

# Local Government **Chief Executive Appraisal**

**Best Practice Guidelines 2024**



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# 1. Introduction

The Chief Executive in local government is a key strategic leadership role. It requires the role holder to have a diverse skill set including corporate leadership, professional policy advice, political management, resource stewardship, sound governance, risk assessment, emergency planning and modelling public service values.

The role is highly visible, and the role holder is accountable to the Elected Members.

Done well, regular feedback and evaluation of performance are the cornerstones of growth and development in every occupation. These best practice guidelines will help Councils develop a robust and fair process for appraising the Chief Executive. The aim is to create regional consistency, and at the same time enable local customisation of how the appraisal process is conducted.

These best practice guidelines consist of the following sections:

- Purpose of the appraisal
- Appraisal process
- Indicative timetable, time commitment and time in career.

The appendices contain resources and examples which Councils may customise for their use.

## 2. Purpose

This section sets out the why, when, how, what, and who of the appraisal process.

### 2.1 Why appraise the Chief Executive?

The purpose of the appraisal performance system for Council Chief Executives is to increase accountability for Council outcomes, through feedback, support and development.

The appraisal process provides timely, clear and focused input to the Chief Executive about how well he or she is performing in the key performance areas which are the most critical for progressing the Council's corporate strategy and objectives.

The benefits of an effective appraisal process include:

- Motivate, encourage and develop the Chief Executive
- Mutual clarity about the Chief Executive's key objectives and indicators of success
- Increase accountability and oversight of performance
- Early identification of any areas of concern, including wellbeing
- Improve communication, trust and respect between Chief Executive and Members
- Two-way structured feedback, learning and development for all involved.

### 2.2 When does the appraisal happen?

Appraisal is a process not a one-off meeting. It is conducted over the 12-month annual cycle of the Council year from the beginning of April to the end of March. The appraisal process consists of a range of activities such as preparation of performance feedback and information, scheduling of diaries, HR oversight and guidance, appraisal meetings to review the period from the start of the appraisal timeframe and at the end of the year, to set goals for the next year, development and support planning, and carrying out the actions resulting from the appraisal decisions.

Formal appraisal discussions take place annually when the performance of the Chief Executive is reviewed, and relevant objectives are set for the year ahead.

In addition, it is recommended that a mid-year interim review is held to update on progress and if necessary, revise goals and objectives. For example, the external context may have changed, or new opportunities have arisen which have implications for Council priorities. In some circumstances such as the appointment of a new Chief Executive, reviews may be held more frequently, as required.

An indicative timetable for the annual appraisal cycle is set out in Section 4. Adequate time must be committed by all parties to ensure the appraisal process is meaningful and beneficial to all involved.

This is challenging as Elected Members and Chief Executives are usually 'time poor'. Therefore, the appraisal process needs to take account of diary pressures and availability, and how best to 'chunk' the stages in the process to maximise participation.

### 2.3 How should appraisal be conducted?

Appraisal in local government must be a robust process which is fair and transparent. A Chief Executive can only maximise outcomes if Elected Members make appropriate decisions in Chamber. This two-way accountability and mutual support forms part of the appraisal discussions on performance.

The process therefore should include two-way feedback, where the Chief Executive has the opportunity to reflect on how well both Elected Members and the manner in which business has been conducted in the Council, have assisted them in leading the organisation forward.

Good practice in appraisal is openness, fairness and transparency and ensuring that the principle of "no surprises" is at the heart of the process.

Confidentiality is critical throughout the appraisal process. The content of the Chief Executive appraisal process should be treated as confidential to the participants. The Panel and the Chief Executive should be aware of their responsibilities under the relevant Code of Conduct.

### 2.4 What measures are used to appraise the Chief Executive?

The Chief Executive's performance can be measured using four sets of indicators:

- i. Essential Chief Executive accountabilities for areas such governance, risk management, statutory compliance, legal responsibilities and election management in particular years.
- ii. Council goals and objectives including the production of the Local Development Plan, as the Chief Executive has ultimate responsibility for implementing the Council's corporate and operating plans; while some of these are delegated to others, the Chief Executive is still responsible for 'seeing to it' that these are delivered; other corporate areas include partnership working, strategic influencing and positioning, and securing investment to drive growth and sustainability.
- iii. Leadership behaviours and style, as the Chief Executive is a role model of the standards, values and culture within the Council. This has an impact on how the brand and reputation of the Council and the area is perceived internally and externally.
- iv. An important indicator of performance is the Chief Executive's wellbeing and resilience. Self-care is an important aspect for how Chief Executives protect themselves from the detrimental effects of leadership, enabling them to recharge, recover and reset.

