

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

PART A: JOB DESCRIPTION

DIRECTORATE:	Chief Executive
JOB TITLE:	Head of Communications and Engagement
GRADE:	Band 14
JD REF:	H194
RESPONSIBLE TO:	Director of Strategy and Communications
RESPONSIBLE FOR:	Council Services within the portfolio. These may change to reflect need and maximise capacity and resources across the Council.
Service/ Functions:	Leadership, management and delivery of Council functions relating to; Communications and Engagement activity inside and outside the organisation. This includes managing campaigns, dealing with reputation and brand management and overseeing the strategy and approach to social media.
Employees:	The team is comprised of professional and technical experts who will provide advice to the Council as a whole as well as support specific services. The staff complement is circa 13 FTE.
Budget	It is likely that individual services will hold budgets to support engagement and communication activities in their areas. This postholder and the team will provide advice on how best to use these resources. The service gross budget responsible for is circa £800k.
Other Resources	As required to ensure that all day to day and transformational activity is undertaken to deliver resident focused and value for money services in line with the Council's Constitution, Vision and Corporate plan and as such meet statutory requirements and democratic processes in a manner that is transparent, efficient and effective. The postholder has specific responsibility for ensuring delivery of the Communication and Engagement Strategy and associated campaigns which affect the Council's credibility and reputation.

JOB PURPOSE:

This post will lead on ensuring delivery of key corporate communication and engagement activities which will give confidence the Council has the right arrangements and activities in place to deliver the best services possible which reflect community needs. In particular, services within the remit of this post will help the Council ensure it has effective and proactive strategies and initiatives in place which will build trust between the organisation and Northumberland residents and partners. The postholder will be the principal point of contact with external media contacts to maximise opportunities for people to be involved and understand what is happening and planned for the County. It will also ensure opportunities are maximised to enhance the Council's reputation at national, regional and local level using appropriate and innovative tools to improve involvement and understanding which will in turn enhance opportunities for collaboration and create support for the Council's ambitions.

Alongside these external relationships and activities the postholder will lead on the approach to internal communication and engagement ensuring that the whole organisation understands and is able to demonstrate a constant commitment to listen and involve the workforce and be transparent with information so that everyone feels their voice is valued and heard.

As part of this all policies and strategies and campaigns need to recognise the views of the local population and the postholder will be responsible for ensuring that the right initiatives are in place to involve and engage people in the co-design and co-production of new proposals which affect them. These initiatives will need to be proportionate and meaningful. The postholder will need to provide expert advice to colleagues to ensure that all engagement activity is relevant and understandable to all those in scope.

Some of this post's responsibilities may require activities to take place with local, regional or national partners to apply best practice and the postholder will be a participant in shaping and delivering activities which make the best use of the capacity at the Council's disposal working alongside these partners.

To play a full and positive role as a member of the Council's wider Management Team ensuring the delivery of effective strategic direction, leadership and resource management (people, finance and other assets) and use of prioritisation to secure the delivery of public services across the locality and maximise the Council's role in finding ways of delivering services which provide best value for money.

To ensure the Council is able to communicate effectively in respect of national policy changes and advise the Chief Executive, Director of Strategy and Communications, Leader, relevant Cabinet Members, Senior Management Team and Council in order to maximise opportunities for transparency and build trust with all stakeholders.

Ensure that effective governance and assurance processes, including reviews and audits are applied in all activity as set down in the Constitution and Council policies and procedures to safeguard the Council's financial and statutory duties and demonstrate public accountability and scrutiny of its decision-making processes particularly in relation to the creation and application of corporate strategies and the Performance Management Framework.

Discharge the functions within the remit of the post having regard to the decision-making framework and arrangements.

KEY FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

Support the Council's Chief Executive and Director of Strategy, Policy and Communications in ensuring the right strategies and initiatives are in place to create and maintain positive and productive communication and engagement activities with all stakeholders both outside and inside the organisation. The postholder will be expected to provide advice and intelligence which will help build a proactive and embedded approach to all communication and engagement activity in order to generate greater transparency and enhance the Council's reputation through creation of opportunities to listen and involve people and thereby improve outcomes and impact.

