraisal discussion requires all objectives that have been set to be reviewed against the appropriate scoring mechanism as seen below:

FA = Fully Achieved – Score 3

Using this grade means that the specific objective has been successfully achieved in all aspects

PA = Partially Achieved - Score 2

This grading can be applied when the specific objective has not been fully achieved for a particular reason but the achievement is 50% and over. It does mean that there has been a recognisable level of achievement

SA = Some Achievement - Score 1

This grading can be applied when the specific objective shows some achievement above 25% of the objective but below 50%

NA = Not Achieved – Score 0

If a specific objective has not been achieved or minimal movement has been made toward achieving it then this grade should be used. As with PA it does not necessarily mean a performance failure as there may be many reasons why it wasn't met. These reasons should be outlined on the form, and where non achievement is outside of the employee's control this objective should be agreed to be removed for assessment purposes. For example funding for a project is no longer available and the project is ceased.

18. Assessing Performance Fairly

Once evidence has been gathered a manager will need to be able to use it to make an assessment of the employee's performance. Consideration should be given to the following questions:

- How does the individual's performance compare to the expected standard?
- What was the impact of the employee's performance?
- If as a manager you don't work in close proximity to your employees because of their location consider different ways in which you can make observations and obtain feedback.
- What other factors may be affecting an employee's performance? Such as issues at home or work, health issues, learning and development needs, and motivation.

An effective performance appraisal system is one that is fair. This means ensuring that as a manager you fulfil your obligation to assess your employees' performance and learning and development needs in a consistent and fair manner. This includes ensuring no discrimination is made on equality grounds. With disabled staff it is important to ensure appropriate reasonable adjustments have been made in their roles and that these are taken into consideration when assessing their performance. This is important to ensure that an acknowledgement is made of differences in how the role may be performed and does not mean that duties are not fulfilled. For further information please see the relevant Council's equalities policies.

19. Feedback

Most people would agree that feedback is a good thing to give and receive, even though it may sometimes feel uncomfortable. Meaningful feedback is an essential part of effective performance appraisal. Feedback increases motivation, supports development and helps individuals to be clear about how to be effective in their role.

Motivation describes the drive a person has to work towards certain goals or objectives, By giving feedback, you are highlighting what a person can do more or less of to help them succeed. This makes feedback a powerful tool.

Learning and development is about building on an existing ability. By providing feedback you can signpost where changes in behaviour can be made to further development.

20. How to Give Feedback

The table below can be used as a method to help structure feedback:

OBSERVE	
Use only observable behaviours or actions	What did the person say/do or not say or do? What did you see or hear?
DESCRIBE	
What impact does the behaviour create in your own mind or other people's minds?	It leads me to think/the impression this creates is.....
CONSEQUENCES	
Describe the consequences that the behaviour creates for other people or the organisation.	And the result (or likely results) is/are.....
SUGGESTIONS	
Make and invite positive and constructive suggestions on how the person can act on the feedback. Agree any actions required.	What do you think is the best way of tackling this issue? What I'd like you to do differently is

The key thing to remember is that feedback should be constructive, whether the message is a positive or negative one. The receiver of the feedback should know exactly what it was they did well and not so well, so that they can understand the impact of their behaviour.

Throughout the discussion, the aim is to seek agreement so that both parties can agree and move forward.

21. Receiving Feedback

An employee should feel encouraged to respond to the feedback received. There may be occasions when an employee does not agree with the feedback received, and they have the right to say they don't agree and why they don't agree. A key purpose of feedback is to be able to decide on any action to be taken.

Tips for receiving feedback:

- Ask questions if you are unclear about what is being said.
- Prompt for constructive feedback to be given if felt wanted or needed.

22. Learning and Development and PDP's

The Council's take the view that investing in the development of all its employees is a priority, and should be planned, implemented and evaluated to ensure it is effective. Development planning is a key component of performance appraisal, as it provides the opportunity to discuss the support an individual needs to meet their objectives.

The learning and development planning discussion has two parts: short-term and long-term.

