

CABINET



Report subject	Individual Performance Framework Update
Meeting date	26 th November 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>BCP Council's individual performance framework seeks to improve employee engagement, productivity, efficiency, and innovation. The framework emphasises career development, wellbeing, and retention to achieve better outcomes and services for communities and residents and deliver our shared vision for BCP Council.</p> <p>As set out in our People and Culture Strategy 2023-2027, BCP Council aims to develop a high-performance culture, and to increase fairness and transparency in our performance decisions.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to review the effectiveness of BCP Council's individual performance management framework introduced in April 2024 and outline plans to enhance the framework over the next 12 months.</p>
Recommendations	n/a report is for information only
Reason for recommendations	n/a report is for information only

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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	Update / Information

1. Background

- 1.1 The People and Culture team undertook an employee engagement survey in 2023, seeking the views of our staff on a range of issues, including questions specifically relating to the management of individual staff performance. Some of the responses from staff and some comments from members and staff network groups, indicated that individual performance was not managed as effectively, fairly or consistently as should be the case, across the council as a whole. There was limited data in place to confirm these observations, but the following exemplify findings from the survey which supported that view:

Findings from the employee engagement survey 2023:



- 1.2 In order to address this issue, a range of performance management strategies were assessed using established best practices, current research, and input from stakeholders to address identified challenges. Recognising the varying degrees of performance maturity across BCP Council, a comprehensive framework was implemented to evaluate and benchmark existing practices and promote continual

improvement in performance management. This initiative was designed to create effective engagement among managers and employees during the initial first year of a three-year programme.

- 1.3 The programme was supported by a comprehensive communication and learning plan. Over 850 people attended a webinar or learning session over the course of year one.
- 1.4 Data and insights have been regularly requested to provide assurance to CMB and Audit & Governance, to ensure individual performance is effectively being managed in BCP Council.
- 1.5 A full review and analysis of the new performance framework's first year has been completed. This review included insights from focus groups, feedback gathered throughout implementation via information webinars and drop-in sessions, and by analysing the data.
- 1.6 The report examines each of the project objectives to evaluate our progress towards them so far.

2. Objective - Align personal goals, service plans, corporate ambitions and culture

- 2.1 The new framework supports BCP council's collaborative culture and uses continuous feedback to promote open communication, trust, transparency, accountability, early problem-solving, stronger relationships, and innovation. It also strongly aligns to the desired culture which is underpinned by BCP Council's Values and Behaviours.
- 2.2 To establish a continuous feedback culture, BCP Council has implemented a holistic programmed approach intended to create multiple platforms for teams and managers to receive feedback. Leadership plays an important role in this feedback model. While informal feedback is encouraged, BCP Council also utilises a structured process through 360 feedback. This feedback approach has been adopted by Directors and above, is currently being extended to Heads of Service, and will be rolled out to all managers at the request of Directorates. The feedback process aligns with the recently developed leadership framework, which outlines expectations for team leaders through to corporate directors.
- 2.3 BCP Council is implementing Clifton Strength assessments, a tool designed to identify strengths and areas for improvement, and to contribute to the organisation's feedback culture.
- 2.4 The performance framework emphasises the significance of providing regular and timely feedback, as well as the continual evaluation of opportunities for improvement.
- 2.5 Performance recognition is addressed through the 'Our Stars' scheme, which acknowledges employees who have demonstrated the BCP values and who have

gone the extra mile. This program is associated with employee engagement and aims to support the organisational behaviours and culture.