In recent years, discussions on performance management recognise wellbeing as a key factor in improving overall performance. Research has demonstrated that ineffective leadership can result in exhaustion<sup>1</sup> and burnout<sup>2</sup>.

Agreement over what constitutes the role of the Chief Executive, and the measures of good performance are essential pre-requisites to ensure the process is robust and fair. Appendix 2 sets out examples of what 'good looks like'. Each Appraisal Panel and Chief Executive can develop indicators that are bespoke to their Council.

Sources of reference information for the Appraisal Panel include the Chief Executive's job description and the [local government competency framework](#).

## 2.5 Who is involved in the appraisal process?

The responsibility for appraising the Chief Executive lies with Elected Members. It is recommended that this be done by a small representative group of Elected Members on behalf of the whole Council.

The Appraisal Panel should consist of between 3 and 5 Elected Members. This is a choice for each Council in the light of their own local circumstances and wider operating procedures. The make-up of the Panel should ensure a gender balance, seniority and cross-party representation, made up of individuals who have the relevant appraisal skills and insight into the complexity of organisational leadership.

Depending on the Council's particular context and political balance, options for the Panel Membership could be one of the following:

- a. The Group Leaders of the parties/political groups<sup>3</sup> within the Council; or
- b. A group of Elected Members nominated by Council specifically for that purpose; or
- c. A Committee or Sub-Committee of Council, e.g. the Member Development Steering Group - or similarly one charged with matters related to employment, staffing, governance or another function relevant to the issue at hand.

The Panel is appointed at the start of each mandate. Ideally the same Panel Members will conduct the appraisal process for the duration of the 4-year mandate. Panel Members should participate in the appraisal training and be able to commit the time required to fully engage in the process. Benefits to Panel Members include developing insight into the Chief Executive leadership role and acquiring skills that they can use in other areas of their work and life.

It is vital that those conducting the appraisal bear in mind at all times that the Chief Executive is employed by the Council as a whole, is therefore required to serve all of the Council and that those conducting the appraisal act self-evidently in the interest of the Council as a whole. A detailed description of roles and responsibilities is set out in Appendix 3.

This guide is written assuming that an external facilitator is appointed to assist the Council through the process. The facilitator brings independence and expertise as well as helping the Appraisal Panel avoid pitfalls such as unstructured meetings, violations of confidentiality, personal agendas. Their role is to ensure that the process is professional and constructive, runs smoothly and leaves the Chief Executive motivated and all parties clear about expectations.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Every Light has its Shadow*, Zwingmann et al 2016

<sup>2</sup> *The Self-Sacrificial Nature of Leader Identity: Understanding the Costs and Benefits at Work and Home*, Lanaj, Gabriel et al 2021

<sup>3</sup> *Party Political Groups refer to those parties as recognised by their Council as a group e.g. with 2+ members*

<sup>4</sup> *Councils may choose not to use an external facilitator and use an officer such as their Head of Human resources to fulfil the role. The only caveat with this is that it can put the Head of HR in a difficult position if the Panel and Chief Executive do not agree with the outcomes of the appraisal (see Section 3.3).*

It is acknowledged that Councils may choose an officer such as the Council's Head of Human Resources (HR) to fulfil the role of facilitator. The potential risk with this option is where problematic situations arise which cause the Head of HR to have either a conflict of interest (if the Chief Executive's performance is below what the Panel expects) or having sufficient authority to challenge the Panel's behaviour (if the appraisal process is conducted unfairly). The independence of the facilitator is helpful in these types of scenarios to challenge and provide guidance as required.

## 3. Getting it Right

This section sets out the stages in the process, ending with a summary of the do's and don'ts of the process.

