

Appendix 1

Performance Appraisal Procedure for the Chief Executive of Northumberland County Council

Introduction

This procedure seeks to ensure that the Chief Executive's performance is formally reviewed on a regular basis. It complies with the principles set out in the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Local Authority Chief Executives (national salary framework & conditions of service) handbook.

Principles

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

- A clear link between Chief Executive 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 Chief Executive'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 the Northumberland County Council's constitution (7.1), the Staff and Appointments Committee;

- (p) *Considers and determines the overall scheme and policies in relation to employee terms and conditions and deals with the appointment of senior officers including making recommendations to Council on the appointment of the Head of Paid Service*

The Chief Executive's terms and conditions of employment include the following:

17. PROBATION

All employees new to the Council are subject to 6 months' probation where an external appointment is made. [The Chief Executive's] Probation reviews will be undertaken by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council. The Council Leader will report the outcome of this process to Staff and Appointments Committee

18. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Chief Executive is required to actively participate in performance management and appraisal with elected members of the Council. The focus of this process should be on clarifying what the Chief Executive is expected to achieve and on identifying any continuing development needs which, if met, would maintain a high level of performance. The process of setting objectives should be by agreement and the result should be to identify objectives which are relevant and challenging but achievable. The Performance Appraisal Process will be the responsibility of the Leader and Deputy

Leader of the Council. An annual statement to Council will be published each year advising that a performance appraisal has taken place.

19. SELF DEVELOPMENT

The Chief Executive is required to participate in self-development or team development activities as required by the Council.

Main Features

The Chief Executive 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 Chief Executive. Objectives should be drafted between the Chief Executive, the Council Leader and the Deputy Leader 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 Council Leader, Deputy Leader and the 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 Leader and Deputy Leader. A summary of the outcome of the performance assessment process will be reported to the Staffing and Appointments Committee.
- d. Identification of Developmental Requirements: Appropriate professional development is identified if required.

Probation

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

The Chief Executive's objectives and developmental needs, for the first five months of their employment, will be drafted with the Chief Executive, Council Leader and Deputy Leader 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 Chief Executive, the Council Leader and the Deputy Leader.

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

1. Confirm the Chief Executive's appointment
2. Extend their probationary period

3. Terminate their employment

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

The Chief Executive shall then be given written notification of the Outcome of their probationary period.

Appraisal Process

The Leader and Deputy Leader will undertake formal appraisals of the Chief Executive. The Director of HR and OD will provide administrative support and advice. The Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive should aim to reach mutual agreement for each appraisal. If this is not possible, the Chief Executive has the right of appeal.

The appraisal process contains the following elements:

a. Setting Performance Expectations and Agreeing Stretching Objectives

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

As part of his/her role profile, the Chief Executive has agreed to exercise leadership in the successful execution of the following objectives:

- Deliver the Council's key corporate and partnership priorities in line with the corporate plan, to benefit the people of Northumberland.
- Lead and develop the Council's Executive Team ensuring the delivery of effective strategic direction and resource management to enable the delivery of public services across the locality.
- Foster a culture and values, which engage all colleagues and partners in the development and delivery of services.
- Ensure that effective governance and assurance processes are in place to safeguard the Council's financial and statutory duties and demonstrate public accountability and scrutiny of its decision-making processes.
- Discharge the functions of the Head of Paid Service in accordance with Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act, 1989, including promoting the effective, economic, and efficient deployment of the Council's resources. Ensure compliance with the Council's Constitution.
- Act as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer

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 Chief Executive and agreed in principle with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council in their performance expectations and objective setting meeting, before the start of the performance year.

b. Regular Performance Conversations

The Chief Executive and Council Leader 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 Chief Executive; 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 Chief Executive demonstrates the standards of behaviour set out in the Northumberland County Council Values, Leadership Behaviours and Nolan Principles.

c. Mid-year Check

The Director of HR and OD will oversee the administration of the formal appraisal cycle.

The Leader and Deputy Leader will undertake mid year discussion with the Chief Executive, ideally every October. The outcomes of which will be recorded.

The performance of the Chief Executive 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. The Chief Executive is 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 Leader and Deputy Leader should consider the Chief Executive'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 Director of HR and OD will oversee the administration of the formal appraisal cycle.

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

The performance of the Chief Executive 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. The Chief Executive is 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.

As the Chief Executive is accountable to the Council as a whole for their performance, an annual statement to Council will be published each year advising that a performance appraisal has taken place

e. Identify developmental requirements

Formal performance reviews should also identify the professional development necessary to equip the Chief Executive with the requisite skills and leadership behaviours to meet his/her 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.

Appeal

Consensus through discussion is the ideal way to manage appraisals. If the Chief Executive disagrees with their appraisal they may appeal against it. They should submit detailed, written grounds for their appeal to the Director of HR and OD, who will arrange an appeal meeting. At the meeting, two elected members from the Staffing and Appointments Committee (StAC), who have had no previous involvement in the process, will consider the written appeal and any oral submission that the Chief Executive wishes to make. The Chief Executive may wish to bring an appropriate representative with them. The outcome of the appeal ie upheld or not upheld, will be reported to StAC.

The appeal panel's decision will be final.