- 2.6 BCP Council conducts an employee engagement survey to identify areas for improvement. Future developments include adopting new technologies to enhance feedback mechanisms, such as pulse surveys and other service-related platforms.
- 2.7 Various learning opportunities are available to help managers and leaders give, receive, and request feedback. Plans are underway to update and improve these opportunities, ensuring they support a psychologically safe environment in which to learn and develop. A focus area is equipping colleagues and managers to approach feedback with openness, using it as an opportunity for learning and growth.
- 2.8 Formal coaching has been introduced as part of the learning and development offer, supporting a comprehensive approach to employee engagement and performance. Coaching offerings now include leadership, performance, wellbeing, neurodiversity, and career development. As part of the review of management skills, there will be the opportunity to develop a coaching model for all managers to use which will support continuous feedback improvement.
- 2.9 Additionally, BCP Council is developing career grades and pathways that will connect continuous feedback with career development, supporting colleagues in advancing their careers.
- 2.10 One of the fundamental outcomes was to create a practical framework that aligns individual goals, with broader corporate ambitions, which helps employees see how their daily work contributes to BCP Council's key purpose which is to support residents and our communities.
- 2.11 In 2024, BCP Council launched a new online performance system designed to align individual objectives with overarching corporate ambitions. Leveraging its existing agreement with SkillGate, the provider of BCP Council's e-learning platform, the council implemented this system at no additional cost. The system allows managers and colleagues to access shared performance records and input personal objectives into a digital portal, facilitating regular progress reviews and monitoring.
- 2.12 Additionally, the platform encourages discussions on wellbeing, career development, and supports documentation of one-to-one meetings. Enhanced reporting features have been introduced, with a requirement that objectives be clearly linked to organisational ambitions. Managers are prompted to ensure each team member's personal objectives connect with key organisational aims, promoting meaningful engagement and reinforcing the 'golden thread' between individual contributions and BCP Council's broader goals.
- 2.13 This strategy cultivates a unified culture and offers employees greater clarity regarding their impact on both community and resident outcomes. Furthermore, the council now benefits from improved data and insights, enabling a direct link between collective personal objectives and overall organisational performance, particularly in achieving corporate aims and ambitions.

- 2.14 Following the review of the first year, it was noted that not all managers were utilising the new system for recording objectives online. As a result, CMB has determined that moving forward, all managers are required to document objectives through the online system. This process will be reviewed annually to identify potential areas for improvement.
- 2.15 Feedback from managers identified a challenge around the timing of setting personal objectives and agreeing yearly service plans. It has since been agreed that service plans will be updated every four years in line with new administration and refreshed annually to inform service priorities and therefore annual objectives for employees.

3. Objective - Colleagues have regular and ongoing performance conversations

- 3.1 Performance conversations should be regular and ongoing, emphasising a relational approach. This approach involves interacting and communicating with others based on core values such as respect, inclusiveness, honesty, compassion, focusing on individual strengths, support for wellbeing, and professional/personal development.
- 3.2 There is currently no data to demonstrate the effectiveness or regularity of performance conversations. There are several reasons for this, including the use of other systems and process for recording 1:1 conversations. This is an area that requires further exploration and review because of the complexity of the issue.
- 3.3 A further employee engagement survey took place in July-August 2025. 2,291 employees completed the survey (46% response rate). This response rate was lower than in 2023 which achieved 52% which we believe was due to the necessity to adjust the time of year that the survey went out because of conflicting timescales with the Pay and Reward ballot that was taking place. We are currently sharing the results of the survey with colleagues. We have seen some noticeable improvements in employee's perception of some of the indicators associated with the performance framework since the last survey in 2023.
- My team has clear objectives / targets and knows what it is meant to do (+10% increase from 71% to 81%)
 - I receive regular feedback on my performance (+13% from 60% to 73%)
 - I am able to access the right learning and development opportunities when I need to (+7% from 58% to 65%)
 - BCP Council enables me to develop my career (+9% from 41% to 50%)
 - BCP Council makes the best use of my skills and ability (+7% from 59% to 56%)
 - I make time to progress my own personal development (+7% from 49% to 56%)

- I feel encouraged to share my learning and ideas with others (+7% from 60% to 67%)
- This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow (+10% from 58% to 68%)
- There is someone at work who encourages my development (+11% from 57% to 68%)
- I understand the contribution my team makes to the overall priorities of the council (+8% from 80% to 88%)

3.4 Feedback about the new online system showed some barriers to recording one to one conversations using the online system, particularly relating to the format and usability. Development has taken place to remove these barriers and create a simpler process for colleagues and managers

