

## Annex 2



The approach to the appraisal of the Chief Executive Officer is fundamental to setting the tone for the political and executive relationships in the organisation and for enabling the Chief Executive to set the direction for all officers and service departments.

### MODELS FOR CHIEF EXECUTIVE APPRAISALS

There are three broad models to consider in agreeing the approach to conduct CEX appraisals. There are advantages and disadvantages of all and some suit the political context of a Council better than others.

The process utilised in Oxfordshire County Council in 2024 suggested a form of leaders of political groups was being pursued.

The models are illustrated below.

Leader and Chief Executive	Panel of leaders of political groups	Panel of members of an Remuneration / Appointment Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Simple model, easy to organise.</li><li>• Can work well politically stable areas where there is a consistent history of the same party forming the administration.</li><li>• Can be challenging in Councils where there is no overall control.</li><li>• Can disenfranchise the opposition parties.</li><li>• If political leadership changes opposition parties are unsighted on the process and objectives.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Often used in Councils of no overall control.</li><li>• Requires preparation and management to avoid the appraisal being used to debate political differences.</li><li>• Needs a strong chair to maintain focus on the appraisal and not on broader political considerations.</li><li>• Does not engage backbench Councillors and so Group leaders need to engage their groups.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A stable model, where expertise in appraisals can be developed.</li><li>• Can engage backbench councillors as well as group leaders.</li><li>• Requires pre-preparation to avoid the appraisal being used to debate political differences.</li><li>• Needs a strong chair to maintain focus on the appraisal and not on broader political considerations.</li><li>• High risk and less effective if the Leader of the Council is not part of the committee.</li></ul>



## 5. Recommendations

### 1. **Agree the preferred model for the Chief Executive appraisal.**

As set out in section 4 there are three broad options or models to consider. It is not recommended that the Leader / Chief Executive model is pursued due to the context of Oxfordshire being in no overall control and having a coalition administration. The two feasible models are to pursue the group leaders' approach or an approach which sees the Remuneration (Appointments) Committee (REMCO) used. The majority favoured an approach where appraisal was a responsibility of REMCO and built into their terms of reference.

The use of REMCO would lead to a stable system for the appraisal, would tie in backbench input and has the advantage that the Council Leader and opposition leader both serve on this Committee.

### 2. **Develop and agree the CEX appraisal policy.**

Ensuring the policy has longevity and survives changes in administrations and Chief Executives, through embedding the policy in the terms of reference for the Committee, as agreed by the Constitution is important.

If the preferred model is to use REMCO, the policy should make provision for the Leader to be part of the panel, should a situation arise in future where the Leader was not part of the REMCO.

The policy should also set the requirement for any Councillor undertaking the appraisal to be appropriately trained and supported.

The policy could include the option to use an independent facilitator if required. The scope of independent support could include supporting the pre-preparation activities of the appraisal panel, the preparation of the Chief Executive, and facilitation and note production following the meeting. Whilst this may not be required, including this as an option enables it to be used if required. [Independent support can be useful if Chief Executive does not wish a Council officer to be party to the discussion or to take the notes of the meeting].

### 3. **Develop and agree the CEX appraisal procedure and processes.**

Set out the procedures to include the timeline, the requirements of the pre-preparation stage, including any 360-degree appraisal or pulse surveys, and any templates and / or documentation to be used.



**4. Implement an appraisal training / coaching programme.**

All members who are likely to undertake appraisals must be trained. Consideration should also be given to providing new members additional support through coaching to develop their skills and effectiveness as an appraiser. This support could be limited to the first year or two of conducting appraisals, until Councillors have gained experience and become more proficient as an appraiser.

**5. Agree evidence collection approaches.**

Evidence and feedback to support the appraisal e.g. via 360-degree appraisal, pulse surveys, and or targeted research is considered and agreed approaches are set out and built into the procedure for the appraisal cycle. It is not recommended full 360-degree appraisal with the same individuals is conducted every year but that on a rotational basis, feedback is collated from a range of internal officers, Cabinet Members, Backbenchers and external partners and stakeholders.

**6. Questioning** - Utilise internal or external independent support in the first few years to support Councillors to structure their questioning to focus on performance, to avoid straying into the minutiae of detail or the risk of the meeting '*descending into rabbit holes*'.

**Question suggested by one Councillor included:**

- The architecture of SMT and its effectiveness.
- Future challenges facing Local Government and horizon scanning - what this means for Oxfordshire to feed the CEX objectives.
- Balance of how CEX is spending his time and how this needs to change in view of the changes in local government predicted.
- The CEX views of how the Council can punch at its weight in Whitehall, and how the Council performs linked to comparator councils.
- CEX aspirations for place.
- Effectiveness of the organisation, resourcing, availability of people etc.