Appraisal Guidance
for
Appraisers and Appraisees

Developing Performance – Why it Matters

To deliver our plans and aspirations, the Council needs to create an environment where every employee understands how they contribute. The appraisal process seeks to address the following:

- Everyone understands how their work contributes to the bigger picture and there is a clear link between individual objectives and Council plans (The Golden Thread).
- Everyone is measured through open and regular discussions on ‘what’ they achieve (objectives and outcomes) and ‘how’ they achieve them (competencies)
- Everyone has a development and training plan designed to meet immediate and longer term needs.

This document provides guidance on how to make appraisal discussions a positive experience by offering best practice tips for before, during and after an appraisal.
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1. Overview of the appraisal process

The appraisal is part of the overall council performance management framework. The golden thread links Council performance and aspirations directly to an individual’s performance so all objectives set should be related to those set in the council and service plans.

However the appraisal review meeting is only one element of the appraisal process that carries on throughout the year. Work review meetings, team briefings, individual conversations and work supervision are all part of the whole appraisal process. Actively managing performance and helping to develop and motivate people throughout the year are critical to a high-performing organisation.

These guidelines will put the appraisal into context and explain best practice. Support and training is available on both the OASYS process and how to conduct the appraisal to improve performance.

Electronic or paper forms

The Council’s preferred method for documenting appraisals is through the OASYS (Online Appraisal SYStem). The system is used to manage and record the conversation. Unless both parties agree it is not necessary to complete the system online during the appraisal conversation. A short paper based appraisal form is available for employees who meet the following criteria:

- Grade 4 or lower
- Do not access a MKC networked computer

And/or

- Work less than 8 hours per week

Examples of roles covered are

- Care workers
- Landscapers
- Saturday Library assistants
- Evening Youth Workers

Who should be appraised?

All employees should have an appraisal.

The appraisal system is designed to ensure that all employees have regular feedback to continuously improve their and the organisation’s skills and performance.

New employees

- For those who are still in their probationary periods, performance assessment should be done at 12, 16, and 20 weeks using the Probationary Report Form.
- For those who are new to post but do not have a probationary period, an objective setting and development planning appraisal meeting should be held as soon as the induction period is completed and brought into the normal annual cycle after that.

Employees with more than one job

If the jobs held are very different and report into different managers, it is normally necessary to have an appraisal for each role.

Exceptions

Exceptions can be made for those who have had extended absences from work for a variety of reasons.
2. Appraisal – what is it?

An appraisal is an annual, formal, recorded meeting between an individual and their line manager. It is a very important part of the Performance Management Framework and links to other policies, procedures, plans and tools, such as the:

- Council’s business planning process;
- Team, service and directorate plans;
- Organisational and Employee Development Policy;
- Equalities and Diversity Policy;
- Supervision/regular 1-2-1 meetings between managers and their staff;
- Career Grade specifications and review arrangements.

An appraisal is not a one off event – it is the formal compilation of all the 1-2-1’s and supervision meetings completed during the year. **There should be no surprises!**

It is a corporate requirement – **all employees must be formally appraised** at least **twice a year by their line manager** with ongoing dialogues throughout the year via 1-2-1’s/supervisions to make sure performance stays on track.
### The golden thread

The appraisal cycle

- **Council Plan**
  - Corporate Plan

- **Service Plans**

- **Individual objectives, targets and plans**
  - Competencies
  - Consistent measure of skills and behaviours
  - Appraisals
  - Discussion of performance and development based around competencies
  - Performance Plus
  - Ongoing measurement and reporting of performance
  - Corporate Plan
  - Council Plan

- **Service Plans**

- **Individual objectives, targets and plans**

- **Competencies**

- **Appraisals**

- **Performance Plus**

### The appraisal cycle

- **Annual appraisal**
  - Corporate objectives
  - Service objectives
  - Team objectives