4. Objective

All colleagues receive an end of year performance review

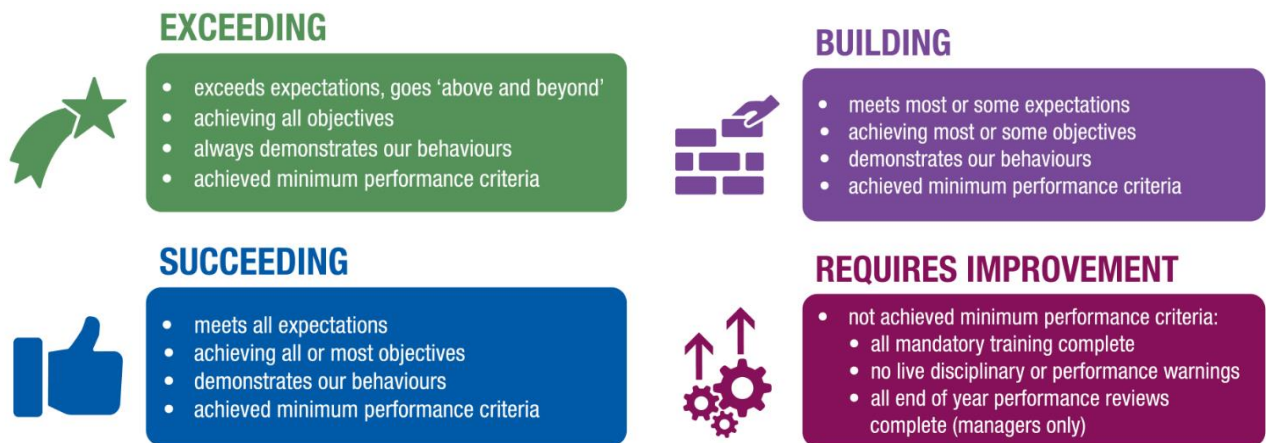
- 4.1 BCP Council achieved an 87% completion rate for end-of-year reviews by the end of February 2025. This figure increased to 92% by the end of March. Approximately 2% of colleagues were considered on long-term absence during this period.
- 4.2 Feedback from colleagues managing large frontline teams indicated that conducting end-of-year reviews was challenging due to remote working or the limited working hours of people in their teams. Examples include staff at the Leisure Centres who are contracted to work for only a few hours a month to deliver classes, and large frontline teams across Environment services which work remotely away from office locations and are managed by a small number of supervisors.
- 4.3 Managers also faced issues with the system, which does not allow delegation to another manager to complete a review on their behalf. System development is being explored, which may then allow an additional or delegated manager to access end of year performance reviews (this may be subject to additional costs).
- 4.4 Additionally, leadership teams do not currently have access to real time data relating to end of year review completion or the performance indicators agreed for their areas. Performance dashboards are being developed, which will provide managers with access to live end of year review completion data.

5. Objective

Create a fair performance framework where decisions are based on evidence

- 5.1 The performance indicators were introduced with the aims to:
- provide a common language

- provide a consistent approach to performance
- provide a benchmark against which to monitor performance
- improve engagement and develop a high-performance culture
- recognise and celebrate colleagues with high performance
- identify colleagues with high potential
- support succession planning
- provide opportunity to discuss development and growth
- clarify our minimum performance criteria
- identify where performance needs to be improved



5.2 A set of minimum performance criteria was introduced. They outline the level of compliance required to achieve satisfactory performance. These criteria are detailed in the box above.

5.3 Colleagues with a performance indicator of 'requires improvement' at their end of year review do not therefore meet the criteria for incremental pay progression. Any exceptions to this must be approved by a Corporate Director.

