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**Probationary Period Policy**

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# Purpose of a probationary period

A probationary period is about helping a newly hired employee settle into their role whilst also giving the line manager the opportunity to assess how they are doing in the role.

As a new employee, a probationary period gives the employee the chance to:

* Get a good understanding of their role and what is expected of them.
* Make sure they get the training and support they need to do their job well.
* Assess if this is an organisation / team they want to work for and feel aligned with.

As an employer, the probationary period gives the Town Council the chance to assess:

* The skills, competencies and knowledge of the employee on the job.
* The employee’s progress on given assignments.
* Their reliability, trustworthiness, integrity, honesty and other relevant personality characteristics of the employee.
* The employee’s relations and collaboration with subordinates, supervisors and peers.

# Length of a probationary period

The length of a probationary period is usually six months but this may vary. The probation length will be discussed with the employee at the point of offering the post and confirmed in writing with the offer paperwork.

# Responsibilities and expectations

Employees are responsible for:

* Engaging with the induction and probationary period processes and reaching the required level of performance.
* Familiarising themselves with the organisation's rules, policies and procedures; particularly those relating to security, equal opportunities, conduct, discipline and grievance.
* Ensuring that they understand the probationary procedure.
* Ensuring that they are familiar with the standards and requirements of the job

role, both those specified within the job description and how their role fits into

the wider team and further organisational contribution.

* Ensuring that they take an active part in the probationary review meetings.
* Undertaking any learning and development activities agreed with the line manager; including any mandatory training and familiarity with specified

policies such as health and safety.

Line managers are responsible for:

* Ensuring the employee is aware of this probation policy and procedure.
* Explaining the expected standard of performance, how performance will be monitored, and expected standards of conduct by the new employee.
* Completing probation review meetings as appropriate for the new employee.
* Ensuring probation documentation is completed in a timely manner.
* Notifying the employee of any probation review meetings in advance so that both parties have time to prepare.
* Identifying any potential for the employee to fail to meet the standards required and taking appropriate action quickly whilst maintaining liaison with HR if appropriate.
* Ensuring that systems are in place to support and monitor the employee’s work throughout the probationary period in order that they receive such assistance as is reasonable to help them fulfil the duties and responsibilities of the role.

# Induction

The Town Council wants its employees to settle in and get to know their new role and employer as quickly as possible - so everyone who joins the Town Council will have an induction within their probationary period.

The line manager will set out the details of your induction plan on your first day in post.

# Training / development

Some roles have specific training/development periods or programmes for new starters which need to be successfully completed as well as the probationary period. If this applies, the employee will be advised of this at the point of being offered the role and it will be explained how this fits in with the probationary period review process.

# Feedback and support

The line manager will give feedback regularly throughout the probationary period, so the employee knows what is going well and if there are any areas where they might need some more training and support.

Employees will be encouraged to talk to their line manager about how things are going for them and advise their line manager if there is anything they are not clear about or need more support with.

# Formal reviews

As well as ensuring ongoing feedback, the line manager will hold formal review meetings during the probationary period. These are an opportunity for both parties to talk about progress in the role and to make sure they are both happy with the way things are going.

There is more information about reviews in the Probationary Period Review Process detailed below.

# Conduct

If the Town Council has any concerns about the employee’s conduct during their probationary period, these will be addressed in accordance with the Probationary Period Review Process.

# End of probationary period

By the end of the probationary period, if all has gone well, it will be confirmed that the employee has successfully completed their probationary period.

If things have not worked out as planned, there is more information about the end of probationary periods in the Probationary Period Review Process below.

Whatever the outcome, the probationary period review process must have been completed before the expiry date of the probationary period. Failure to approve the end of the probationary period or inform the employee of an extension to the probationary period prior to the six month anniversary of the start date will result in the employee automatically being deemed to have completed their probationary period on their six month anniversary of commencing employment. The only exception to this rule is if the employee is absent from work immediately prior to their six month anniversary, in which case the probationary period will be deemed to continue until the End of Probationary Period meeting can take place promptly once the employee returns to the workplace.

**Probationary Period Review Process**

The probationary period review process is carried out by the line managers in consultation with the HR team for the appropriate guidance, support and document provision.

The probationary period review is a possible five-step process:

**STEP 1**

Informal Discussions

**STEP 2**

First Formal Probationary Period Review

**STEP 3**

Second Formal Probationary Period Review

**STEP 4**

End of Probationary Period Formal Review

**4b**

Extension of Probationary Period

**4c**

Termination of Employment

**4a**

Completion of Probationary Period

**STEP 5**

Appeal

Please find further detail of each step set out below.

**Step 1 - Informal discussions**

Line managers should provide the employee with ongoing feedback throughout their probationary period so they know how things are going.

If line managers have any concerns about the employee’s performance, conduct or attendance, they should not wait for a formal review to raise this, but should instead discuss this informally with the employee as soon as possible and agree the steps needed to make improvements.

Line managers should be meeting with the employee on a monthly basis, as a minimum, and ideally face-to-face, to review how the probationary period is going. This should be flexed as required i.e. fortnightly meetings may be more suitable earlier in the probationary period, when challenges are being experienced or with spikes in workload, for example. Line managers should take notes of key discussion points and share these with the employee after the meeting.

