

WhitecastleCommunity Council

Staff support, appraisal and performance policy

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of Community Council's staff support and appraisal process is to allow every member of staff to:

- feel fully supported;
- feel valued;
- have a framework for clear and consistent assessment of overall performance;
- express their views formally;
- receive guidance; and
- know the way forward - i.e. their objectives.

1.2. To allow the community Council to:

- support, encourage and assist staff in their roles;
- improve community Council performance;
- develop staff so that they can be more productive, more motivated and have more job satisfaction;
- help develop the Community Council through suggestions and feedback from staff;
- allow a process of two-way communication; and
- establish training needs.

2. Support for Staff

2.1. The Chair should meet for regular informal discussions with clerk once a month to consider all aspects of Council business.

2.2. The clerk should approach the Chair for help, support and advice as required.

2.3. All staff will meet either individually or collectively with others with their line manager at least once a month. They should feel free to discuss any matter that is relevant to their work. At any other time, all members of staff should feel free to talk to their line manager if they require help, support or advice. These talks should take place immediately if they relate to health and safety matters and before any related tasks are commenced. All line managers and staff should develop open and approachable relationships. However, all members of staff are encouraged to communicate confidentially with the Chair about any matter they feel they cannot discuss with their line manager. Any such requests for help and support and any related actions will be recorded and filed appropriately.

3. Staff appraisals

3.1. Staff in established positions should be formally appraised annually with an informal review after six months. The action plan and training needs should be discussed to establish progress and to move the process forward. Staff who are new to the Community Council or in a new role, should receive a job description and their objectives and targets when they start in their new position. The objectives and targets will be reviewed after the first three months. After this they will fit in to the normal appraisal cycle.

3.2. All staff shall be appraised annually and informally as required. The appraisal process should not exist in isolation but should form part of an ongoing process of support and

feedback. Feedback on specific tasks should be given throughout the year and should not be left until an annual appraisal.

3.3. Appraisals for the clerk shall be carried out by two members of Council with the reasonable agreement of the clerk. Members conducting the appraisal should be confident in doing so and should be able to act in an impartial and supportive manner.

3.4. The clerk retains the right to appeal the choice of appraisers.

3.5. Appraisals for all other members of staff shall be carried out by their respective line manager.

3.6. To be effective, it is important that both appraisee and appraiser are comfortable with and have bought in to the appraisal process and purpose. It will praise achievement and encourage the employee in their role. The appraisal process should remain a two-way conversation and should not be used as a punitive measure.

3.7. Before appraisal

3.7.1. Members of staff will be invited to attend their appraisal and asked to complete an appraisal form. Staff should be given at least a week to allow time to prepare and reflect on their previous appraisal and action plan.

3.8. At the appraisal meeting

3.8.1. The meeting should be held in a confidential environment that is free from interruption. The appraisal discussion will allow an opportunity for both the employee and clerk/councillor to reflect and comment on the previous year's agreed action plan.

3.8.2. The meeting will set objectives for the forthcoming year (aligned with council aims) and identify areas for development and improvement (i.e. can improvements be made to the way tasks are carried out).

3.8.3. After discussion, the appraisee and appraiser should agree an action plan for the following year. This will take into account any issues of concern and support needed for the employee to do their job. It will consider training and development needs, planned qualifications, and career planning. Any training and qualifications suggested should be employee and council focussed and be correct for the role, development, and the priorities of Council. Sometimes additional training will not be required for some employees. It is important that it is considered none-the-less.

3.9. After the appraisal meeting

3.9.1. Following the meeting, the appraiser will type up the appraisal form, the discussions and the actions agreed and pass to the employee to check for accuracy and agreement.

3.9.2. Both parties are encouraged to sign the completed document. In the case of the clerk's appraisal, the document should be agreed by council and signed by the Chair.

3.9.3. Depending on the nature of the discussion and actions agreed for the following year, it may be appropriate to schedule additional formal and informal appraisals to follow up on actions and offer support where necessary.

3.9.4. All formal and informal discussions and appraisal meetings will be held confidentially. Appraisal documentation will be retained confidentially by the clerk.

4. Procedure for dealing with issues of capability and performance

4.1. This procedure is used to deal with poor performance. It does not apply to cases involving genuine sickness, proposed redundancies or misconduct. In those cases, reference should be made to the appropriate policy or procedure.

4.2. The primary aim of this procedure is to assist and support employees whose performance is causing concern to attain the standards required. This procedure also enables the Council to take essential management action, including dismissal within reasonable timescales in respect of employees whose performance continues to fall short of the required standards.

