

Item: 5

Human Resources Sub-committee: 7 November 2023.

Good Conversations Process.

Report by Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider a revised process on Good Conversations for staff to replace the current Employee Review and Development process.

2. Recommendations

The Sub-committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, on 10 November 2016, the Human Resources Sub-committee recommended that the revised Corporate Learning and Development Policy, including the Competency Framework and Employee Review and Development Procedure, be approved.

2.2.

That, following feedback in respect of the existing Employee Review and Development Procedure, a less formal, less complex and more regular conversation model has been introduced on a trial basis, with feedback being very positive.

It is recommended:

2.3.

That the revised Employee Review and Development process, renamed 'Good Conversations', attached as Annex 1 to this report, be approved.

3. Background

3.1.

On 10 November 2016, the Human Resources Sub-committee recommended that the revised Corporate Learning and Development Policy, including the Competency Framework and Employee Review and Development Procedure, be approved. The current Employee Review and Development (ERD) process is therefore due for review and updating.

3.2.

The Organisational Development Team has researched the ERD processes in place with various other Scottish Local Authorities through the Organisational Development Network and carefully considered the pros and cons based on feedback from them. In addition, feedback on the existing Annual ERD process has been gathered from employees and managers across various services as part of the review. This information has been carefully considered and informed development of the new process.

3.3.

The importance of having a meaningful annual conversation is recognised in order to support employees. Providing opportunities for regular 1:1s including conversations around progress on priorities, personal development, and the Council's values and wellbeing, is essential to help ensure employees are developed to their full potential and ensure business continuity going forward.

3.4.

Based on feedback from employees, the need for a more user-friendly, less intimidating process is essential and although it is recognised that in some work areas regular 1:1s are more challenging due to location and numbers of staff, regular conversations between employees and line managers can only improve relationships, performance and wellbeing.

4. Process and Guidance

4.1.

Attached as Annex 1 to this report is the draft process which amends the current Employee Review and Development process in line with feedback from Managers, Employees and Trade Unions following consultation. The main changes are as follows:

- The process, now named 'Good Conversations' has an annual conversation and where possible followed up by regular 1:1/check ins and also team meetings.
- The annual conversation is based on a conversation model and topics to be included are provided in the guidance. Annual priorities are identified and discussions around the Council's values are encouraged. Discussions around the competency framework are no longer included as, in the long term, this framework will be completely removed and replaced by 'Our Values'.
- Work related priorities will be clarified for the year ahead and any support and development needed either for individuals and/or teams will be agreed.
- The conversations should be relaxed and meaningful and keep individuals feeling valued, motivated and engaged. They should help boost confidence and morale as well as help produce high performing individuals and teams.

4.2.

The conversation model is based on a less formal process which has proven to be a more positive experience for employees in organisations that have adopted a similar approach. The focus is less on the paperwork and more on the conversations between line managers and their team.

4.3.

It is recognised that one size does not fit all and therefore this Conversation model can be tailored to fit the many different professions and areas of work within the Council. Forms provided within Annex 1 can be altered to suit these situations provided priorities are set, and progress and problems arising are discussed during the year. The conversations about what is going well and what is not are also considered essential, as are the discussions around the five staff values and employee wellbeing.

4.4.

It is acknowledged that the Council has employee groups, due to numbers and/or location, where very regular conversations on say a monthly basis, would be immensely challenging and impracticable for managers to implement. In these areas an annual conversation with the values and employee wellbeing discussion included is acceptable. It is also recognised that there are certain employee groups who work very few hours and team conversations can be used for these as long as all participants are offered a 1:1 should they so wish.

4.5.

Team conversations can also be used on a regular basis where appropriate and a form is included in Annex 1 which covers this. The practice of having Team meetings is well embedded in Council services and there may be existing agenda arrangements. It may therefore be more practical for Teams to supplement these existing agendas with the key parts of the form rather than having to use the exact council Team conversation form. In such circumstances it is important that staff are given the opportunity to request a 1:1 should they wish.

4.6.