Short-term development should be focussed on supporting the achievement of business objectives and development of competencies (as described in the Role Competencies Profile) for the coming year. Whereas longer term development will go beyond the initial year of the appraisal cycle. Consideration at this point should also be made to available funding (if this is required) and how this can be used to meet the learning requested.

Every employee is expected to complete a PDP during the 2016/2017 appraisal year including any developmental areas identified as part of the self-assessment, as well as professional or technical training/development requirements.

23. Planning Learning and Development

Answers to the self-assessment questions within the online competency based IT system can be used as a basis for discussion developing and working towards a successful PDP. It is important that the employee is made aware of all learning and development needs and consideration be fully given to how they can be addressed.

Training will be provided to all staff in the use of the IT system that will support self-assessment against the Role Competencies Profile (RCP).

Development activities will be most effective if learning is applied to the work be undertaken. An employee should discuss with their manager how to make the most of the development opportunity and how this will be applied to their post.

Achievement of any learning and development plans remains the responsibility of the employee but should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are appropriate.

Short term development should include details of:

- The development objective
- Why it is needed
- How the objective will be achieved and by when

Remember- development takes time! No-one becomes an expert overnight. The conscious-competence model is useful for outlining the process that individual's go through when they are learning something new.

24. Evaluation of Learning

Following the completion of any development activity, you should discuss the impact it has had on the employee during subsequent one-to-one meetings. The level of impact also needs to be noted on the appraisal form. This may also be an opportunity for you to provide feedback on any changes you have observed in the employee's behaviour as a result of the activity.

To increase the effectiveness of development activities further still, try to discuss how the employee's development can continue to be built upon. For example, if they have attended a course on project management, it may be useful to consider which projects they could become involved in over the course of the year.

25. Setting Objectives

Effective objective setting is crucial to the performance appraisal process. This part of the discussion clarifies to employees exactly what is expected from them. It also provides the opportunity to agree what support managers need to provide in order to help the employee achieve their objectives. Objectives should contribute to the delivery of the service plan and organisational priorities and encourage the employee to recognise how their role fits into the bigger picture.

Objectives should:

- Be tailored so that they consider an individual's abilities, experience and aspirations
- Be stretching/challenging so that the individual has an opportunity to develop new skills and experiences (this refers to the quality of the work not quantity)
- Be supported by the individual's development plan
- Be reviewed regularly
- Be amended if circumstances arise that affect the business objectives, e.g. new policies/priorities, changing customer needs
- Be in line with each Council's values
- Be SMART

How Many Objectives?

No more than 8 objectives should be set for employees, and ideally no fewer than 5 to ensure that when objectives are assessed there is some equity in numbers across posts. Fewer objectives may be set if employees:

- Work part-time hours
- Are part of a team where there are several others fulfilling the same role
- Are not office-based

It may be appropriate for you to set the objectives for these employees in advance of the appraisal meeting, especially if you have a number of employees fulfilling the same role.

For the 2016/2017 appraisal year the following objectives will be set for all staff:

- To carry out a self-assessment against the RCP for an employee's post to identify development areas (fully achieved).
- To have in place an agreed Personal Development Plan including any developmental areas identified as part of the self-assessment, as well as professional or technical training/development requirements (fully achieved).

26. Comments and Sign-off

The final section of the performance appraisal form can be used to make additional comments that the manager, employee or reviewing manager (if end of year appraisal) may have. If for any reason an employee is unhappy with the outcome of their performance appraisal or would like to record any mitigating circumstances that may have affected performance, this should be recorded in the comments section. Once the appraiser and the appraisee comments have been made, the form should be passed to the reviewer (if end of year appraisal only). If the form is not the end of year appraisal the form will be submitted to HR once the line manager has signed the form off. The end of year appraisal will be submitted once the reviewer has authorised the form.

27. Appeals

If there is a disagreement relating to any part of the process that cannot be resolved between the employee and the reviewer then an appeal can be made to the HR. The appeal will be heard by an independent and more senior manager than the employee.