5.4 People and Culture received the following feedback from managers about the use of performance indicators:

- issuing performance indicators was well received and promoted more performance conversations
- more consistent and robust guidance in assigning performance indicators to colleagues is required, particularly in differentiating between succeeding and exceeding
- minimum performance criteria should be developed to include elements of poor performance (not just those colleagues on a formal performance improvement plan)

- better criteria around what constitutes 'building,' and this should be correlated with the relevant duration in the position
 - moderation should provide constructive challenge about how performance indicators have been applied to achieve fairness and consistency
 - the same standards and expectations should be applied to all colleagues to identify and address inconsistencies or biases.
- 5.5 The review identified that Directors permitted exceptions, allowing colleagues to complete overdue training or reviews in March instead of the February deadline. This increased completion rates for mandatory training (91%) and end-of-year reviews. However, the 'requires improvement' indicator was used inconsistently, resulting in a lack of uniform application of the framework.
- 5.6 The traditional bell curve model divides employees into set performance groups but poses issues for new starters in new roles who are still developing. Newly hired colleagues should not be placed in the "requires improvement" category during their probation or training period. Most employees meet expectations; however, due to moves and promotions, BCP Council should see more staff in the 'building' group. The review found inconsistencies here, and greater clarity and guidance has now been provided for Year Two.
- 5.7 The new framework contains an element of performance related pay; it was decided that withholding of increments would be applied to those colleagues who did not meet the minimum performance criteria and so would remain on their current spinal point (if not at the top of their grade) until these criteria were subsequently met. This was only for colleagues who were not already at the top of their grade.
- 5.8 It was identified that colleagues at the top of their grade are impacted differently to colleagues who are not. To ensure a more fair and consistent approach BCP Council will also be introducing Management and Guidance (MAG) for any colleague who does not meet the minimum performance criteria. MAG is an initial step towards implementing a structured approach for managing individual employee relations issues. The aim is to resolve matters prior to initiating more formal procedures.
- 5.9 Where appropriate, formal improvement procedures are set in place to manage a situation where an employee's performance falls below standard. Formal performance improvement is a documented process which sets out clear, measurable goals and support measures, aiming to correct issues before further action is considered including potential termination of contract. Four formal performance improvement cases have been in progress in the period April 2024 to the date of this report. BCP Council does not formally track informal performance discussions; if improvement occurs informally, formal procedures are unnecessary. The performance improvement framework will be reviewed in 2026/27 to improve overall management of formal performance improvement cases. Considerations will include managerial confidence or skill, organisational or individual risk tolerance, and the complexity of the process.
- 5.10 It is also acknowledged that whilst Pay and Reward is implemented and embedded, the grading structure will erode the bottom pay point of each band and this will mean

colleagues will automatically receive incremental progression if impacted by that. This means that until 2029 when the pay bands no longer overlap, there will be a smaller pool of colleagues that have the potential for an increment to be withheld.

- 5.11 As part of the Equality Impact Assessment, BCP Council have committed to monitoring fairness in the end of year review process. BCP Council has good disclosure rates in relation to disability and ethnicity, but other characteristics have not been analysed in this report due to lower rates of disclosure. Year One provided BCP Council with a baseline of data, which will be used to monitor performance data in relation to protected characteristics.
- 5.12 To ensure a fair and consistent performance framework, it is crucial to apply criteria and exceptions consistently, ensuring all colleagues are given equal opportunities to meet requirements. Clear, transparent processes for granting exceptions and consistent use of performance indicators will create an equitable system. This will not only enhance trust in the process but also support organisational culture and continuous improvement.
- 5.13 The People and Culture Team continue to work with services to encourage colleagues to complete their equalities data on the Dynamics system or, for colleagues without devices, via the Portal. By increasing disclosure rates and therefore having a greater richness of data, further analysis can be carried out to ensure the performance framework is consistently and fairly applied.
- 5.14 In addition, the management development programme outlined in paragraph 7 will include unconscious bias training to support and underpin the day to day decisions of managers.