The three stages in the appraisal process are

- i. Preparation
- ii. Appraisal Meeting(s)
- iii. Decision making and reporting

### 3.1 Preparation

Adequate preparation by all involved is the key to an effective appraisal process. This section will detail the preparatory activities to be undertaken by the Chief Executive and the Panel with input from the facilitator and Head of Human Resources (HR).

#### 3.1.1 Chief Executive Preparation

The Chief Executive's preparation consists of a self-assessment of how they have delivered on the previous 12 months' objectives. The facilitator can assist the Chief Executive to review their year and to identify relevant information and facts to include in their summary report, which may be a PowerPoint presentation or Word document.

The Chief Executive will also want to describe the context of the previous 12 months, highlighting the challenges, opportunities and other issues that may have impacted on their performance. As the Chief Executive's objectives are strategic and corporate, the Chief Executive may draw on information and data from different parts of the Council.

The Chief Executive may bring other information into the appraisal self-assessment such as 360 feedback<sup>5</sup>, awards, achievements, or qualifications that testify to the quality of their performance and evidence of self-development. Also relevant are external roles that they may have held during the year which have been beneficial to the Council.

Given the importance of well-being, the Chief Executive may share information that relates to their personal resilience and how that has affected their performance and the fulfilment of their role.

<sup>5</sup> This refers to a recognised 360 assessment instrument which may have been completed a part of the Chief Executive's development activities during the year.



### 3.1.2 Panel Preparation

The facilitator will contact the Members of the Panel in advance of the appraisal meeting(s) to discuss the agenda, clarify their role and elicit their views on the Chief Executive's performance. This enables Members of the Panel to begin to organise their input and feedback to the process, clarify any points they wish to make or raise any concerns that they have. The facilitator can clarify any process points and ensure that all Members of the Panel have completed the appraisal training<sup>6</sup> and are comfortable with the process.

The facilitator can share the key themes from the preparatory Panel discussions with the Chief Executive.

This gives the Chief Executive an opportunity to address any relevant issues or concerns in their performance report. It also avoids 'unexpected surprises' being introduced during the appraisal discussion and ensures that feedback is factual, relevant and focussed on performance. The facilitator's role is to moderate the process, to ensure it runs smoothly and is conducted in a fair, professional and constructive manner.

### 3.1.3 Other Sources

The Council's Lord Mayor, Mayor or the Chair can contribute directly or indirectly to the appraisal process. These role holders work closely with the Chief Executive for their year in office. Their experience gives them a 'whole Council' perspective which is valuable to include in the appraisal.

If the Mayor/Chair undertakes the appraisal training, they may participate as part of the appraisal Panel for the year of their office. Alternatively, they may provide feedback to the facilitator who can share it with the Panel.

There may be other sources of data which relate to the Chief Executive's role such as staff surveys, stakeholder or 360 feedback, cultural audits or peer reviews.

### 3.1.4 Liaison with HR

The Head of HR has an important role in ensuring the appraisal process and decision fit with the relevant employment legislation and Council 'people' policies, and to provide technical advice if required. The facilitator and the Head of HR will liaise throughout the preparatory phase to arrange diaries and logistics.

The Head of HR will arrange the training for their Council's Panel, either directly themselves or through member services.

### 3.1.5 Facilitator Input

The facilitator will be familiar with local government and the role of the Chief Executive. The external facilitator may bring with them wider sector experience and an external objective perspective. Frequently, the facilitator has an ongoing mentoring role with the Chief Executive and is known and trusted by the Appraisal Panel.

The facilitator is responsible for ensuring that everyone can fully participate in the process through being well prepared. They may chair the appraisal meetings<sup>7</sup>, write the appraisal summary detailing the discussions, decisions and outcomes. The benefit of the external facilitator is their independence which lowers the risk of role conflict or bias in the process.

<sup>6</sup>As recommended in the APSE report, resources for appraisal training are being developed regionally and will be available for Councils to use, to create regional consistency and good practice.

<sup>7</sup>The appraisal meeting may be chaired by one of the Panel, by the Mayor/Chair or by the Facilitator.



### 3.2 Appraisal Meeting(s)

This section sets out guidance on the content of the appraisal meeting(s) and how the feedback discussion may be structured. The appraisal has two parts:

- Part 1 looks back to review achievements and performance (45-60 minutes).
- Part 2 looks forward to agree future objectives and plan development (45-60 minutes).