4.3. The Council recognises that during an employee's period of employment their capability to carry out duties may deteriorate. This can be for a number of reasons including that the employee's job has changed over time or that the employee has changed (e.g. due to health reasons). The Council endeavours to support employees in their role through appropriate training and the support mechanisms noted at paragraph 2.0.

5. Early Action to Address Performance Concerns

5.1. Informal Standard Setting Discussion

5.2. It is expected that employees will have regular contact with an appropriate manager, between annual appraisals. During any such contact, the manager or appraiser has a responsibility to maintain professional contact and dialogue, to clarify expectations, discuss performance issues and to provide support including coaching, advice and (where relevant) observation with constructive feedback.

5.3. Where an employee's performance continues to give concern and the professional dialogue does not appear to be effective then the discussion should move to a standard setting meeting. This remains an informal part of the procedure although the meeting will be structured and a note of the discussion and outcome will be recorded.

5.4. The purpose of the meeting is to explore reasons for the performance concerns, discuss targets for improvement alongside a programme of support. The employee should be given reasonable written notice, good practice being up to five working days' notice, of the meeting to prepare and give them the opportunity to obtain someone suitable such as a workplace colleague or trade union representative to accompany him/her to the meeting if required.

5.5. The standard setting meeting must address the following issues clearly and fully:

- a) The areas of performance that are causing concern and the evidence or information that leads to this view.
- b) The expected standards of performance
- c) An opportunity for the employee to respond or to provide any relevant information relating to the concerns

- d) Timescales in which performance is expected to improve
- e) Clear targets to establish whether the required standards have been achieved
- f) Ongoing support, advice, guidance and appropriate training
- g) Arrangements for the monitoring/assessment of performance
- h) Arrangements including a date for assessment at the end of the review period.

5.6. Targets set within this discussion should be proportionate in number, reasonable in expectations with clear success criteria and a focus on development.

5.7. It is essential that the employee is made fully aware that the process could move to the formal procedure should performance not improve to the required standard. In the light of this potential implication, it could be of benefit to both manager/and employee to permit the involvement of a workplace colleague or trade union representative. However, this would not impact upon the status or purpose of the meeting.

5.8. The timescale for the review period will need to reflect all the circumstances of the situation but this will normally be between four and ten weeks. The employee will be given a copy of the notes of the meeting and this will include a record of the arrangements set out in a) to h) above.

6. Early Stage Review

6.1. At the end of the informal review period a meeting to discuss progress will be held with the employee. This meeting will best be conducted by the person who was involved in the standard setting discussion, where possible.

6.2. The employee will be informed that a) His/her performance has improved to an acceptable standard and there will be no further requirement for monitoring against the standards set. It may, however be advisable that ad hoc, informal checking continues for an agreed period of time to ensure that the improved performance is truly embedded, or b) There has been some improvement and it is believed that a short extension of the informal standard setting process should be sufficient to enable the employee to reach the standards expected, or c) His/her performance has not reached an acceptable standard and it is considered appropriate to move into the formal procedure.

7. Formal Capability Procedure

7.1. Formal Capability Meeting

7.2. At least five working days' notice will be given of the formal capability meeting. The notification will contain sufficient information about the concerns regarding the performance and their possible consequences to enable the employee to prepare to answer the case at a formal capability meeting. It will also contain copies of any written evidence (unless previously provided); the details of the time and place of the meeting; and will advise the employee of their right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or trade union representative.

7.3. This meeting is intended to establish the evidence regarding the performance concerns. It will be conducted by the Clerk alongside two nominated members of the council. Should this meeting involve the Clerk, a panel of three members of the council shall conduct the meeting.

7.4. The meeting allows the employee to respond to the concerns about their performance and to make any relevant representations. This may provide new information or a different context to the information/evidence already collected.

7.5. The person conducting the meeting may conclude that there are insufficient grounds for pursuing the capability issue formally and that it would be more appropriate to continue to address the remaining concerns through the appraisal process or through other informal means. In such cases, the formal capability procedure will come to an end. The person conducting the meeting may also adjourn the meeting if appropriate, for example if they decide that further investigation is needed, or that more time is needed in which to consider any additional information such as new evidence indicating that personal circumstances could be a significant contributory factor.

