

Appendix 1

Performance Appraisal Procedure for Executive Directors of Northumberland County Council

Introduction

This procedure seeks to ensure that Executive Director's performance is formally reviewed on a regular basis. It complies with the principles set out in the Joint Guidance on Appraisal of the Chief Officer from the Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Chief Officers Conditions of Service Handbook.

Principles

There are a number of general principles that underpin this procedure. They are as follows:

- A clear link between Executive Director objectives and the Corporate Plan ensuring measurable lines of accountability for performance.
- An objective setting process that allows for a balanced focus on 'what' and 'how', with performance standards and expectations clearly articulated at the beginning of the performance year.
- An all year round focus on helping to maximise the Executive Director's job performance and identifying any development opportunities.
- Improved emphasis on recognising high performance throughout the year.
- Prompt identification, monitoring and tackling of underperformance.

Responsibilities for Appraisal

Under the responsibilities set out in Northumberland County Council's constitution (part 5, section 9, appendix A) it is the responsibility of the Staff and Appointments Committee;

9.33 (b) To determine the terms and conditions relating to employees of the County Council to include the remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for the Head of Paid Service and Chief and Deputy Chief Officers

The Executive Director terms and conditions of employment include the following:

17. PROBATION

All new senior managers will be subject to 6 months probation where an external appointment is made.

18. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Senior managers are required to actively participate in the prevailing Performance Management Scheme.

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20 SELF DEVELOPMENT

Senior managers are required to participate in self development or team development activities as required by the Council. [You] are required to complete a number of

learning modules, some of which must be completed on an annual basis. Details of the required learning modules are found in Learning Together.

Main Features

The Executive Director performance management process is made up of a number of stages which are outlined in more detail throughout this procedure. The main features include:

- a. Setting Performance Expectations and Agreeing Stretching Objectives: A performance expectation setting meeting should take place before the start of the annual performance year to make clear performance expectations for the Executive Director. Objectives should be drafted between the Executive Director and the Chief Executive and must focus on both the 'what' and the 'how'.
- b. Mid-year check: These should be conducted on at least a 6 monthly basis between the Executive Director and Chief Executive to ensure objectives remain relevant and that performance progress can be informally assessed on a continuous basis.
- c. End of Year Formal Appraisal: An annual performance assessment will be undertaken by the Chief Executive. Confirmation that the performance assessment process for Executive Directors has been completed for the previous year will be reported to the Staffing and Appointments Committee in or around April of each year.
- d. Identification of Developmental Requirements: Appropriate professional development is identified if required.

Probation

An externally appointed Executive Director's probation period will run for six months from their first day of employment with Northumberland County Council.

The Executive Director's objectives and developmental needs, for the first five months of their employment, will be drafted with the Executive Director and the Chief Executive at the earliest opportunity and formally recorded.

During this time, all reasonable support and development should be sought, offered and accepted so that the probationary objectives will be achieved.

After three months' employment an interim performance discussion will take place between the Executive Director and the Chief Executive.

After five months' employment, an End of Probation Performance Discussion will take place between the Executive Director and the Chief Executive. This will represent the formal End of Probation Performance Review. Following this, the Chief Executive will report the outcome of this process to Staff and Appointments Committee their decision to either:

1. Confirm the Executive Director's appointment
2. Extend their probationary period
3. Terminate their employment

Advice should be taken from the Director of Workforce and OD if members wish to pursue options 2 or 3.

The Executive Director shall then be given written notification of the outcome of their probationary period.

Appraisal Process

The Chief Executive will undertake formal appraisals of the Executive Directors. The Chief Executive and respective Executive Director should aim to reach mutual agreement for each appraisal.

The appraisal process contains the following elements:

a. Setting Performance Expectations and Agreeing Stretching Objectives

At the start of each performance year the Executive Director and the Chief Executive will meet to discuss the Corporate Plan, the Council's strategic priorities, directorate priorities and the performance expectations for the year ahead.