Parts 1 & 2 can be combined into a single meeting or split over two meetings with a relatively short interval between them. Each Council can determine what works best for them.

#### 3.2.1 Part 1: Looking Back

Part 1 of the appraisal consists of a presentation by the Chief Executive, followed by discussion and feedback with the Panel. This may take the form of a PowerPoint slide deck or a written word report which the Chief Executive can present to the Panel. Given the confidential and respectful nature of the process, e-copies of the documentation are not shared beyond the Panel. Any hard copies of reports that are issued, are taken back at the end of the meeting.

The Chief Executive's summary will cover the following:

- Overview of the year: context, achievements and challenges
- Progress against objectives and any mitigating factors<sup>8</sup> that impacted on performance
- Any stakeholder feedback or data from other sources
- How their well-being, learning, and professional development needs have been met.

The Chair will invite feedback from each Member of the Panel, considering the following:

- a. Have relevant objectives been met? Were they realistic?
- b. What went well?
- c. What caused the non-delivery of objectives – were there factors outside the Chief Executive's control?
- d. How did the Chief Executive demonstrate leadership: building organisation capacity for excellence, partnership working and relationships building, civic engagement, personal style and role modelling?

In addition, the whole Panel should consider if there are adequate processes in place to provide support and promote the Chief Executive's well-being? The facilitator will guide discussions to maintain focus on overall performance rather than single issues.

#### 3.2.2 Part 2: Looking Forward

Part 2 of the appraisal focusses on the future:

- Agreeing the Chief Executive's goals, outcomes and indicators of success
- Professional development and well-being planning
- Seeking support and any 'asks' of Members.

It is recommended that the Chief Executive will have given thought to what their future goals and objectives may be and share these with the Panel for discussion and ratification. Future goals will relate to the Chief Executive's accounting officer role, Council corporate priorities and leadership behaviours.

Given the executive strategic nature of the Chief Executive's role, goals and objectives may be less tangible, more long term and less easy to measure compared to frontline management roles. See Appendix 5 for an example of objectives, descriptions and indicators of success.

<sup>8</sup> *Mitigating factors may include Chief Executive illness, bereavement, absence of key personnel, industrial relations, external crises or critical incidents. This is not exhaustive Panels need to consider to what extent factors in the wider context impacted on delivery when assessing the Chief Executive's performance.*

### 3.3 Appraisal Outcomes

When Parts 1 and 2 have been completed, the Chief Executive is asked to step out of the meeting while the facilitator assists the Panel to agree the appraisal outcome. The Chief Executive rejoins the meeting and is informed of the outcome decision and discuss next steps.

The appraisal outcome decision should be recorded and noted in the appraisal report, which the facilitator writes and is signed off by the Chief Executive, Panel and Head of HR.

There are a number of possible appraisal outcomes:

- Chief Executive met performance expectations,
- Chief Executive did not meet performance expectations due to mitigating factors, or
- Chief Executive did not meet performance expectations.

Each of these decisions has implications for next steps in regard to decisions about salary scale progression, increment payments<sup>9</sup>, development planning and support needs.

If the appraisal decision is unfavourable the Chief Executive may wish to appeal the decision formally. This section describes each of these outcomes and the associated actions.

#### 3.3.1 Meets Performance Expectations

Where overall performance has been consistent with that which might normally be expected at this level, generally all targets have been met and core leadership skills demonstrated then it will be recorded that the Chief Executive has met performance expectations. This will enable them to be awarded any relevant pay increments linked to performance.

Increments apply from 1<sup>st</sup> April, although the appraisal process may not be completed until June. Retrospective payment may therefore apply.

The Head of Human Resources will confirm outcomes in writing and arrange payment of any awarded increment.

#### 3.3.2 Mitigating Factors

Where targets have not been achieved, consideration needs to be given to the reason for what may appear to be lack of success. The Panel need to consider any mitigating factors which may have resulted in objectives not being achieved.

This includes consideration of the circumstances of the past year and forming a judgement as to overall performance. There may have been factors outside the Chief Executive's control which impacted on their performance, and these must be taken into account.

