

## **JOINT GUIDANCE ON APPRAISAL OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This guidance is intended for use by senior elected members and the chief executive when agreeing a process for appraising the performance of the chief executive. The focus of this process should be on clarifying what the chief executive is expected to achieve and on identifying any continuing developmental 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 process should not become complex. At all times it needs to focus clearly on a few basic issues: what the chief executive's job is; what has been done well; what could have been done better; the major issues over the next year; and what developmental needs the process clearly identifies.

### **RESPONSIBILITY FOR APPRAISAL**

The responsibility for appraising the chief executive lies with senior elected members. It is a contractual obligation on the part of both the chief executive and the employing council to engage in a regular process of appraisal.

It will be for local decision in the light of local circumstances whether the appraisal should be carried out by a small committee representing all political groups or by a senior representative or representatives of the controlling group. Whichever approach is adopted, those conducting the appraisal need to bear in mind at all times that the chief executive is employed by the council as a whole, not by the controlling group, and is therefore required to serve all of the council.

### **AIMS OF APPRAISAL**

1. To identify and clarify the key objectives, priorities and targets of the council and appropriate timescales for their achievement over the next (e.g. twelve) months.
2. Agree what the chief executive should personally achieve over the next (e.g. twelve) months and identify required standards of performance, in order to deliver the council's key objectives, priorities and targets. Wherever possible standards of performance should be expressed in ways which can be monitored objectively.
3. Discuss positive achievements over the past (e.g. twelve) months and identify reasons for good performance.
4. Discuss instances over the past (e.g. twelve) months where targets have not been met, identifying the factors preventing the achievements of agreed goals.
5. Discuss developmental requirements. The chief executive will have strengths and weaknesses and the parties should identify the professional development necessary to equip the chief executive with the requisite skills to meet the

council's objectives. The parties should be proactive and anticipate future developmental needs in the context of the council's changing priorities. This discussion could lead to the design of a formal programme of continuous professional development (CPD). Equally this discussion may lead to agreement on changes to the working relationship between leading members and the chief executive. It should not be assumed that it is only the chief executive who may need to adjust his/her approach to the working relationship.

Appraisal should be set in the context of the council's objectives, priorities and targets, generally expressed in the community and corporate plans. Appraisal targets when taken as a whole should be related to agreed targets for the council as a whole.

### **THE APPRAISAL CYCLE**

Appraisal should take place on a predetermined date, *at least annually* backed up by monitoring meetings on a regular basis at which targets can be reviewed for continuing relevance. A formal system of appraisal should not prevent the continuous review of progress and performance.

### **KEY ELEMENTS OF THE APPRAISAL PROCESS**

1. Continuous two-way monitoring of performance against objectives.
2. Preparation for an appraisal interview.
3. An appraisal interview where recent and current performance, future objectives and development needs are discussed.
4. Agreement should be reached on action required from either party to ensure required performance is achievable.
5. The process of informal discussion regarding performance should continue.

### **The appraisal interview and afterwards...**

1. Both parties should be well informed and prepared for the interview.
2. The process should be two-way.
3. The interview should be free from interruptions and notes should be taken when necessary.
4. The parties should concentrate as far as possible on established facts rather than unsubstantiated opinions.
5. Targets which are realistic and capable of being monitored should be agreed.
6. Any agreed development plans should be implemented within the agreed timescale.
7. The chief executive should be given a reasonable opportunity to correct any shortfalls in performance.

8. A date for the next review should be agreed.

**EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE**

External assistance in facilitating the appraisal process can be helpful in providing an independent perspective.

Within the local government 'family', it may be sought from Local Government Employers (LGE) [jo.fowles@lge.gov.uk](mailto:jo.fowles@lge.gov.uk) or by contacting the Employers' Secretary [sarah.messenger@lge.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.messenger@lge.gov.uk) or from the appropriate Regional Employers' Organisation [www.lge.gov.uk/lge/core/page.do?pagelid=120016](http://www.lge.gov.uk/lge/core/page.do?pagelid=120016) or ALACE [www.alace.org.uk/](http://www.alace.org.uk/) or SOLACE [www.solace.org.uk](http://www.solace.org.uk)

Such assistance from the aforementioned organisations may take the form of them either directly participating in the process for which a fee may be requested to cover staff time or the recommendation of, for example, a suitably experienced recently retired senior officer or other independent individual.

Alternatively such assistance may be available from commercial services, such as consultancy firms eg. SOLACE

**Note: If external assistance is sought, it must have the agreement of both sides.**

**OTHER MATTERS**

The content of appraisal interviews should be treated as confidential to the participants. However, it may be useful to report to an appropriate committee meeting that an appraisal interview has taken place.

This may be useful in acting as a reminder that the chief executive and members need to ensure that chief officers are in their turn appraised.

It should, however, not be assumed that the process for appraising the chief executive should be followed in precise detail for other staff. There is a fundamental difference between elected members appraising the chief executive and managers appraising subordinates. The principles, nevertheless, are the same.