- **1-2-1’s /supervisions**
  - 1-2-1’s /supervisions

- **6 month appraisal review**
### 3. Preparing for the appraisal

#### Summary checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Appraiser</strong></th>
<th><strong>Appraisee</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Agree a date and time in your diary at least 2 weeks prior to the review meeting. Allow enough time to prepare.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Arrange a suitable, private room. Ensure uninterrupted time to meet.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Link individual into OASYS (Online Appraisal SYStem)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Prepare for the appraisal by seeking evidence for assessments against all the competencies and evidence for performance against last year’s objectives/goals. Check that all the necessary service and team plan information is available (If not, then provide them). Seek performance feedback from others where appropriate.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Make sure that you have the previous years appraisal (if applicable), 1-2-1, supervision and other supporting documentation to review</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Read through the background information thoroughly and become familiar with the main themes and issues.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Read the current job profile and person specification – have a copy to hand.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>If the post is career graded, refer to the specification for the career grade and progression arrangements.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Clarify any issues regarding the process before the interview.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Be clear about what happens after the interview and who is responsible for what.</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Do preparation work in OASYS</td>
<td>✓</td>
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**Preparation – priorities and plans**

Conducting team briefings before starting the appraisal process is a good way to help set the scene, not just for your team but for the individual as it is important that all objectives fit within team, directorate and corporate plans.

The following items must be considered:

- The Team or Service Plan and how that fits with the Council's overall priorities to achieve desired outcomes;
- Issues and questions to be carried forward to individual appraisals.

Individual and/or team discussion could also include:

- Priority areas of work;
- Service improvements required to achieve desired outcomes;
- Any outcomes from internal audits which need acting on.
- Key targets and performance measures and how they help to achieve Team priorities and outcomes;
- Risk management – what could go wrong? What steps can we take to reduce the severity or the impact of identified risks?

These discussions and/or team briefings will help both the manager and the employee to begin the process of developing objectives for the coming year.

**Preparation – time and place**

Creating an atmosphere where non-threatening open discussion can take place is a key role of the Line Manager in preparation for the appraisal meeting. In choosing an environment several elements need to be considered:

- The physical environment – a quiet, confidential space with no interruptions;
- Body language – a more informal room set-up usually works better than sitting facing each other across a desk;
- Agreeing and booking a date sufficiently in advance – at least two weeks’ notice is recommended.

**Preparation – assessing objectives and competencies**

Evidence about last year’s performance against the competencies (the ‘how’) and objectives (the ‘what’), should ideally be gathered throughout the year so assessments can be made on as much information as possible.

Review the information available so that you can prepare for the appraisal meeting where this will be discussed.

The Competency Framework plays a vital part in the appraisals process. It underpins the principles of the Council’s vision and values and supports its aims and objectives for achieving short, medium...
and long term goals. The framework provides clear guidelines on the standards of behaviour expected from all employees and categories these as:

- Expected;
- Good;
- Outstanding;
- Below expectations.

The Competency Framework is used as the basis for conducting all appraisals so that as we develop plans and set objectives for the coming year, we can be sure we are working to consistent standards to achieve common goals.

The Competency Framework\(^1\) consists of six competency areas. These are:

- Leading change;
- Focus on the customer;
- Team working;
- Delivering performance;
- Motivation;
- Managing resources.

In the first instance, the appraiser assesses the appraisee’s competence in each of the six areas, using the framework as a guide. All assessments must be based on clear evidence so that in the appraisal interview these can be discussed, challenged and revised if appropriate.

**Example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Examples of evidence</th>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on Customer</td>
<td>Observed on many occasions providing consistently good customer service/practice even when dealing with difficult calls, a suggestion made to improve the customer experience</td>
</tr>
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For Heads of Service and above there are four additional leadership competencies\(^1\). These are:

- Creates a compelling future
- Inspires others to lead
- Delivers excellence for the customer
- Takes accountability for making it happen

\(^1\) The Competency Frameworks with sample behaviours at each level are available via the Staff Portal.
4. The appraisal meeting

Steps to success
The following is a step by step guide for appraisers and appraisees through the appraisal meeting:

- **Step 1: Review of last year’s performance**, including consideration of any objectives that need to be carried forward to the new appraisal year. Both the appraiser and the appraisee have the opportunity to comment on the achievement of targets from the previous year and how these have been used to develop the employee’s role in the team;

- **Step 2: Employee competencies** – the initial assessment of the employee’s competence in each of the six areas is made by the appraiser and discussed at the meeting. For Heads of Service and above there are an additional four leadership competencies. There must be clear evidence for each assessment. This process is also designed to help identify individuals’ key areas of strength and areas where competencies may need to be developed;

- **Step 3: Objectives for the coming year** – these must link to service and corporate outcomes, objectives and plans and will also link to needs or ambitions identified in the previous two sections. Objectives must be clearly measurable and timescales put on completion (see below for more on this). They can be set either by the appraiser or the appraisee and are agreed jointly through discussion;

- **Step 4: Training, Development and Education** – to achieve targets and continually improve services, particular training or development needs may be identified. It needs to be clear why these are required for example as a result of an internal audit or because of new ways of working, how they will be met and what their level of priority is. **Leadership competencies.** If an appraiser believes an appraisee has potential to move into a more senior leadership position, the leadership competencies can be used as a guide for agreeing development needs.

- **Step 5: Overall comments** – at the end of the process, when all the sections have been completed, there is an opportunity for both appraiser and appraisee to add comments in this last section. The appraisal then needs to be signed off by both people.

A framework for discussion
It can help greatly at the outset if both the appraiser and the appraisee agree the **purpose** of the meeting, the **output** required and certain key **ground rules**.

The **purpose of the meeting** is for the employee and their line manager to discuss the employee’s performance over the last year, highlighting strong performance and identifying areas where further support and development might be required, and discuss the fit with the organisation’s and the individual’s ambitions in the future. It is an opportunity to talk one-to-one in a confidential environment.

The **outputs required** are ‘SMART’ objectives and a development plan for the employee for the coming year that fit with team and corporate outcomes and objectives, and the completion of the required on-line (or paper-based) appraisal system requirements.
Key ground rules might be:

- **Openness and participation** – the employee is encouraged to participate in and contribute to the process of determining objectives and goals, in a manner that will be valued and respected;
- **Good listening** – both the employee and the manager need to listen well to the other, not making assumptions based perhaps on previous experience;
- **Showing respect at all times** – for example, both parties being on time and being adequately prepared for the interview.

Once these are agreed, the appraisal meeting can get fully underway.

**Setting objectives**

Setting objectives is a key part of the appraisal review meeting. These objectives need to follow simple principles in order to retain the interest and enthusiasm of the employee and to help ensure they meet corporate outcomes, individual targets and enrich career development. They should also include reference to the Council’s competency framework which focuses not just on what an individual does but how the individual accomplishes it.

**Definition of terms**

**Outcomes**
An outcome is the result, impact or consequence of actions on an individual, organisation or community. Desired outcomes are changes you want to bring about and plan to achieve. A number of teams’ objectives are usually needed to achieve a desired outcome.

**Objectives or goals**
An objective is a statement of intent or description of a goal that moves the individual, team or organisation towards achieving a vision and delivering desired outcomes. An objective or goal helps to set personal and business standards to deliver outcomes, improve organisational performance and increase knowledge and skills to support continuous improvement. It should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (see below).

**Outputs**
Outputs are the measurable activities, services or products that an organisation carries out or provides. They can help to deliver outcomes.

**What is the purpose of setting objectives/goals?**

The purpose of setting objectives/goals is to **focus time and energy on the right things to achieve the outcomes needed**. These must be **tangible and specific** or else it is almost impossible to know whether they have been achieved. **Clear milestones and completion dates** help to maintain momentum and achieve completion of the agreed task.
Setting good objectives/goals

An objective can be interpreted in many different ways, so being clear about what you are aiming for is essential. A key principle to use when setting these is being SMART:

- **Specific** – the outcome or end result required is clear and precise;
- **Measurable** – the outcome or end result can be quantified;
- **Agreed** – the target or goal is agreed by both parties;
- **Realistic** – the target or goal is sensible and can reasonably be achieved;
- **Timed** – there are clear time frames or boundaries for completion.

