

MARDEN PARISH COUNCIL

STAFF APPRAISAL POLICY

Adopted on 27 September 2018

1. Introduction

- a) Marden Parish Council is committed to maximising individual performance and potential and will provide the necessary feedback, support and training to ensure that high standards of performance are maintained throughout the organisation. Appraisal meetings are an opportunity for employees to seek and receive high quality, responsive and balanced feedback on their work performance from the council. It is also an opportunity to identify and plan for future individual learning and development needs.
- b) 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 Chair or Vice Chair (on behalf of the council) and employees have a responsibility. An appraisal is a formal event happening each year, but there should be several regular, informal conversations between the Chair/Vice Chair and employee in the interim.
- c) Marden Parish Council recognises that successfully undertaking the role of an appraiser requires that person to have received appropriate training. The Council will therefore ensure that prior to a Councillor being requested to undertake the role of an appraiser, such training will be made available if appropriate.

2. Procedure and reporting of Appraisal

Schedule for Appraisals

- a) Marden Parish Council operates the following schedule for appraisals:
 - i. Staff on a probationary period will receive an appraisal at 4 weeks employment, 8 weeks of employment and a final probationary sign off appraisal at 12 weeks employment.
 - ii. If the employee is not at a required standard at the 12 week appraisal, the decision may be taken to terminate employment at that point, or extend the probationary period. If the probationary period is extended this will be noted in the employee's personnel file.
 - iii. Monthly appraisals will continue until the employee is signed off from the probationary period. (***The decision to terminate employment or extend a probationary period must be taken to a meeting of the Council to be authorised before any action is taken. It will therefore be necessary to plan ahead and to ensure that this item is an agenda item before the end of the employee's probationary period for a decision to be made.***)
 - iv. Once the probationary period has been completed, appraisals will be normalised and carried out annually in March.
- b) Where it is known that an employee is due to commence a long period of absence, e.g. maternity leave, this will be factored into the objective timescales and where appropriate, an appraisal will be held before the absence starts. Where an employee misses a scheduled appraisal meeting due to sickness absence, it will be rearranged to take place following their return.

Reporting of Appraisal to Council

- c) Once the Appraisal has been completed and signed by the appraiser, the employee and the alternative trained Councillor, the Chair or Vice Chair (the appraiser) will provide a written summary for Councillors to note and for Council to consider any changes required to the employee's hours or training requirements. Any change in the employee's terms and conditions must be agreed jointly by the Council and employee.

Interview Preparation

- d) Appraisals shall be carried out in a formal interview between the employee and the council. In the case of the Clerk and RFO, the interview will be with the Chair or Vice Chair. Each party needs to prepare for the meeting. The appraiser is responsible for scheduling the appraisal interview date.

- e) Employees should be given adequate notice of appraisal interviews. Self-assessment forms completed by employees before their interviews can 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. Self-assessment forms are an aide memoire to the individual and they do not have to be shown to the person conducting the appraisal.
- f) For the appraiser, preparation should be ensuring they are clear on what is included in the employee's job description and any previous appraisals completed. They should also be aware of any training the employee has completed since the last appraisal, and any grievances or disciplinary action taken. The appraiser should consider the overall results attained by the employee and, where the results have been significantly greater or lower than expected, possible reasons for variations in performance. This will be easier if notes have been made throughout the year of the employee's successes and failures, and any performance related developments beyond the employee's control. It is a good idea to also draft a list of objectives for the following year. Appraisers may find the self-appraisal form a useful checklist when making their own preparations.