The Personal Development conversation is important for all employees, it includes mandatory e-learning, any learning to cover skills and knowledge gaps and development opportunities.

5. Implementation of new Procedure

5.1.

The process was soft launched in August 2023 and briefing sessions for line managers on the new process are already being delivered as part of the Corporate Learning and Development Programme and include time for questions and answers.

5.2.

The attached process which has been updated to include changes made by the trade unions will be circulated as soon as full approval is given.

5.3.

An evaluation of the new 'Good Conversation' process will be carried out 12 months after the introduction.

6. Trade Unions consultation

The recognised Trade Unions have been consulted in the creation of this process and changes requested have been made.

7. Human Resources Implications

The human resource implications are contained within the body of this report.

8. Equalities Impact

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Annex 2 to this report.

9. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council complying with governance and its duties as an employer and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

10. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report. The cost of compiling the data is met from existing service budgets.

11. Legal Aspects

There are no legal implications arising directly from the new procedure.

12. Contact Officers

Karen Greaves, Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions, extension 2202, email: karen.greaves@orkney.gov.uk.

Andrew Groundwater, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, extension 2253, email: andrew.groundwater@orkney.gov.uk.

Alison Skea, Service Manager (Organisational Development), extension 2157, email: alison.skea@orkney.gov.uk

13. Annexes

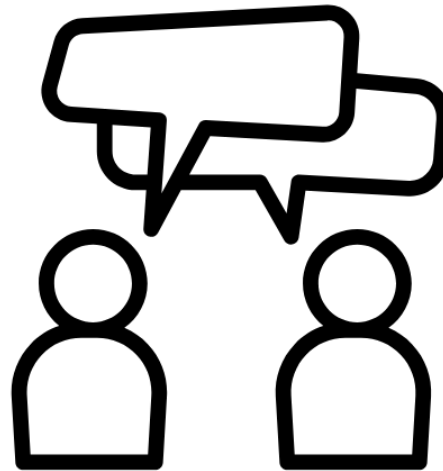
Annex 1: Good Conversations.

Annex 2: Equality Impact Assessment.



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Good Conversations

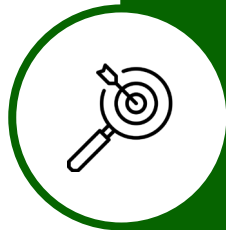


Create an Inspiring Culture



What are Good Conversations?

It is about a line manager having regular conversations with their employee(s) which focus on clarifying work related priorities for the year ahead, providing feedback and agreeing any support or development needed for employees and teams to be the best they can be. The ethos is all employees have the opportunity of talking about their job and the process should be adapted to make that happen in the most appropriate manner.



The purpose of Good Conversations

The purpose is to enable meaningful conversations which help build relationships, provide support and keep individuals feeling valued, motivated and engaged. They should help boost confidence and morale as well as help produce high performing individuals and teams. High performance and successfully delivering outcomes is achieved when managers consider the task, individuals and the team.



Good Conversation – What is it?

It is a relaxed but focussed conversation between the line manager and their employees / teams to discuss their progress and how they can be the best they can be at work.

There will be 3 parts of the conversation:

- Annual conversation
- Regular 1-2-1 check-ins
- Team check-ins

Good Conversations – What is involved?

Annual Conversation

Every employee will attend an annual conversation which will centre around 3 areas for discussion with the focus being on having a conversation and not about filling in a form or sitting around a computer.

It is a chance to step back and take stock by reflecting on the year that's been and what has been accomplished and to get prepared for the year ahead.

Managers should provide their employee with the blank form in advance of their annual conversation to allow them time to prepare and record their thoughts. Where possible this should be emailed back to the manager before the conversation takes place.

The 3 areas for discussion are:

What has gone well over the last year?

What might have gone even better?

What do you want to achieve / focus on for the year(s) ahead?

Supporting Questions for the Annual Conversation

Below is a list of supporting questions which can be used to aid conversations during the annual review between manager and employee.

What has gone well in the last year?

- What do you feel the most proud of in the last 12 months?
- What have you enjoyed working on most over the last year?
- What sense of achievement did you gain in the last year?
- Did you feel your achievement was recognised?