This can be used as a checklist to ensure effective objectives/goals are set.

Putting objectives into context

Another model to help set objectives and inspire individual employees is the three-step approach.

- **Step 1** – to inspire employees to want to achieve the objective by outlining the challenges and benefits of achieving it;
- **Step 2** – to give employees a clear and comprehensive picture of all aspects of the objective in the wider context – how it forms part of the “Golden Thread” and delivers desired outcomes;
- **Step 3** – to have high expectations: to inspire, challenge and expect employees to have good ideas and suggest robust solutions to issues. Given the right support, people will be creative in achieving set objectives.

Key success factors when setting objectives

When planning objectives/goals, some key success factors are:

- Identify key issues and factors in achieving an objective or goal;
- Identify the environmental factors that could hamper the achievement of the objective – such as current market trends, changes in government policy or non-performance of another organisation;
- Identify resources that may be required to achieve an objective or goal – such as administrative support or training and development;
- Using the SMART principal, review that you have put the right measures in place to ensure success of the chosen goal and that both you and your employee agree on what is to be achieved;
- Ensure the appraisee knows that you have an “open door” policy to discuss any unforeseen obstacle;
- Reinforce your support and commitment to your appraisee achieving their agreed objectives and goals.
Signing off the appraisal

Once an Appraisal review meeting has happened it is important that both the appraiser and appraisee jointly agree the outcomes of the meeting.

At the conclusion of the meeting the appraiser will complete the necessary on-line Appraisal Review Form or record as a paper based appraisal. This will then be forwarded onto the appraisee to review and make any amendments. If amendments are made, the Appraisal Review Form needs to be returned to the Line Manager to review the changes. If necessary arrange a short meeting to confirm any final changes.

Help and support

If you have any concerns in relation to the appraisal process, contact HR Advisory ext 3893

If you need help with the process or documentations please contact ext 3854 training support and some one from Employee Development will get back to you.

Employee Development can also access the appraisal if you need to make changes once it is closed.

All IT problems should be reported to the IT Helpdesk.
5. Appraisal – the on-going commitment

The Appraisal process is not confined to the annual appraisal interview, with its preparation and follow-up. It is an on-going process throughout the year to make sure that objectives are on track and that any changes needed are incorporated for example any recommendations from internal audits.

Council guidelines state that at least two interviews must be held each year – the main annual appraisal interview and a mid-year review to assess and record progress. In addition to these, regular 1-2-1’s/supervisions will be held between the appraisee and their appraiser throughout the year (see below for more details).

In different parts of the organisation, different levels of on-going feedback and assessment already take place. Some key ones are set out below.

Personal development plans

Development plans feed into corporate development requirements. Learning, training, development and educational needs identified during the appraisal provide essential information for directorate management teams, so that they can prioritise, plan and allocate resources.

The information is also used corporately to help identify key themes and meet needs that are common to the whole organisation, with the support of the Organisational Development department.

During the year, the implementation of these plans should be monitored by the line manager, along with the effectiveness of any training and development undertaken, to ensure the necessary learning is embedded.

Effective 1-2-1s/ supervision

Effective 1-2-1s/ supervision are requirements across the whole organisation, but arrangements will vary. The approach in each service area takes account of service delivery priorities and the needs of managers and employees. The purpose, though, is the same, which is to ensure that:

- Employees are properly managed, supported and developed to do their job and deliver services competently and effectively;
- Performance standards are maintained and, wherever possible, improved.

Supervision can be carried out through regular planned team meetings and work reviews and one-to-one meetings. For some employees, formally recorded one-to-one supervision is a requirement of their profession.

