

Job Profile

Service:	Central Services - Communications
Post title:	Head of Communications and Public Affairs
Grade:	HOS 1
Responsible to:	Assistant Director of Communications
Staff managed:	Manages a group of managers
Date of issue:	June 2026

Job context

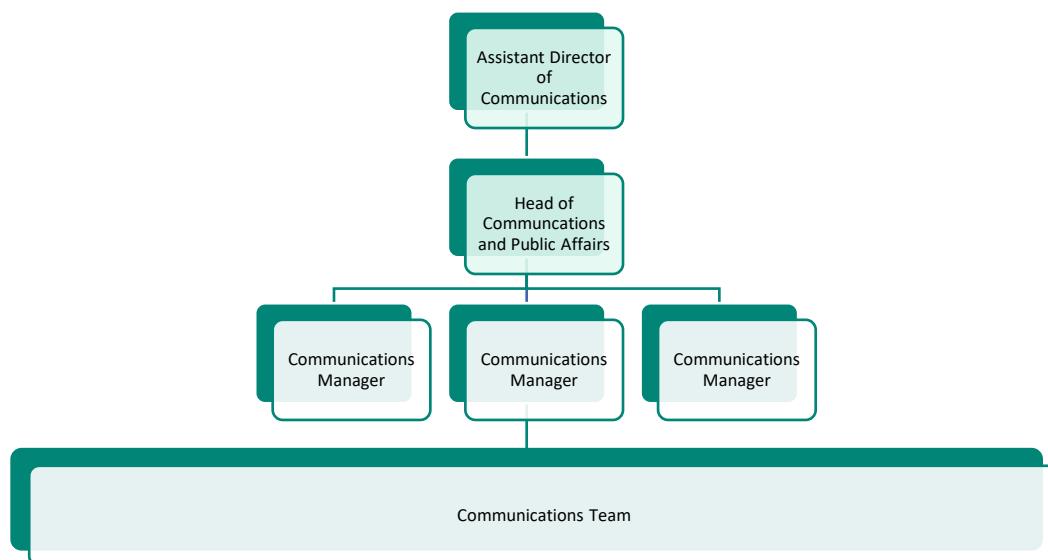
York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (the Combined Authority) is a public sector employer with access to powers and funding to unlock transport and housing improvements, boost skills provision and help the economy transition to net zero. Making the most of the combined strengths of the city region and rural powerhouse, the Combined Authority is a long-term commitment to shaping a brighter future for generations to come.

The Head of Communications acts as Deputy to the Assistant Director of Communications, providing senior leadership across the Combined Authority's communications function. The role has responsibility for setting strategic direction, assuring delivery, and maintaining high standards across all internal and external communications activity.

Operating within a complex political and organisational environment, the post holder will ensure that the Combined Authority's narrative, reputation and engagement activity support the Mayor's priorities, corporate objectives, and statutory responsibilities. The role requires close working with the Mayor's Office, senior officers, partners and stakeholders, and provides authoritative professional leadership across all communications portfolios.

This post is politically restricted under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and the post holder may not have any active political role either in or outside of work.

Structure



Job Description

Job purpose

- Provide senior leadership for the Communications service, acting as Deputy to the Assistant Director of Communications and as a key member of the senior management team.
- Lead development and delivery of high-quality, strategic communications that support the Combined Authority's priorities, Mayoral vision and corporate objectives.
- Ensure the Combined Authority maintains a strong, coherent and trusted public profile through effective media handling, stakeholder engagement, corporate communications and digital channels.
- Set and assure organisation-wide communications standards, governance and ways of working to ensure consistency, quality, compliance and value for money.
- Lead and support managers to deliver complex and high-profile communications programmes in a politically sensitive environment.

Operational management

- Provide senior leadership for the Communications service, ensuring clear priorities, effective planning and high standards of delivery across all portfolios.
- Act as Deputy to the Assistant Director of Communications and support corporate leadership.
- Lead and hold to account Communications Managers for performance, governance and quality. Ensure all activity complies with organisational assurance frameworks.

Communications	• Provide senior professional leadership on all communications activity including media, campaigns, digital and corporate communications. • Lead high-level media handling on sensitive issues and set organisation-wide communications standards. • Develop and lead on a Public Affairs strategy for the organisation. • Oversee political liaison under the direction of the Assistant Director • Help to manage perceptions of the Combined Authority.
Partnership / corporate working	• Work closely with the Mayor's Office, Directors and senior officers to align communications with corporate priorities. • Build strong relationships across the organisation and with external partners to promote shared narratives and coordinated delivery.
Resource management	• Exercise professional leadership through managing staff, ensuring relevant professional and occupational standards are maintained. • Inspire, lead and line manage staff, taking responsibility for recruitment, appraisals and allocation of work. • Budget management responsibility and decision making from a delegated budget • Manage the service area within operational budgets and be responsible for the delivery of all funded programmes for which the service is responsible.
Systems and information	• Oversee communications systems and digital platforms including website, intranet and CRM, ensuring appropriate governance, data protection and accessibility standards are met. • Ensure that systems and processes to support the service are consistent with the Combined Authorities standards and procedures. • Use relevant IT systems and tools to support the management, delivery and development of services.
Strategic management	• Contribute to corporate strategy development and lead communications planning to support long-term organisational goals. Provide leadership during periods of change or crisis and coordinate strategic communications responses. • Serve as a member of the service area's management team, delivering to the directorate and corporate agendas. • Establish a culture and approach within the Communications team, providing clear objectives and priorities which filter through to individual and team objectives that encourages and promotes performance management and improvement
Politically Restricted	• This post is politically restricted under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and the post holder may not have any active political role either in or outside of work.

Person Specification

Essential upon appointment	Desirable on appointment
Knowledge • Extensive senior-level knowledge of communications practice and public sector communications. • Strong strategic judgement, influencing skills and leadership capability. • Comprehensive knowledge of the main issues and influences affecting the service area.	• Experience within combined authorities, local government or similar environments.

• Strong understanding of operating in a political and public sector environment, including working with senior political stakeholders. • Knowledge of governance, assurance and compliance requirements relevant to public sector communications. • Expert knowledge of media relations, reputation management, and crisis communications. • Deep understanding of political environments and the role of communications within them. • Knowledge of Combined Authorities, devolution, and regional governance structures. • Understanding of legal and regulatory frameworks for public sector communications.	
Experience • Significant experience leading communications teams or functions in complex organisations, ideally within local government, public sector, or a politically-led organisation. • Experience of managing high-profile, sensitive or reputationally significant issues. • Proven experience of influencing at senior level and advising leaders on communications strategy and risk. • Successful management of budgets. • Strong track record of delivering strategic communications in complex, high-pressure environments.	• Experience working directly with a Mayor or equivalent political leadership.
Occupational Skills • Excellent judgement and decision-making skills. • Strong strategic thinking and ability to translate organisational priorities into effective communications outcomes. • Highly developed influencing and relationship-management skills. • Ability to lead, motivate and support managers and teams in a demanding environment. • High level analytical skills with the desire to ask difficult questions; be tenacious and find service improvements. • Highest standards of integrity and probity and a demonstrable commitment to Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity and Human Rights. • Excellent communication skills, strong negotiation and influencing skills. • The ability to lead - and play a key role as part of – across a complex public authority and across the partnership landscape. • The ability to think strategically and to appreciate the wider corporate and public interest needs • The ability to work on own initiative and self-motivate. • The ability to prioritise and manage multiple work streams. • Ability to risk assess and make effective decisions balancing this alongside overall organisational goal. • Political awareness and capacity for partnership working in a highly devolved and accountable service	

Professional Qualifications/Training/Registrations required by law, and/or essential for the performance of the role • A degree or equivalent level of experience • Management qualification or equivalent level of experience • Evidence of continuous professional development.	• Professional communications qualification (e.g. CIPR/CIM).
Other Requirements • Able to work flexibly to meet the demands of the job including some out of hours working at either evenings or weekends. • Committed to ensure equality and inclusion are demonstrated. • Highly motivated and not easily discouraged. • Personal and professional demeanour and credibility which commands the confidence of members, senior managers, staff, members, external partners and other stakeholders. • A high degree of probity and integrity and work within the constraints of a publicly funded service. • A commitment to learning and achievement. • Able to travel for business purposes.	
Behaviours • Acts with integrity, professionalism and accountability. • Builds collaborative relationships and works effectively across organisational boundaries. • Demonstrates confident, inclusive and visible leadership. • Highly politically aware, with exceptional judgement and discretion. • Strategic thinker with the ability to translate vision into delivery. • Confident, credible, and resilient leader. • Agile and responsive in a fast-moving, high-profile environment. • Committed to the development and demonstration of the corporate vision, values and behaviours Values and Behaviours	

NB – Assessment criteria for recruitment will be notified separately.

You should use this information to make the best of your application by identifying some specific pieces of work you may have undertaken in any of these areas. You will be tested in some or all of the skill specific areas over the course of the selection process.