What might have gone even better?

- What has been challenging or had you feeling out of your comfort zone?
- What have you taken or learned from this experience?
- What support could help you achieve your priorities easier?

What do you want to achieve / focus on for the year(s) ahead?

- What do you think your priorities should be?
- What is your plan for achieving these priorities?
- What barriers / challenges might get in the way of achieving these priorities?
- What are your thoughts on the best way to overcome these barriers / challenges?
- How can I help you? What other support do you need?
- How are you hoping to develop in the next 12 months?
- Where do you see your career in the future?

Annual Conversation Form – See Appendix 1 for editable version

(Record brief bullet points only - priorities can be short and long term)

Employee Name		Employee Number:	
Job Title:		Date:	
What's gone well this year? (Achievements)	What might have gone even better this year? (Barriers)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 		
Commitments (What do you want to achieve / focus on in the future?)			
What do you want to focus on for the year ahead (Your Priorities)?	What do you need to support this (Personal Development)?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 		

Regular 1-2-1 Check-ins

In addition to the annual conversation, it is best practice that managers carry out regular 1-2-1 check-ins with their employees throughout the year covering specific topics. The topics covered below are the typical conversations that managers should be having with their employees. Research illustrates that regular good conversations lead to more productive and motivated team members.

These are conversations that can easily be incorporated into scheduled supervision or 1-2-1 meetings or simply be standalone quick check-ins in their own right. The frequency of check-ins and which topics should be discussed is entirely flexible and up to each manager and employee to discuss and agree. It is best practice to hold more regular 1-2-1 check-ins with employees you don't see as often.



Values

This topic focuses on the role modelling of the values. Using a coaching style work through the values with the employee finding out where they think they model the values and where they struggle to model the values.



Life and wellbeing

This topic will focus on both the employees' health and wellbeing. It should cover areas like resilience and dealing with change. The conversation should discuss anything that you as their manager can do to support them in the workplace, including workplace adjustments.



Ongoing Priorities

Review of the workload priorities discussed during the annual conversation. This conversation should happen regularly throughout the year.



Personal development

This topic should cover any development that was planned and any future development needs that have been identified.



Improvements

This topic focusses on what the employee thinks about improvements that can be made within the team or service.



Feedback

This conversation and all the conversations within this process should be focussing on the employee's strengths and building on these. The manager should start the conversation by asking the employee what they believe their main strengths are and then present their views on the employee's main strengths. If there are areas of concern with the employee's performance feedback should be given. More regular 1-2-1's would be expected where performance was an issue.

Supporting Questions for the 1-2-1 Check-Ins

					
<p>Council Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How well do you think you role model the values?• What value do you find easiest to role model?• Which value challenges you when role modelling it?• What can I do to support you role model the values?	<p>Life and Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do you feel about your work / life balance?• What worries or concerns do you have right now?• How resilient do you feel at present?• What impact are your working arrangements having on your wellbeing?• What is important to you in the next few years?	<p>Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progression on priorities linked to delivery of Council Plan, Service Plan and Team Plan?• Which priorities are you able to progress the best?• Do you have priorities that you are concerned might not be met?• How do you think you could meet those priorities?• What support do you need to meet those priorities?	<p>Personal Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you organised or completed any of your agreed development needs?• What did you find most useful?• What might be an area of development that might help you further in your job?	<p>Improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What, if any, improvements to your job have you identified since we last met?• What impact would the suggested improvements make?• What organisational improvements would you like to see implemented?	<p>Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What has been your biggest achievement so far this year?• What has been your biggest challenge so far this year?• What feedback would you like to give me?• Is there anything you are working on that you feel is out of your remit?