6. Objective

Provide data, insights and reporting around performance

- 6.1 Due to budget constraints, BCP Council were unable to develop a performance system in Dynamics F&O. Instead, SkillGate was used which, although provides data and insight on individual objectives and reviews, has limitations compared to more comprehensive and sophisticated digital platforms on the market. Such systems tend to improve efficiency and enable more informed data-based decisions such as workforce planning and engagement, but this would require investment.
- 6.2 Feedback has been received about the usability of SkillGate as a performance system. An improvement plan is being developed, which will take into account system constraints, budget and resource within People & Culture and ICT.
- 6.3 With the introduction of pay & reward, and the procurement of a new payroll system it is not feasible to develop further digitalisation of a performance framework currently.
- 6.4 If there is appetite to adopt a more enhanced performance-related pay model in the future, one that recognises and rewards high performance rather than just a focus on poor performance; and one which also incorporates development rates to enable more career growth, and new entry routes into the council to align with various

corporate objectives—then BCP Council will be required to invest in technology to improve accuracy, real-time data, and analytical insights. The planned timeframe should provide sufficient opportunity to establish the necessary framework, and ensure processes are transparent, consistent, and fair across all departments.

7. Objective

Support existing and potential managers to support colleague performance

- 7.1 BCP Council aims to develop leaders and managers who can prepare colleagues for a range of opportunities, enhancing our reputation for nurturing talent both internally and externally. This will strengthen our Employee Value Proposition (EVP), making us a recognised leader in public sector growth and development.
- 7.2 There is currently no corporate management development and training framework available across BCP Council, however, some Directorates offer programs for new and aspiring managers through the workforce development team or ad hoc training including formal qualifications. Various e-learning opportunities and resources are available. Feedback suggests that management training is not offered consistently across the Directorates.
- 7.3 BCP Council needs to adopt a more holistic approach to management development which focuses on developing well-rounded leaders who understand the interconnectedness of various aspects of management, including technical skills, behavioural skills, and the broader context of the organisation, public sector and partners. It goes beyond traditional skill-based training by incorporating self-reflection, mentorship, and real-life problem-solving.
- 7.4 A modular approach is being developed to provide flexibility and cost-effectiveness, enabling managers to select relevant modules tailored to organisational, service, and individual needs. Although modular learning is not a new concept, its benefits align with BCP Council's goal of becoming a learning organisation, while also allowing managers to maintain their regular duties, avoid information overload, and have adequate time to assimilate and apply newly acquired skills.
- 7.5 Through self-assessment and performance conversations, managers choose modules which are most relevant to their needs. This can be delivered in a variety of ways but to ensure that the right outcomes are achieved, learning should be linked to reflective work-based assignments or personal development plans. The key is how they apply this in real-life scenarios to deliver better outcomes for our residents.
- 7.6 Key stakeholders would need to be involved to develop a corporate framework together with a specific directorate element to ensure the right outcomes are achieved and measured.

8. Summary of financial implications

- 8.1 This section is not applicable to this report.

9. Summary of legal implications

- 9.1 Under the Equality Act 2010 in the UK, employers must not discriminate against employees based on protected characteristics. For employees with disabilities, employers must consider if reasonable adjustments are needed to help them meet performance standards before taking any action. All performance evaluations must be objective, fair, and based on clear, evidence-based criteria. Managers should recognise unconscious biases that could affect their performance decisions.
- 9.2 Under the Employment Rights Act 1996, a dismissal for capability (performance) must follow a fair procedure and clearly define performance expectations. A poorly managed performance process can form the basis of a claim for unfair dismissal.
- 9.3 Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR governs the performance management system as it involves processing personal data.
- 9.4 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their employees and must consider how the performance framework might impact an employee's mental health. Work-related stress can affect performance, and employers have a duty to address it.

10. Summary of human resources implications

- 10.1 So as to maintain the momentum and implement the learning from year 1, it will be necessary to ensure continued resource to complete the three-year performance project plan. The People Strategy priorities will need to reflect this demand.

11. Summary of sustainability impact

- 11.1 This section is not applicable to this report.

12. Summary of public health implications

- 12.1 There are no public health implications arising from this report.

13. Summary of equality implications

- 13.1 A full EIA has been completed to date.

Background papers

None provided

Appendices

None provided