Local arrangements should ensure that everyone has opportunity for individual discussion of their performance and that any support requirements are identified and addressed. The Council
expects that all employees will have regular **one-to-one sessions with their line manager at least every other month – ie, 6 times per year.**

**Formal supervision**

Where formal one-to-one supervision arrangements are required, meetings should be scheduled in advance so that the programme of supervision is maintained. Meeting on the same day and time of the week or month can be helpful. These meetings should be regarded as a high priority. The duration of the supervision meeting should be agreed, and sessions should begin and end promptly. Inevitably, there will be occasions when dates have to be changed but this should be avoided wherever possible and alternative dates set if unavoidable. It is the responsibility of both the line manager and employee to reach a mutually acceptable re-arrangement of their meeting.

The supervision agenda may vary according to service requirements but good practice will build on the appraisal action plan and include:

- Feedback on performance;
- Progress on the delivery of outcomes;
- Training and development needs and provision;
- Support needed;
- Personal matters, including leave and absence etc.

Formal notes of the areas covered in a one-to-one supervision must be kept by the supervisor/manager, for the following reasons:

- Provides a record for both parties;
- Provides a basis for the appraisal process;
- May be used to monitor change, including records of achievements, any areas of difficulty, and individual learning development.
Appendix 1: Performance Standards for Appraisals and Supervision

1. Effective appraisal and supervision arrangements are essential for everyone and there are minimum performance standards to be met.

2. Every employee to have a meaningful appraisal each year, the Council standard is 6 monthly, with an action plan that is implemented and monitored.

3. All appraisal should be entered into the OASYS system. A short paper based appraisal form is available for staff who meet the following criteria:
   - Grade 4 or lower
   - Do not access a MKC networked computer
   And / or
   - Work less than 8 hours per week

   Examples of roles covered are
   - Care workers
   - Landscapers
   - Saturday Library assistants
   - Evening Youth Workers

4. Action plans to include key objectives, training and development needs, and the agreed approach to 1-2-1, supervision and review sessions.

5. Every employee to have regular individual 1-2-1/ supervision/ performance review sessions with their supervisor/ manager in the way that best supports the service priorities and delivery.

6. Assistant Directors/ Corporate Directors to monitor the completion of annual appraisals according to corporate arrangements.

7. Appraisal completion and employee satisfaction within the process to be monitored corporately each year and progress reported to CLT and Members.
# Appendix 2 Examples of SMART Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Link to Council/Service Group / Section Aims</th>
<th>SMART Objective - EXAMPLES</th>
<th>Target date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational Transformation Programme (OTP)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Public Access</strong></td>
<td>To improve our customers’ experience by making it easier for them to get the services they need at the first point of contact.</td>
<td>Review our customer pathways by collecting feedback and data to assess the number of enquiries resolved at the first point of contact by 30 Sept. Produce report by 31 Oct for senior management team, with recommendations and implementation plan for improving the rate by 10% within a year. If approved commence implementation plan and complete within by 31 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OTP</strong></td>
<td><strong>Organisational structure and processes</strong></td>
<td>To develop a fit for purpose workforce which will deliver high quality services to our customers To improve attendance rates across the Council through early intervention and support</td>
<td>To complete 100% of appraisal reviews by 30 June to include SMART objectives and development plans for the next year. To performance manage against objectives during the year using 1-2-1’s/supervisions and to have completed the 6 monthly reviews. Enforce the Attendance Policy and Processes to improve absence rate. Attendance rate to sit below the corporate benchmark by year end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living in MK</strong></td>
<td><strong>Everyone one will be:</strong> Safe from harm</td>
<td>Deliver choice and control for individuals requiring</td>
<td>Deliver services to meet or exceed all expected standards for quality including choice (where appropriate). To be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and neglect. Experience choice and control.

| support by providing preventative community based approaches and outcome focussed personalised support | measured through feedback including complaints and compliments, observations, records and 1:1’s/supervisions |

**Notes**
- Column 1 - Which **Outcome** from the Council’s Corporate Plan does this objective link to?
- Column 2 – How does this objective **link** to the service plan/team aims?
- Column 3 – **SMART** = specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound.
- Column 4 – **Target Date** for completion of the objective