The line manager should alert the HR team where there are concerns being discussed and ensure relevant notes are saved in the employee’s personnel file.

**Step 2 - First Formal Probationary Period Review**

Employees will normally have a First Formal Probationary Period Review with their line manager halfway through their probationary period, although this may be held earlier if there are serious concerns about the employee that have not been able to be resolved informally.

The HR team will provide the line manager with specific wording for the review meeting invitation. The employee will have the chance to be accompanied by either a trade union representative or a work colleague if they would like. Line managers will also be provided with a First Formal Probationary Period Review Form to support this meeting.

During the review, line managers will follow the prompts on the review form, discussing what has gone well so far in the probationary period and what has not (exploring the possible reasons for this), and what extra training or support could be required.

By the end of the review, the line manager should agree aims for the remainder of the probationary period with the employee – a template for this is included in the review form. This sets out any further progress for the employee to make and by when, as well as any training or support that the line manager will provide.

**Step 3 - Second Formal Probationary Period Review**

If there are any areas of significant concern at the first review, the line manager should inform the employee of a date for a Second Formal Probationary Period Review - usually one month later. Again, employee can choose to be accompanied by either a trade union representative or a work colleague if they like.

At this meeting the line manager should assess the employee’s progress towards their probationary period aims and agree any further actions that need to be taken.

Again, the HR team will provide the line manager with specific invitation wording and a Second Formal Probationary Period Review Form to support the meeting.

**Step 4 - End of Probationary Period Formal Review** – this meeting MUST take place before the employee’s six month anniversary has elapsed. In the event the employee is absent from work immediately prior to the six month anniversary of their commencement of employment, then the probationary period will be deemed to continue until this meeting can take place promptly once the employee returns to the workplace.

At the end of the probationary period, all employees will have an End of Probationary Period Formal Review Meeting, at which the employee may choose to be accompanied by either a trade union representative or a work colleague if they like.

At this meeting the line manager should review progress against the aims that were agreed in the first formal review meeting and assess whether the employee is carrying out their role effectively.

If the line manager has any concerns about the employee’s performance, attendance or conduct they should give them the opportunity to discuss these during the meeting before making a decision on the outcome of the probationary period.

**Step 4a – Completion of probationary period**

If everything has gone well, the line manager will confirm this with the employee and request that the HR team issue a letter congratulating them that they have successfully completed their probationary period.

**Step 4b - Extension of probationary period**

At the end of the meeting, if the line manager has concerns about the employee’s performance, conduct or attendance, they may decide to extend the probationary period. This will give the employee more time to receive the level of training or support that they need or to improve any performance, conduct or attendance issues.

If it is necessary to extend a probationary period, it will only be extended once, for a minimum of one month and a maximum of three months.

The HR team will issue a letter confirming the extension to the probationary period and the reasons why.

The line manager may also decide to extend an employee’s probationary period if they have been off work sick, or absent for other reasons for more than one week of their contracted hours during their probationary period.

**Step 4c - Termination of employment within probationary period**

If a line manager believes that the employee has had the required level of training and support but still has concerns about their performance, conduct or attendance levels, they may decide to recommend terminating their employment. The decision to make this recommendation can be taken at any formal review meeting, during or before the probationary period has ended, or during an extension period. The decision to terminate employment will need to be discussed with the HR team and approved by a member of the Strategic Management Team.

The HR team will issue a letter formalising the termination of employment and setting out the appeal process.

If the employee does not make themselves available for a probationary period review meeting which may result in dismissal, it will be rearranged. If they don’t turn up for the rearranged meeting, without reasonable excuse, the line manager will look at all the evidence available in their absence and make a recommendation to the Strategic Management Team accordingly.

**Step 5 - Appeal**

The employee has the right to appeal against their dismissal in writing to the Town Clerk within five working days of receiving the outcome letter. In their appeal letter the employee should set out the reasons why they believe the sanction is not appropriate.

The employee will be invited to an appeal hearing with the Town Clerk. They will have the right to be accompanied by either a trade union representative or a work colleague if they choose.

During the meeting the Town Clerk will ask the employee to give their reasons for the appeal and to explain why they feel that the original decision was not appropriate. The Town Clerk will subsequently investigate the appeal and confirm their decision in writing. This will normally be within 10 working days, but if itis going to take longer they will let the employee know.

This is the end of the appeals process.

**Documentation**

All documentation will be managed by the HR team and will be held securely on the employee’s personnel file.

**Roles in the Process**

In order to make the process fit for purpose, there may be times when the roles within a process have to be varied to ensure the steps can be carried out within a certain timeframe or by appropriate managers.

Examples of this may include:

* In the absence of a line manager, their senior manager will take on the line manager role.
* In the case of the Town Clerk’s direct line reports during absence of the Town Clerk, the Mayor and Chair of Personnel (or deputies if required) will take on the line manager role acting together.
* In the case of termination of employment of a member of the Strategic Management Team, this will need approval from the Personnel Committee or Full Council.
* In the case of termination of employment of the Town Clerk, this will need approval by Full Council.
* In the case of the Town Clerk not being able to consider an appeal, this will be referred to the Appeals Committee.
* In the case of the HR team not being able to provide support to the process, external HR support will be sought.