

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL STAFF APPRAISAL POLICY

The City of Durham Parish Council is committed to enhancing individual performance and potential and will provide the necessary feedback, support, and arrange training to ensure that high standards of performance are maintained throughout the organisation. Appraisal meetings are an opportunity for people to seek and receive high quality, responsive and balanced feedback on their work performance. It is also an opportunity to identify and plan for future individual learning and development needs. The key to staff appraisal meetings is that there should be no surprises. This is because staff appraisals must not exist in isolation but should be part of an ongoing process in which both the Council and the Clerk have a shared responsibility. An appraisal is a formal event happening each year, but there should be several regular, informal conversations between members of the Personnel Committee and employee in the interim.

Appraisals will be conducted annually. Where it is known that an employee is due to commence a long period of absence, e.g. sickness, maternity leave, this will be factored into the objective timescales and where appropriate, an appraisal will be held before the absence starts. Where a member of staff misses a scheduled appraisal meeting due to sickness absence, these will be rearranged to take place following their return.

The date and procedures for the annual appraisal should be agreed by the Personnel Committee. The Clerk's appraisal will be held between the Clerk, the Chair of the Parish Council's Personnel Committee and up to two other Councillors agreed for this purpose by the Personnel Committee. The lead appraiser is responsible for scheduling a mutually agreed appraisal interview date and time. Where an appraisal must unavoidably be conducted remotely appraisals will be carried out using appropriate technology. Where, more usually, face to face meetings take place they will be in a venue agreed by all parties. Employees should be given adequate notice of appraisal interviews. A Self-assessment form will be completed by an employee before their interview to help them detail what they think have been their strong and weak points; what they see as barriers to effective performance; their plans for the coming year and their development and training needs.

Preparation for the appraiser(s) will include ensuring that they are clear about what is included in the Clerk's job description and any previous appraisals completed. They will also be aware of any training the staff member has completed since the last appraisal, and any grievances or disciplinary action taken. The self-assessment appraisal form will be used as a checklist when making their own preparations. [They will also invite comment and feedback from all Councillors.]

Preparation for the appraisee will include completing the self-assessment form, preparing relevant information or gather supporting evidence, prior to the meeting, to illustrate how objectives have been met. The appraisee will also consider their overall performance, challenges, areas for improvement, objectives for the coming year as well as short and long-term personal goals.

The interview should be free from interruptions. Key points of the appraisal will include

- Review: previous objectives and discuss individual's actual performance.
- Explore: what factors affected individual performance examining both internal and external constraints and issues.
- Agree: future SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) performance objectives and identify any support and development plans.
- Plan: identify training and development needs and plan for implementation including costs and timescales.

The appraisers will initially ask the staff member to go through the self-assessment form to:

- Encourage the employee to discuss his or her strengths.
- Discuss, where appropriate, how far agreed objectives have been met.

From this and the ongoing appraisal meeting the appraisers and the staff member will:

- Agree future objectives
- Discuss any development needs appropriate to the existing job or the individual's future in the organisation, for example training.
- Summarise the plans that are agreed.

After the interview, the Lead appraiser will write up a summary of the main points from the meeting and any objectives agreed using the Appraisal Form.

The form will be submitted to Personnel Committee in confidence for consideration of recommending relevant actions indicated by the form. If the appraisal scheme is to have credibility, it is essential that the Personnel Committee follows up any points arising from the interview and recommends to the council any agreed actions. The appraisee also needs to ensure that they communicate regularly with the Personnel Committee updating them on agreed targets and objectives. The implementation or otherwise of agreed actions recommended for approval to the council should form part of the next appraisal.

The aim will be to end the meeting on a positive note.

Employees may use the Grievance Procedure in the event of problems over the accuracy or the fairness of the appraisal record or meeting or implementation of agreed actions, in which case the appraiser hearing any grievance will need to have sight of the appraisal.

Date adopted: July 2025

Date to be reviewed: May 2026