Measuring achievement of the Chief Executive's core leadership skills must be an integral part of this decision. This means determining if the Chief Executive has demonstrated effective leadership and judgement. The competences in Appendix 1 may be used as a framework for assessing this. If so, the Chief Executive may be considered to have met performance expectations in the face of difficult circumstances.

The Panel needs to exercise judgment and take advice on how to conduct the appraisal process in unusual circumstances such as prolonged absence due to ill-health.

If the Panel decides that considering the mitigating factors, performance expectations have been met, then any relevant performance related increments can be made.

<sup>9</sup>At the time of writing, the guidelines for N. Ireland Local Government pay and reward policy for Chief Executives are being reviewed. Councils will use these to determine how pay scales, performance and cost of living increments are applied to the Chief Executive following the outcome of the appraisal process.

### **3.3.3 Did Not Meet Performance Expectations**

Where the Panel agrees that overall performance does not meet the expected level, they should identify specific shortcomings and evidence of missed agreed targets. If the outcomes are that the Panel decides the Chief Executive has not met performance expectations, then this will result in no performance related incremental salary progression.

The Chief Executive may request that the Panel reconvene after a short interval to consider further supplementary evidence the Chief Executive can present to support their performance. If the Chief Executive's supplementary evidence is adequate, then the Panel may decide that performance expectations have been met.

If the Panel remains of the same view that there is a shortfall in performance, then their decision stands.

It is the duty of the Panel to require self-development activities and support that will assist the Chief Executive improve their performance in the relevant aspects of the role.

### **3.3.4 Appeal**

If the Chief Executive disagrees with their appraisal outcome (e.g. in terms of the objectives proposed or the assessment of performance) they may appeal against it. They should submit detailed, written grounds for their appeal to the Head of HR, who will arrange an appeal meeting. Any appeal can be referred to an appropriate independent third party with no previous involvement in the process.

The Appeal Panel will comprise two individuals, who will consider the written appeal and any oral submission that the Chief Executive wishes to make. The Chief Executive may wish to be accompanied by an appropriate representative. The outcome of the appeal i.e. upheld or not upheld will be kept on the Chief Executive's personal file. The Appeal Panel's decision will be final.

### **3.3.5 Reporting**

The facilitator will prepare a report of the actions emerging from the appraisal meeting, including the Chief Executive's personal development plan. The report should be signed by the Chief Executive and the Chair of the Panel and kept on the Chief Executive's personal file. The report will be used as the basis for the next appraisal.

However, with the agreement of all parties, it may be reported to an appropriate Committee meeting that an appraisal interview has taken place.

### 3.4 Summary of Good Practice Do's and Don'ts

The table below sums up good practice factors and pitfalls to be avoided.

Do	Don't
Prepare well and be informed	Have unrealistic expectations
Appoint and train a balanced Panel	Send substitutes
Agree what 'good' looks like	Have different yardsticks to measure
Allow two-way feedback	Hold an inquisition on a 'hot topic'
Keep free of interruptions	Hold appraisal during a Council crisis
Focus on facts and evidence	Give unsubstantiated subjective opinions
Understand the complexity of the Chief Executive role	Oversimplify the demands of the Chief Executive role
Attend to Chief Executive's well being	Ignore indicators of stress or burnout
Take account of mitigating factors	Break confidentiality
Set realistic goals linked to corporate priorities, Chief Executive accountabilities and leadership style	Have unrealistic expectations about what can be achieved
Give time to address shortfalls	Judge performance through a political lens
Focus on strengths and achievements	Focus on weaknesses – no one is perfect
Set aside adequate time	Let strong personalities dominate
Keep it legal and aligned with policy	Hesitate to get advice if difficulties arise

## 4. Timetable, Time Commitment and Time in Career

The terms and conditions of service for Chief Executives in Northern Ireland require that an annual formal appraisal be conducted. This is a contractual requirement and needs to be fulfilled.

It is recommended that Councils have a less formal six-monthly interim review to keep things on track and recalibrate expectations if necessary. The interim review is good practice.

Members and the Chief Executive currently hold ongoing discussions throughout the year on Council performance, issues and challenges. This is recognised as an area of best practice and feeds into the annual performance appraisal.