The Interview

- g) At least one hour should be set aside for the appraisal interview. The venue should be mutually agreed and should be comfortable and arranged to create an informal atmosphere. The interview should be free from interruptions.
- h) The appraiser should explain the purpose and scope of the interview, this being to:
 - i. **Review:** previous objectives and discuss the employee's actual performance.
 - ii. **Explore:** what factors affected individual performance examining both internal and external constraints and issues.
 - iii. **Agree:** future performance objectives and identify any support and development plans for the future. Targets set should be achievable and realistic and in light of available resources including time and should be capable of being monitored.
 - iv. **Plan:** identify training and development needs and plan for implementation including costs and timescales.
- i) The appraiser should initially ask the employee to go through the self-appraisal form to:
 - i. Encourage the employee to discuss his or her strengths and weaknesses
 - ii. Discuss how far agreed objectives have been met
- j) From this the appraiser and employee should:
 - i. agree future objectives
 - ii. discuss any development needs appropriate to the existing job or the employee's future in the organisation, for example: training, education, work experience
 - iii. summarise the plans which are agreed
- k) If there are disagreements the appraiser should explain how the employee can appeal against his or her appraisal.

After the interview

- l) After the interview, the appraiser should write up a summary of the main points from the meeting and any objectives agreed using the Appraisal Form. The completed form should be passed to the alternative trained Councillor for counter signing/amendment. It should then be forwarded to the employee for checking and comments and be signed by both the employee and appraiser with a copy to be retained by the employee and a second signed copy stored by the appraiser.
- m) If the appraisal scheme is to have credibility, it is essential that appraisers follow up any points arising from the interview and carry out any agreed action. For example, it may be necessary to organise training or help to overcome any obstacles to the employee's effectiveness which were mentioned at the interview.
- n) In the event of event of an appraisee having issues with the written appraisal, the appraisee will first discuss the matter with the appraiser.

- o) If resolution is not forthcoming at that point, then the appraisee shall request that in a timely manner the areas of concern may be discussed with the alternative appraisal trained Councillor. If, following such discussion, the appraisee considers that the issues raised in the write up of the appraisal are not a fair representation of the appraisal, the appraisee may request that the matter is put before the full Council in a private session.
- p) If further escalation of the issues is required, the ACAS procedures will be adhered to.

3. Guidance for Appraisers

- a) Prior to the formal appraisal, preparation should be done by both parties. The appraiser should look at objectives set at any previous appraisals, while the employee should give due consideration to any points they want to bring up. It is important for the success of the process that appraisals are conducted with an eye on the bigger picture.
- b) **Be prepared**
Prepare by referring to a list of agreed objectives and notes on performance throughout the year.
- c) **Create the right atmosphere**
A successful meeting depends on creating an informal environment in which a full, frank but friendly exchange of views can take place. It is best to start with a fairly general discussion before getting into any detail.
- d) **Work to a clear structure**
The meeting should be planned to cover all the points identified during preparation with time allowed for individuals to fully express their views.
- e) **Use positive feedback**
Where possible, reviewers should begin with praise for some specific achievement, but this should be sincere and deserved. Praise helps people to relax – everyone needs encouragement and appreciation.
- f) **Let the employee do the talking**
This enables them to get things off their chest and helps them to feel that they are getting a fair hearing. Use open questions to encourage people to be expansive.
- g) **Invite self-appraisal**
This is to see how things look from the employee's point of view and to provide a basis for discussion as many people underestimate themselves.
- h) **Performance, not personality**
Always refer to actual events, behaviour and results.
- i) **Encourage analysis of performance**
Performance should be analysed jointly and objectively why things went well or badly and what can be done to maintain a high standard in the future.
- j) **Don't deliver unexpected criticisms**
Feedback on performance should be immediate and should not wait until the end of the year. The purpose of the formal review is to reflect briefly on experiences during the review period and to look ahead. Any specific complaints/criticisms from employer/employee should be dealt with separately during the year by using the agreed grievance/complaints procedure within the organisation. These are not matters to be dealt with within the context of the staff appraisal.
- k) **Agree measurable objectives and a plan of action**
The aim should be to end the review meeting on a positive note. There should be an outcome from an appraisal; either a continuation of previous behaviours and conduct, or a change to the employee's role that improves the situation both for them and the organisation.

Review date: by September 2019

Signed: 
Chair, Marden Parish Council

Dated: 27/9/18