

Head of Communications

Reports to: Service Director: Policy, Insight and Change

Grade: Leadership Grade 1 (L1)

Location: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald, Cambridgeshire / Hybrid

Job Purpose

This role leads the Communications Service of the Council which is responsible for all aspects of Communications, including: communications strategy and planning, media and external relations, change communications, programme communications and campaigns, marketing, brand management, internal communications, crisis/emergency communications, stakeholder engagement, website design, development and accessibility and all social media communication channels.

The post-holder holds the unique remit of being the senior professional adviser on all communications issues to the Political Leadership of the Council, the Chief Executive and other members of the leadership team across all areas of the council's work. This role also requires the postholder to work in close partnership with a range of key agencies, including but not limited to: the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mayoral Combined Authority, the District and City Councils, the Local Resilience Forum and emergency services partners (Police, Fire and Ambulance Services), the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board and NHS Trusts, Schools and Multi-Academy Trusts, the Community and Voluntary Sector, Towns and Parish Councils.

The postholder will represent the Council's interests locally, regionally and national, as appropriate, in relevant professional bodies, groupings and forums, including with the Local Government Association, with Government Departments, Arms' Length Bodies of Government, such as the Environment Agency and Homes England, where appropriate, and with regulatory bodies.

As a member of the Council's Extended Leadership Team, the Head of Communications will also have high levels of empowerment, professional autonomy and discretion to ensure the strategic development, delivery and assurance of all communications activities across the authority.

Leadership and Collaboration

Demonstrates compassionate and inclusive leadership, through the line management of services for whom the post is accountable and a commitment to drive continuous improvement, efficiency savings and higher levels of satisfaction for residents of the County.

Effectively contribute to the development and delivery, communication and engagement of residents with the Council's Strategic Framework, Medium Term Financial Strategy, People Strategy, Change Strategy and Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

Actively understand the challenges faced by colleagues across the organisation to be able to support all Extended Leadership Team (ELT) colleagues to deliver their objectives as well as those of the whole council.

Create a high-performance culture by providing strong and motivational leadership to drive continuous improvement, efficiency savings and higher levels of satisfaction for residents of the County.

Actively promote the Council's Vision and Ambitions and ways of working and the Council's values and behaviours to ensure they are delivered throughout the organisation.

Role model and take responsibility for ensuring an effective approach to corporate parenting and safeguarding of vulnerable people is embedded in areas of responsibility.

Develop and implement effective communication and engagement arrangements with service users, stakeholders, communities and partnership agencies to facilitate effective relationships that drive improvements in service delivery.

Actively develop and maintain strong and strategic relationships with key external stakeholders in the public, private and community and voluntary sectors, to optimise opportunities for delivering services in partnership wherever this would generate improved outcomes, effectiveness, or efficiency.

Governance

Understand and uphold the Constitution and Scheme of Financial Delegation of the Council and lead upon ensuring that a robust set of Contract Procedure Rules and contract management framework is in operation and embedded across the Council, working with directorate management teams, and providing expert advice, constructive challenge and support.

Provide professional advice for Group Leaders and elected members as requested to support the democratic process and running of the Council and the management of major contracts and commercial activities.

Be jointly accountable with others in the Policy, Insight and Change Management Team and the wider Strategy and Partnerships Directorate Management Team for the Directorate/Service risk register and any aspects of the corporate risk register and corporate risk framework of the Council relevant to services areas that the postholder is accountable for.

Ensure that teams under the postholder's leadership or sphere of influence fulfil their duties in relation to standards, complaints and scrutiny, maintaining an open culture of transparency, accountability and ownership, taking responsibility for mistakes, putting them right and learning lessons for future improvement.

Promote, preserve and protect the health, safety and wellbeing of councillors, employees, service users, contractors and partners in the provision of Council services, ensuring that the provisions of all relevant legislation are achieved, such as the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Innovation

Champion innovation by being open minded to new and radical ways to deliver services, actively seeking out good practice from others to learn from to develop our own service design and delivery.

Promote a culture of continuous improvement by encouraging colleagues to share ideas, take appropriate risks, and recognising innovation.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Promote an organisational culture that is positive, safe, respectful and compassionate, as well as open to change and feedback enabling everyone to feel empowered and valued.

Act at all times in ways that create an inclusive environment where people can thrive and be empowered to do their best. Role model good behaviour and practice and proactively seek ways to ensure staff feel valued and develop a sense of belonging.

Demonstrate awareness of the diverse needs of our residents to inform the decisions made about the services we deliver and ensuring a robust approach to equality impact assessments and their application to employment, service delivery and policy development.

Role Specific Accountabilities

Strategic Development

Lead, develop and enhance the delivery of a high-quality communications and marketing strategies and service that supports existing and new services for the benefit of communities across the County, including the planning and delivery of appropriate communications, engagement and marketing strategies in accordance with service needs that meet our statutory requirements and deliver on the council's vision and its ambitions.

Lead and oversee effective media and external relations across all channels and audiences on matters from routine to highly sensitive issues - for both traditional and social media - to strengthen the council's reputation and protect its integrity.

Set the direction and drive the ambition to deliver up to date, high quality content in conjunction with service directors, so that information about all our services across all channels is relevant and accessible.

Lead the promotion of, and engagement with, the council's vision and ambitions, taking account of our role in wider public sector delivery. Driving innovation, creative thinking and alternative ways of delivering outcomes, mindful of how messages and our use of communications channels need to be tailored to suit different audiences.

Lead the development and management of the council's identity/brand ensuring brand compliance, including the adoption of the right language and tone to reflect the council's values and its vision and to support greater understanding and transparency of services.

Lead on the design, development and delivery of campaign plans and marketing products to support the council's priorities and key messages.

As Head of Profession for Communications, provide expert strategic and operational advice and support to the Chief Executive and Leader of the council, the wider political and executive leadership teams, senior managers, partners and stakeholders to ensure the effective delivery of all aspects of the council's communications and protection of the reputation of the authority.

Ensure the coordination and effective delivery of an on call/24-hour communications service to respond to emergency situations including participating in the Local Resilience Forum's Warn and Inform communications group, including personal participation and active engagement in meetings/forums on behalf of the Council.

Managing Resources

As part of the Strategy and Partnerships directorate extended management team, identify priorities and establish the most effective deployment of resources to meet the delivery of agreed outcomes to time, cost and quality.

Effectively manage the Communications Service's budget, ensuring that the service meets its' and the Council's financial objectives and complies with the Council's financial regulations. Maximising value and service improvement outcomes and creating mechanisms that enable levels of success to be monitored and quantified.

Partnership Working

Build and maintain effective working relationships with a wide range of internal and external colleagues, partners and stakeholders to ensure delivery of effective communications and information services which engage and inform all stakeholders.

Specifically build, lead and grow an effective and professional grouping of Communications Leads across Cambridgeshire to share best practice, undertake joint campaigns and collaborative approaches where appropriate and to forge a more cohesive representation of the county locally, regionally and nationally, building upon the Combined Authority's Shared Ambition for the Region and the County Council's Strategic Framework for Cambridgeshire.

Ensuring through partnership the delivery of long-term positive outcomes locally for people and communities. Build and promote successful partnership working across all sectors and with service users to deliver more cost effective and valued services.

Change, Development and Improvement

Delivery of a high performing service operating model meeting the changing needs and expectations of members, chief officers and services.

Developing and embedding a performance culture that delivers results through rigorous challenge, disciplined execution and continual improvement. Providing managerial leadership to the improvement of corporate and service performance by ensuring that resources are targeted to business priorities and meeting customer needs.

Personally develop, deliver, evaluate and re-assess the Council's Communications Strategies and plans to ensure that these drive high quality and consistent means to inform, engage and involve residents, communities, elected members, council officers and partner agencies in the work of the County Council.

Ensure the communications service continues to be fit for purpose, develops and can meet the future needs of the council and its wider responsibilities to in the growth, development and shaping of Cambridgeshire as a place and for its communities.

Ensuring the service makes most effective use of technology to drive service improvement and maximising the use of this technology for all the service's stakeholders.

Create an environment where the Communications Service and individuals within it challenge existing process and procedures to improve operational efficiency and service delivery.

Constantly review and improve the look and feel of all communications and marketing channels to ensure they remain effective and relevant to the audience.

Proactively understand our service users by using service, customer and market insight, intelligence and data to shape key messages to support the council's vision, in particular drawing upon the Quality-of-Life Survey, Complaints, Compliments and Feedback and other sources for evidence based and responsive communications approaches.

Person Specification (essential criteria)

Experience	<p>Demonstrable experience of:</p> <p>Role Specific:</p> <p>Communication, Marketing and Reputation Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrable leadership knowledge and experience in business and service planning. • Demonstrable leadership experience of developing and delivering effective internal and external communications, information, marketing, and engagement strategies to support and deliver against strategic objectives within a complex organisation. • Deep understanding of the development and use of digital channels and tools to provide advice, information, transactional services, marketing, and communications. • Proven track record of creating and delivering strategic campaigns with measurable outputs. <p>Leadership and management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proven experience of successfully leading and developing high performing communication teams. <p>Productive relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proven ability in fostering positive and constructive relationships with and amongst team members, councillors and with peers across and outside the organization. • Clear understanding of the need to engage with communities and promote good customer relations. • Politically astute and aware, recognising the need to maintain political neutrality and work across the political spectrum. <p>Financial Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful management of budgets and evidence of pro-active identification and implementation of efficiencies and savings. <p>Presentation of information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to prepare meaningful and concise media releases, presentations and reports and to manage and participate in senior level meetings to achieve desired outcomes. <p>Negotiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proven ability to engage in positive dialogue to achieve desired outcomes. <p>Change Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and experience of successful service change and organisational development. • Knowledge and experience of how to effect cultural and behavioural change. • Knowledge and experience of leading wide ranging service change projects.
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Skills and knowledge	<p>Ability to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly effective and adaptable leadership and management skills. • A thorough understanding of the environment in which local government operates. <p>Role Specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrable experience of information, communications, marketing and media strategies and their delivery. • Detailed knowledge of a wide range of communication marketing, information and engagement mediums. <p>Working Together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximises the value of working together, building support ‘behind the scenes’ for changes to delivery and providing focus and direction in delivering to joint outcomes. • Shows a close interest in all the services that their Service is designed to maintain. <p>Effective Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly developed written and verbal communication, influencing and negotiation skills. • Demonstrates use of digital, collaboration and analytical tools. <p>Partnership Working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to promote the wider activities of the Council and share responsibility for the Council across service boundaries, especially in the public domain. <p>Strategic Thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to see the big picture, interpret it, consider feedback, and develop relevant strategies, plans and deliverables. • Ability to think strategically across organisational, functional and unit boundaries, identifying areas for development to meet all customers’ and colleagues’ expectations. • Thinks creatively, offering original solutions outside of conventional expectations. <p>Leadership and Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to lead, develop and effectively motivate colleagues and partners in relation to multi-team service delivery. • Ability to lead by example through demonstrating motivation, commitment, perseverance, and conscientiousness. • Demonstrates ownership and accountability of outcomes and deliverables within the service setting. • Ability to manage change effectively. • Ability to design, innovate and influence best practice in the work of the team, contractors, partners, and self. • Ability to plan, prioritise and review performance. • Strong management skills and their application which support team
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	<p>performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to influence others, set and review priorities, make decisions and take responsibility. • Strong financial management and budgetary control skills. <p>Judgement and Decision Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to understand and analyse complex issues and to offer sound, strategic, professional and managerial advice and solutions. • Ability to challenge others constructively and to make informed decisions that if challenged can be substantiated. • Ability to exercise sensitivity and clear judgement over organisational issues and developments and to arrive at a balanced view. • Demonstrable ability to learn from experience and to share that learning through future actions to improve service and staff performance. • Politically aware and able to ensure judgement and advice is offered within the appropriate operating context, whilst remaining politically neutral.
<p>Qualifications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree level qualification or equivalent in a relevant subject (Media Relations, Public Relations, etc) • Evidence of any relevant continuous professional development. <p>Role Specific:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant professional qualification or membership, CIPR/CIM highly preferred.
<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to demonstrate awareness and understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion and how this applies to this role.