#### 4.1 Annual Timeline

Councils are advised to agree their timeline and reporting arrangements and include these in their Chief Executive Appraisal procedure. An indicative timetable for the annual appraisal cycle is set out below:

What	When	Who
Set dates in diaries	January	Chief Executive /HR/Panel and Facilitator
Confirm Panel Membership and training, if necessary	February	Chief Executive / HR/Panel
Preparation by facilitator with the Panel	March	Facilitator/Panel
Preparation by facilitator with Chief Executive	March	Facilitator/CE
Formal Performance Appraisal Annually	April / early May	Chief Executive /HR/Panel and Facilitator
Paperwork and summary report completed	31 <sup>st</sup> May	Facilitator
Pay increments (all that apply) Post appraisal processed	31 <sup>st</sup> May	HR
Report to Council (AGM)	June	HR
Interim review (optional)	October / November	Chief Executive /HR/Panel and Facilitator
Objectives revised, if appropriate	November	Chief Executive /HR/Panel and Facilitator

#### 4.2 Time Commitment

All parties need to set aside time to prepare for the appraisal interview. Based on experience, the following time commitments may be required:

- Approximately 3 days for the Chief Executive's preparation.
- Up to 0.5-day appraisal training for the Panel Members as well as 1 hour for preparation and at least 2 hours for the appraisal interview.
- 3-5 days for the external facilitator to support the preparation of all parties, conduct the '360' feedback using the Chief Executive competences, facilitate the appraisal interview, write up the appraisal summary report and ensure it is signed off by the Chief Executive/HR and the Panel.
- The internal HR contact person has a key ongoing role over the 12 months to liaise with all parties, ensure clarity about roles, arrange Panel training, ongoing communication and information sharing, and overseeing the links between the appraisal with pay increments and budgets for development plans.

### 4.3 Time in Career

The appraisal process should take account of where the Chief Executive is in their career. For example, they may be:

- Newly appointed as Chief Executive
- Experienced Chief Executive
- Mature Chief Executive approaching the end of their career

This section makes some suggestions about how the appraisal process can support the Chief Executive at these different stages.

#### 4.3.1. *Newly appointed Chief Executive*

A new Chief Executive appointed to the role requires support and development particularly during the first 12 months, in parallel with the Chief Executive's probationary period.

The Appraisal Panel will focus on setting clear and appropriate goals for the first 12 months with an emphasis on the new Chief Executive's learning and development. Coaching and mentoring should be put in place to support the new Chief Executive. In some instances, the mentor may become the external facilitator of the appraisal process.

In this situation, the Appraisal Panel may meet with the Chief Executive to review their performance at 3/6/9/ and 12 monthly stages.

Where the individual has previous Chief Executive experience, and perhaps outside of local government, the Panel has an important role at the outset in clarifying expectations about performance, accountabilities and leadership style.

A mismatch in expectations can arise when there is a new Chief Executive, who may have a different style and approach from their predecessor (especially if that person had held the role for a long time).

It may take 12-18 months for the new Chief Executive's approach to bed in. Judgment about their performance must take account about the level of organisational change they are having to lead. Like the previous example, mentoring/coaching support and other developmental activities for the new Chief Executive are important in the first 12 months, as well as interim review of performance and clarification of objectives during the year.

#### 4.3.2 *Experienced Chief Executive*

The appraisal process for an experienced Chief Executive is an important factor determining their motivation and resilience in the role. It must be a meaningful and fair process. While the Panel can set more ambitious goals and targets commensurate with the Chief Executive's capability and experience, it must also ensure that the Chief Executive's development goals are stretching and in line with the demands of the role.

Development at this level may not necessarily involve 'courses' but may include mentoring, opportunities to network and exposure to 'best' or 'novel' practices in other organisations or sectors.

Encouraging the experienced Chief Executive to continue learning and growing professionally and personally will benefit the rest of the executive team and the staff and is more likely to enable organisational improvement and innovation.

### ***4.3.3 Mature Chief Executive approaching the end of their career***

The appraisal process for a Chief Executive towards the end of their career is important in ensuring the Chief Executive is still energised by the role and motivated to perform. The Panel nor the Chief Executive should be overly focussed on 'retirement'.