As part of their role profile, Executive Directors have agreed to exercise leadership in the successful execution of the following objectives:

- To lead, steer, develop and manage services relating to their directorate in order to deliver the Council's key corporate and partnership priorities that fall within the remit of the portfolio and in line with the corporate plan to benefit the people of Northumberland.
- To play a full and positive role as a member of the Council's Senior Management Team ensuring the delivery of effective strategic direction, leadership and resource management (people, finance and other assets) to secure the delivery of public services across the locality. The postholder will be expected to deputise for the Chief Executive if requested and to provide cover if needed across the Executive Management Team.
- Lead by example and foster a culture, both with the Directorate and across the Council, which engages all staff and partners in the development and delivery of services which meet residents' needs and expectations. This will involve leading cross Council initiatives to make best use of individuals' strengths and help foster collaboration across the whole organisation.
- Ensure, as a senior executive, that effective governance and assurance processes are applied in all activity as set down in the Constitution and Council policies and procedures to safeguard the Council's financial and statutory duties and demonstrate public accountability and scrutiny of its decision-making processes.
- Discharge the functions within the remit of the portfolio having regard to the decision making framework and arrangements.

Objectives for the year, set as part of this process should help to achieve one or more of the above. They should, as far as possible, be specific, measurable, time bound and challenging but achievable. Objectives should focus on both the 'what' and the 'how' (in alignment to Northumberland County Council Values, Leadership Behaviours and Nolan Principles). The onus for writing the draft objectives should be on the Executive Director and agreed in principle with the Chief Executive in their performance expectations and objective setting meeting, at the start of the performance year.

b. Regular Performance Conversations

The Executive Director and Chief Executive should hold regular performance conversations throughout the performance year. As a minimum these should be 6 monthly.

These performance conversations provide an informal opportunity to reflect on the role of the Executive Director; what has been done well; what could have been done better; the major issues over the period ahead; and any development opportunities.

Objectives should be discussed to determine whether they should be revised in light of changing priorities.

As part of these conversations, account should be taken of how the Executive Director demonstrates the standards of behaviour set out in the Northumberland County Council Values, Leadership Behaviours and Nolan Principles.

c. Mid-year Check

The Chief Executive will undertake a mid year discussion with the Executive Director. The outcomes of which will be recorded.

The performance of the Executive Director must be assessed by taking account of both 'what' they have achieved and 'how' they have achieved it. A judgement should be made as to what extent objectives have been fulfilled to date, using the following criteria:

- 'What' they have achieved - whether objectives are on track to be met or not, and to what degree;
- 'How' they achieved it - the degree to which they have demonstrated Northumberland County Council's leadership behaviours;
- Demonstration of Northumberland County Council's values and the Nolan Principles. All members of the senior management team are expected to exemplify these values; and
- Additional consideration should also be given to the degree of difficulty or ease of meeting the objectives in light of actual events.

When assessing these objectives, equal weight will be given both to 'what' and 'how' these objectives were achieved to ensure a balanced focus on delivery and behaviours.

The Chief Executive should consider the Executive Director's views carefully and decide, in advance of the interim appraisal interview, whether they agree with them or whether they wish to add, delete, change any of them.

d. End of year Formal Appraisal

The Chief Executive will undertake a year-end appraisal discussion with the Executive Director ideally within the first two weeks of each April. The outcomes of which will be recorded.

The performance of the Executive Director must be assessed by taking account of both 'what' they have achieved and 'how' they have achieved it. A judgement should be made as to what extent objectives have been fulfilled using the following criteria:

- 'What' they have achieved - whether objectives have been met or not, and to what degree;
- 'How' they achieved it - the degree to which they have demonstrated Northumberland County Council's leadership behaviours;
- Demonstration of Northumberland County Council's values and the Nolan Principles. All members of the senior management team are expected to exemplify these values; and
- Additional consideration should also be given to the degree of difficulty or ease of meeting the objectives in light of actual events.

When assessing these objectives, equal weight will be given both to 'what' and 'how' these objectives were achieved to ensure a balanced focus on delivery and behaviours.

e. Identify developmental requirements

Formal performance reviews should also identify the professional development necessary to equip the Executive Director with the requisite skills and leadership behaviours to meet their objectives both now and in the future.

Progress against the development objectives will be discussed as part of the mid-year and year-end appraisals.

Subject to Approval