7.6. During the meeting, or any other meeting which could lead to a formal warning being issued, the person conducting the meeting will:

- a) Identify the professional shortcomings, for example if an employee is not meeting one or more of the relevant professional standards;
- b) Give clear guidance on the improved standard of performance needed to ensure that the employee can be removed from formal capability procedures (this may include a re-focus of the objectives on the specific weaknesses that need to be addressed, any success criteria that might be appropriate and the evidence that will be used to assess whether or not the necessary improvement has been made);
- c) Explain the support that will be available to help the employee improve their performance;
- d) Set out the timetable for improvement and explain how performance will be monitored and reviewed. The timetable will depend on the circumstances of the individual case but in straightforward cases this should be between four and ten weeks. (It is for the Community council to determine the set period. It should be reasonable and proportionate, but not excessively long, and should provide sufficient opportunity for an improvement to take place); and
- e) Warn the employee formally that failure to improve within the set period could lead to dismissal. In very serious cases, this warning could be a final written warning.

7.7. Notes will be taken of formal meetings and a copy sent to the employee, normally within 5 working days. Where a warning is issued, the employee will be informed in writing of the matters covered in the bullet points above and given information about the timing and handling of the review stage and the procedure and time limits for appealing against the warning. The employee should be provided with a clear, written action plan to confirm the objectives, the support being provided and the arrangements for monitoring, review and success criteria.

8. Monitoring and review period

8.1. A performance monitoring and review period will follow the formal capability meeting. Formal monitoring, evaluation, guidance and support will continue during this period. The employee will be invited to a further formal review meeting, unless they were issued with a final written warning, in which case they will be invited to a decision meeting.

9. Formal review meeting

9.1. As with formal capability meetings, at least five working days' notice will be given and

the notification will give details of the time and place of the meeting and will advise the employee of their right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or a trade union representative.

9.2. If the person conducting the meeting is satisfied that the employee has made sufficient improvement, the capability procedure will cease and the appraisal process will re-start.

9.3. It may be necessary to revise appraisal objectives to ensure achievability within the remaining time period. In other cases: If some progress has been made and there is confidence that more is likely, it may be appropriate to extend the monitoring and review period; If no, or insufficient improvement has been made during the monitoring and review period, the employee will receive a final written warning.

9.4. Notes will be taken of formal meetings and a copy sent to the member of staff. The final written warning will be consistent with any previous warnings that have been issued.

9.5. Where a final warning is issued, the member of staff will be informed in writing that failure to achieve an acceptable standard of performance (within the set timescale), may result in dismissal and given information about the handling of the further monitoring and review period and the procedure and time limits for appealing against the final warning. The employee will be invited to a decision meeting.

10. Decision meeting

10.1. As with formal capability meetings and formal review meetings, at least five working days' notice will be given and the notification will give details of the time and place of the meeting and will advise the employee of their right to be accompanied by a workplace companion who may be a workplace colleague, or a trade union representative.

10.2. If an acceptable standard of performance has been achieved during the further monitoring and review period, the capability procedure will end and the appraisal process will re-start. It may be appropriate to provide a short period of informal monitoring outside of the formal process to ensure that the improved performance is fully embedded. If performance remains unsatisfactory and the evidence is that the employee is unlikely to attain the standard expected within a reasonable timescale then a decision, or recommendation to the council will be made that the employee should be dismissed or required to cease working at the Council.

10.3. The Council is the employer and retains the power to dismiss employees. The employee will be informed as soon as possible in writing within five working days of the decision meeting of the reasons for the dismissal, the date on which the employment contract will end, the appropriate period of notice and their right of appeal.

11. Appeal

11.1. If an employee feels that a decision to dismiss them, or other action taken against them, is wrong or unjust, they may appeal in writing against the decision within five working days of the receipt of the decision letter, setting out at the same time the grounds for appeal.

11.2. Appeals will be heard without unreasonable delay, usually within ten working days of

receipt of appeal notice and, where possible, at an agreed time and place.

11.3. The same arrangements for notification and right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or a trade union representative will apply as with formal capability and review meetings and, as with other formal meetings, notes will be taken and a copy sent to the employee.

11.4. The appeal will be dealt with impartially and, wherever possible, by a panel of councillors who have not previously been involved in the case.

11.5. The employee will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal hearing as soon as possible and unless there are exceptional circumstances this will be within five working days.

11.6. In the event the employee does appeal against a warning the arrangements, preparation and hearing of the appeal will not interrupt the timescales and/or capability process unless the appeal decision leads to the matter being reconsidered.

12. Responsibilities & review

12.1. The council is responsible for the review of this policy on a biennial basis or in response to changes in relevant legislation.

Approved February 2024