Performance goals at this stage will link to succession planning, building the executive team capacity for continuity and performance during the leadership transition, and the Chief Executive passing on their experience and expertise to others through their mentoring and development of staff.



# Appendices



# Appendix 1:

## Chief Executive Leadership Behavioural Competences

**Cultural and Transformational Change:** Ability to successfully drive, manage and sustain major cultural and transformational change.

**Leadership:** Ability to inspire senior managers, staff, Elected Members, communities, and partners towards the achievement of goals which realise the full potential of the Council's area.

**Vision:** Ability to lead and develop a clear vision for the Council and to formulate, implement and monitor strategic plans to achieve Council objectives and advance the Council's position at local, regional, national, and international levels.

**Innovative decision-making:** Ability to apply and encourage innovative thinking, make valid judgments, and reach decisions based upon analysis of relevant information and risk assessment.

**Trust and respect:** Ability to set, maintain and model the highest standards of professional and ethical behaviour, engendering the trust and respect of Elected Members and others and the ability to develop and maintain effective partnership arrangements both internally and externally.

**Forward planning in a political environment:** Ability to look ahead, anticipate and assess options, taking into account political priorities and sensitivities and lead others to ensure that plans are based on the best options.

**Political advice and management:** Proven success in providing high level, balanced advice, and guidance on strategic issues in a highly pressurised environment and the ability to manage the Member / Officer interface and retain a high degree of probity and integrity.

**Communication and presentation skills:** Excellent oral, written and presentational skills, with the ability to represent and promote the interests of the Council at local, regional, national, and international levels.

**Democracy, public service and financial management:** Commitment to the concept and value of local democracy, public service and good governance and the ability to undertake the role of Chief Financial Officer showing a sound appreciation of public / local government financial management.

**Equality and diversity:** Ability to understand the implications of promoting equality and diversity and to ensure that the development of services, policies and procedures reflects these needs.

*Other resources include:*

### Local Government Chief Executive Development Framework

The LGA have developed a 360 tool specifically designed for Chief Executives, which links to the appraisal process to support personal development. The tool collects online information from feedback from individually determined groups that may include Members, partners and staff.



## Appendix 2: What does good look like?

It is important that the Panel and Chief Executive have a shared understanding of the Chief Executive role and agree how they would judge a 'good' Council - which should be the product of a Chief Executive's effective performance.

Examples of what Members of one local Council agreed as indicators are the following:

1. Agile and responsive
2. Award winning
3. Clean unqualified audit/no adverse reporting
4. Delivers for constituents and staff
5. Financially sound and resilience
6. Good governance
7. Good relationships internal and externally
8. Good reputation - trusted by the public and other external stakeholders
9. Meeting quality standards: legal, health and safety, financial
10. One organisation - everyone bought in to achieving the goals.

# Appendix 3:

## Roles and Responsibilities

### **Single Point of Contact (Head of Human Resources or Equivalent)**

- Keep up to date with communications/updates
- Refresh current practice against the Best Practice Guidelines
- Ensure the appraisal system meets the Council's agreed timeline (or the indicative timeline detailed at section 4.1)
- Communicate with all those involved
- Oversee the schedule
- Provide any documentation/templates e.g. objectives, development plan, Presentation
- Co-ordinate appointment of the External Facilitator
- Oversee that the Appraisal Panel has reasonable gender/political balance.

### **External Facilitator**

- Provide impartial support and wider public sector experience
- Act as mentor to Chief Executive throughout the year.

### **External or Internal Facilitator**

- Ensure Members understand their role and that of the Chief Executive and undertake training
- Brief Members and Chief Executive before, during and after the appraisal
- Ensure discussions are strategic (through chairing the Panel or supporting the Chair)
- Cover all elements of the Performance Framework
- Agree annual outcomes and objectives, review previous objectives, and resolve issues
- Facilitate discussions on well-being and development
- Facilitate discussions to agree if Chief Executive has met/exceeded performance
- Agree if the criteria for the award of performance increments are met
- Prepare a summary report.

### **Chief Executive**

- Build ongoing relationships with all Members
- Fully engage in the performance appraisal process
- Do a self-assessment with the External Facilitator, pre appraisal
- During the appraisal, present a summary of progress on objectives and issues followed by two-way discussions
- Discuss next steps with Panel re: objectives, well-being and development
- Engage in well-being, development and mentoring.

**Appraisal Panel (Appointed for four years)**

- Representative of gender and political balance
- Complete training to understand their role, role of Chief Executive and the performance appraisal system
- Work with the external facilitator to prepare for the appraisal
- Engage in ongoing two-way discussions on Council and Chief Executive performance, issues and challenges
- Support the Chief Executive to achieve Council outcomes
- Be strategic and represent Council interests as a whole.

**Representative Bodies (NILGA, SOLACE, The Local Government Staff Commission, PPMA, Trade Unions)**

Standard job description and Terms and Conditions:

- NILGA to issue updated pay guidelines, re: discretionary performance increment
- NILGA to issue up to date Best Practice Guidelines
- NILGA to monitor application of the guidelines
- The Local Government Staff Commission to work with representative bodies to refresh the Local Government Competency Framework (strategic) for Chief Executive, if appropriate
- Review roles and responsibilities in resolving disputes.



## Appendix 4: Example Appraisal Agenda

Whether the appraisal is conducted over 1 or 2 meetings, it is recommended that the following agenda items need to be covered:

- i. Agreeing purpose and process of the appraisal, ground rules, overview of the agenda timings and decisions;
- ii. Presentation by Chief Executive of their assessment of their recent and current performance, well-being and resilience, taking note of the wider context and the challenges and opportunities that have impacted on their role over the last 12 months;<sup>10</sup>
- iii. Feedback and questions by Members of the Panel, moderated by the facilitator;
- iv. Response by Chief Executive to clarify issues, address any questions or concerns;
- v. Agreeing the next 12 months' objectives including well-being and development goals, performance targets and measures, and the actions required to ensure that these are achievable;
- vi. Development planning for Chief Executive;
- vii. Clarification by the facilitator of the appraisal decision;
- viii. Noting decisions and any follow up actions.<sup>11</sup>

The process of informal discussion regarding performance, as well as mentoring support should continue during the year.

<sup>10</sup> The Chief Executive should also present on any well-being issues that may have impacted on their performance and what support needs they have to sustain their resilience in the role

<sup>11</sup> Does the Chief Executive leave for Panel to agree decision/increment award?

## Appendix 5:

# Example objectives and indicators

Objective	Indicators
1. Work constructively with political leadership and Members to focus on the Corporate Plan delivery, the implementation of the governance processes to conduct business efficiently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular Party Group Leaders meetings</li> <li>• Absence of deferred decisions</li> <li>• Non disruption of services</li> </ul>
2. Put in place the Performance Framework for the Council developing a meaningful blend of statutory and local performance indicators and using non disruptive measurement and data collection methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly performance reports</li> <li>• Ease of understanding for Members</li> </ul>
3. Produce and implement annual business plans and service plans across the Council derived from the Corporate Plan framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance reports</li> <li>• Alignment of service work plans with corporate plan</li> </ul>
4. Increase the profile of the Council area with decision makers at regional, national, and international levels and engage the area stakeholders in community planning and economic development (especially the private sector) to drive the area's economic development and attract investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of support for an investment strategy for the area</li> </ul>
5. Establish a strong strategic executive team and one Council operational system focused on achieving quality and performance standards and creating a positive culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of Services and Systems across Council which are delivered locally</li> <li>• Staff engagement processes in place</li> </ul>
6. Develop strategic collaborative relationships with outside bodies which attract resources into the area and maximize the utilisation of existing assets, develop the infrastructure and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint initiatives with organisations such as Invest NI, NIHE, HSCTSs, Government departments, ALBs and relevant others</li> </ul>
7. Identify Members' support needs and put in place effective political support and Member Services and ICT strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage of Members rooms and research facility</li> <li>• Members' satisfaction with briefing and support</li> <li>• Confidentiality of all Members</li> </ul>
8. Deal effectively with the anticipated HR issues resulting from the organisational change required to operate sustainably	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contain HR issues minimise disruption</li> </ul>