Supporting Questions for 1-2-1 Check-Ins with Senior Managers:



Priorities

In addition to the supporting questions on the previous page, the following should be discussed:

- Identify Service Risks
- Review Service Performance and Performance Indicators
- Update on budget position

1-2-1 Check-In Form – See Appendix 2 for editable version

(Existing recording processes can be used. The focus should be on the conversation)

Employee Name:		Employee Number:	
Job Title:		Date:	

 Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•
 Life and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•
 Progress on priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•
 Personal Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•
 Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•
 Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•

Team Check-ins

Managers should have regular check-ins which focus on ensuring the team is working well together. It is acknowledged that the frequency of team check-ins will vary across the Council; however, a minimum of 2 check-ins per year should take place. The following are suggested topics that can be used for team check-in conversations. (If you already hold regular team meetings then please continue to do so just ensure you cover certain topics like Council Values.)

Suggested topics for Team Check-ins:

The Council Plan

This allows a conversation to take place about what is happening across the Council and within your Service regarding the Council Plan and current projects and workstreams.

Employee Engagement

Employees will participate in a regular staff survey and this conversation allows managers to communicate the findings from the survey.

Celebrating Achievements

This is an opportunity to celebrate what the team are doing well, where they have gone the extra mile and reflect on the impact the team is having.

Current Performance

This is an opportunity for the team to review their performance against actions plans and targets.

Challenges and Ideas

Gives the team the opportunity to discuss the challenges and the tensions the team are facing. It is a chance to explore solutions and ways forward and ways of supporting each other.

Team Learning

A chance to share what we have learned; from events we have attended, articles we have read or what we have learned on the job.

Team Check-In Form – See Appendix 3 for editable version

(Optional - Managers may continue to use existing recording process (if in place))

Date of Meeting		
Topic of Conversation	Key Discussion	Actions
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•





Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a function, policy or plan by anticipating the consequences, and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

1. Identification of Function, Policy or Plan	
Name of function / policy / plan to be assessed.	Good Conversations process
Service / service area responsible.	HR & OD
Name of person carrying out the assessment and contact details.	Alison Skea, Service Manager (Organisational Development) alison.skea@orkney.gov.uk
Date of assessment.	03/10/2023
Is the function / policy / plan new or existing? (Please indicate also if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	Existing

2. Initial Screening	
What are the intended outcomes of the function / policy / plan?	This updated process should lead to a more meaningful conversation setting priorities and identification of support and development needs, leading to a more motivated and high performing organisation.
Is the function / policy / plan strategically important?	(Strategic plans include major investment plans, new strategic frameworks or plans such as annual budgets, locality plans or corporate plans).
State who is, or may be affected by this function / policy / plan, and how.	All employees at all levels should benefit from this less formal process.
How have stakeholders been	Consultation with many and varied staff groups

involved in the development of this function / policy / plan?	including recognised Trade Unions has taken place.
Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking (see equalities resources on OIC information portal).	The process has been informed by research into procedures in other local authorities and HR best practice from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Professional Development. Consultation has been carried out with the Corporate Leadership Team, various staff groups and trade unions.
Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.	(Please complete this section for proposals relating to strategic decisions).
Could the function / policy have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?	(Please provide any evidence – positive impacts / benefits, negative impacts and reasons). The process will be applied equally to all employees regardless of their equality strand.
1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.	No impact foreseen
2. Sex: a man or a woman.	No impact foreseen
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	No impact foreseen
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	No impact foreseen
5. Pregnancy and maternity.	No impact foreseen
6. Age: people of different ages.	No impact foreseen
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	No impact foreseen
8. Caring responsibilities.	No impact foreseen

9. Care experienced.	No impact foreseen
10. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	No impact foreseen
11. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	(Includes physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, mental health) No impact foreseen
12. Socio-economic disadvantage.	No impact foreseen

3. Impact Assessment

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	No
How could you minimise or remove any potential negative impacts?	N/A
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes

4. Conclusions and Planned Action

Is further work required?	No
What action is to be taken?	N/A
Who will undertake it?	N/A
When will it be done?	N/A
How will it be monitored? (e.g. through service plans).	All procedures are monitored on an ongoing basis by HR & OD

Signature: 

Date: 03 10 2023

Name: Alison M Skea

ALISON M SKEA

Please sign and date this form, keep one copy and send a copy to HR and Performance. A Word version should also be emailed to HR and Performance at hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk