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Performance Management Policy

Adopted by Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council on 12 October 2023.

Note: This Policy should be used in conjunction with the Council’s Dignity at Work, Disciplinary, Equal Opportunities, Grievance, and Sickness and Absence Policies.

Statement

The aim of this Policy is to encourage continuous personal and professional development for Council employees (Officers).

Officers must take responsibility for their performance, and line managers must demonstrate realism in supporting them to develop and perform at their best.

Effective performance management improves Officer motivation and encourages high performance through clear goal setting, regular and honest feedback, supporting wellbeing, and providing frequent opportunities for learning and development.

It is also important to set out how the Council can recognise, and reward, sustained high performance and how to manage performance that does not meet the required standards.

Performance - Overview

Setting Goals and Standards

Officers must work towards Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) goals throughout the performance year. These goals must consider short, medium and long-term priorities, and should be tailored to individual needs, development or responsibilities.

SMART goals are:

* Specific - clear and focused, with well-defined outcomes;
* Measurable - so Officers can evaluate their progress;
* Achievable - challenging, but realistic to achieve;
* Relevant - to the strategic objectives of the Council, and aligned with Council values and behaviours;
* Time-bound - with a set target date (a target date for a goal should be realistic, but ambitious, motivating the Officer to apply focus and discipline to achieve it and helping to prioritise the task).

Goals should be set and agreed in line with the leave year.

Reviewing Performance

Goals for the leave year should be reviewed, refreshed and updated with line managers in advance of the leave year where possible - it is vital that the minimum expected standards are set, as well as what good performance looks like, so that both Officer and line manager are clear on what these standards are (it may be appropriate to carry goals across from the previous year, but these must be reviewed regularly to make sure they are still relevant).

To enable effective performance management, Officers and line managers should have regular conversations (ideally monthly), which should be recorded, with the aim of supporting the Officer to perform and/or behave at the required standard, and to discuss:

* expectations on role and its associated performance standards, as well as any changes in Council requirements and personal circumstances;
* wellbeing, development, feedback, and demonstrated performance.

Rewarding Good Performance and Challenging Poor Performance

Recognising and Rewarding Excellent Performance and Behaviours

A focus of this Policy is to foster and recognise high performance.

Where performance against agreed goals is satisfactory or above expectations the Council wishes to recognise this. It will normally be the case that, where goals are met or exceeded consistently across the year, the Officer will progress up any pay spine point progression scale applicable to their contract of employment (as agreed by the Personnel Sub-Committee).

Poor Performance

If performance/behaviour dips, or is below minimum standards, it is important that line managers give respectful and compassionate support to the Officer - an Officer’s performance and/or behaviours can dip for several reasons, including but not limited to:

* lack of training;
* lack of will/motivation;
* skills or knowledge gaps;
* misunderstandings about expectations;
* line manager management style/relationship with the Officer;
* Councillor attitudes/relationships;
* workplace relationships;
* environmental factors;
* health or other issues outside of work.

Addressing Poor Performance

The Council expects all Officers to perform effectively and to work with their line manager to identify areas for development and improvement, and line managers are responsible for addressing poor performance fairly, effectively and promptly.

Where there is poor performance, the line manager and Officer should work together to help restore the Officer’s performance. In most cases, dealing with the dip early and compassionately will prevent performance deteriorating and the need for formal poor performance procedures, which can be challenging and time consuming.

Line managers and Officers should have an open conversation to identify the cause for the dip in performance. From this discussion, the line manager and Officer can then agree ways of moving forward to prevent the dip from becoming an ongoing issue.

Support from the line manager should be provided to the Officer to enable them to improve and can include ensuring that any formal or informal training or coaching is provided. It may be helpful to agree one or more short-term goals that articulate what the Officer is expected to do by a certain point to bring their performance and/or behaviours back up to the expected level. It is essential that the measuring how to do this is clear to both parties.

At each such review, the Officer’s delivery against their expected performance standard along with feedback from relevant stakeholders and any mitigating factors should be considered. The line manager can then either:

* end the support process where the Officer has demonstrated they are able to deliver the expected performance and/or behaviours;
* continue the process of support where the Officer has demonstrated some progress but needs additional time to demonstrate this consistently;
* begin the Managing Poor Performance process (below), if all reasonable support has been provided to the Officer, yet performance and/or behaviours have not improved.

It is essential that a careful judgement is exercised on assessing the seriousness of the situation and each is decided on its own merit, as they will vary from person to person. In limited situations, it may be necessary to initiate the Managing Poor Performance process immediately.

Managing Poor Performance Process

Overview

This process outlines the procedure to manage poor performance and must be followed to ensure the statutory code of practice, as laid out by Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), has been adhered to.

Line managers will:

* review and consider available information and assess the current context and circumstance to understand the reasons for a dip in performance;
* deal with any issues affecting performance promptly, effectively, fairly and supportively;
* check that the Officer is aware of the level of performance required of them;
* provide all reasonable help, support and encouragement to assist the Officer to reach and maintain the required performance standards.

Performance Management Meeting

Such meetings enable line managers and Officers to address poor performance and should be convened to enable that discussion.

Before the meeting, line managers must:

* invite the Officer to the meeting in writing to discuss their performance - this should contain sufficient information about the alleged poor performance and its possible consequences, including any previous performance discussion notes, to enable the Officer to prepare for the meeting;
* make and take into account any necessary workplace adjustments required under the Equality Act 2010;
* notify the Officer of their statutory right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.
* give the Officer at least 5 working days’ notice of the meeting - if the Officer (or their colleague or TU representative) cannot attend, the meeting may be postponed once, for up to a further 5 days.

In the meeting the line manager should:

* come to the meeting with an open mind;
* set out clearly the specific areas that are falling below the required performance standard, and the consequences of not improving performance;
* give the Officer the opportunity to reply or raise any issues or factors that may have impacted upon performance (for instance personal issues);
* discuss any possible solutions, including what support is available to the Officer (such as training, etc);
* discuss the timescale during which an improvement is expected;
* recognise that either party has the right to request a short adjournment to consider any points raised.

At the end of the meeting line managers should decide what action to take - the potential outcomes are that:

* the line manager may decide no further action is required;
* a verbal warning may be issued, or if there has been a series of dips in performance that have not progressed beyond a verbal warning, a written warning may be issued;
* where a verbal warning has not resulted in improvements, a written warning may be issued - this may be a first written warning or a final writ*t*en warning;
* where a final written warning has not resulted in sufficient improvement the line manager may recommend dismissal of the Officer, or an alternative sanction.

After any meeting the line manager should write to the Officer within 2 working days, including:

* a note of the discussion and performance issues;
* agreed actions - eg workplace adjustments or training;
* the decision taken (where no warning or sanction is to be issued, the line manager should describe the reasoning);
* any improvement required from the Officer;
* any help and support available to the Officer;
* the date of the next meeting (if any).

Written warnings

Written warnings must include a review period in which an Officer has the opportunity and support to improve their performance. If the Officer’s performance has improved, the line manager should use the meeting at the end of the review period to advise them that no further poor performance actions are necessary. Performance management can then revert to the normal process.

Dismissal Decision

Where an Officer has not improved their performance after a final written warning, dismissal may be necessary. This will be a matter for the Personnel Sub-Committee to decide upon, and where the Personnel Sub-Committee concludes that the Officer should be dismissed the Sub-Committee Chairman should notify the Officer of their decision in writing, within 5 working days of the meeting, including:

* the reasons for the decision;
* the date on which the decision becomes effective;
* the appropriate period of notice, if relevant;
* the individual’s right of appeal and the time limits for such.

Appeals

An appeal against a dismissal decision must be received by the Council within 5 working days of the Officer receiving the decision and must specify the grounds of appeal.

The appeal will be heard by a panel of 3 Councillors who have not previously been involved in the case. The Appeal Panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.

The Officer will be notified, in writing, within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal of the time, date and place of the Appeal Meeting. The meeting will take place within 25 working days of the Council’s receipt of the appeal. The Officer will be advised that they may be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a friend, a trade union representative, or a trade union official.

At the Appeal Meeting, the Chairman will:

* introduce the Appeal Panel to the Officer;
* explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the Officer’s reasons for appealing against the decision of the Personnel Sub-Committee;
* explain the action that the Appeal Panel may take.

The Officer (or their companion) will be asked to explain the grounds of their appeal.

The Chairman will inform the Officer that they will receive the decision and the Appeal Panel’s reasons, in writing, within 5 working days of the Appeal Meeting.

The Appeal Panel may decide to uphold the decision of the Personnel Sub-Committee or substitute its own decision.

The decision of the Appeal Panel is final.

Document control

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