Play a role in supporting Members of the Council and the Chief Executive in developing the vision and priorities for the County and ensure best advice is provided on the most appropriate response to internal and external pressures for change while demonstrating a strong commitment to listening to different views based on inclusiveness and an understanding of need across the local population. An ability to design and implement success campaign will be critical for brand and reputation management activities.

Manage proactively the interface between Elected Members and Officers, maintaining and developing essential Member / Officer partnerships and processes which support and promote a positive and respectful relationship between Members and Officers. This role will ensure there is clarity of roles and responsibilities between Officers and Members in respect of communication activities which reflects agreed protocols and codes of practice.

Support colleagues in ensuring that all communication and engagement activity reflects the diversity of the population and takes clear and appropriate steps to be inclusive while using tools that deliver best value. This approach also needs to be applied in the activity taking place with the workforce. The advice will use understanding of innovative tools which enhance engagement and involvement from relevant groups.

PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES

Lead on the delivery plan to embed a corporate approach to communications and engagement activity both internally and externally ensuring that the whole organisation is well placed to listen to different views which will help address, national, regional and local challenges and opportunities in a way that is based on maximising whole system assets .

<p>While colleagues in services will lead on communication and engagement activity within their respective portfolios these need to sit within a corporate framework which supports delivery of the Council's vision and corporate plan.</p> <p>Provide best practice advice and guidance on the design, development and implementation of Communications and engagement activity which takes account of the Council's overall objectives and priorities and recognises the need to manage expectations in the most positive way.</p>
<p>Provide advice to the Chief Executive, Director of Strategy, Policy and Communications, colleagues, Cabinet, and all Members, on matters which will ensure the Corporate Plan is well communicated and understood so that as many people as possible can be involved and share in its successful delivery.</p>
<p>Act as a role model and exemplar in achieving a people-centred, values based and inclusive organisational culture that promotes innovation and creativity, nurtures growth, and focuses on developing and maximising the potential of the workforce to improve services.</p>
<p>Oversee the most effective utilisation, performance, and deployment of resources (Human, Physical and Financial) that puts at its heart the provision of high quality, value for money services and ensure that there is sufficient capacity within the service to deliver successfully against the Council's ambitions and priorities bearing in mind statutory requirements as well as local frameworks, policies and procedures.</p>
<p>Promote and maintain high standards of conduct by providing advice to relevant Committees and other bodies to ensure the best advice possible is contained in reports and recommendations.</p>
<p>Actively demonstrate commitment and action to develop an inclusive, supportive, and constructive working environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and diversity is valued in the workplace, in service delivery and communications.</p>
<p>Provide assurance that strategies and plans are in place to enable appropriate levels of financial and governance control are in place across the postholder's remit .</p>
<p>Ensure equality, diversity and cohesion principles are embedded across all services. Provide leadership around diversity and inclusion, ensuring that the policies and services of the Council reflect the changing needs of all local communities and workforce and that equality of opportunity is ensured and diversity celebrated.</p>
<p>Represent the Council at local, regional, and national levels, promoting inter-authority working across the region to ensure the Council is well placed to address key challenges where cross organisation communication and engagement is required .</p>
<p>If requested play a role within the Council's Corporate Emergency Planning arrangements (This includes a requirement to be available in the event of an emergency to perform the duties allocated to the post within the Emergency Plan).</p>

To undertake functions in the event of local or national elections, supporting the Returning Officer to ensure the democratic nature of such activities is undertaken efficiently and in compliance with all statutory requirements.

Ensure that all duties and responsibilities are carried out in accordance with Council's Constitution, governance arrangements, policies, and procedures.

Special Conditions:

This position has been identified as a politically restricted post under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Therefore, the post holder is restricted from undertaking or participating in any political activity.

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PART B: SENIOR MANAGERS CORE COMPETENCIES

Working with Partners

- Work collaboratively across services and departments to deliver corporate excellence.
- Work collaboratively with external partners to deliver excellent service.
- Seek opportunities for partnership working at a local, regional, national level.
- Clarify expectations, objectives and working arrangements of partnerships.
- Contribute effectively to multi-partner projects.

Serving our Community

- Promote the Community Plan.
- Seek and act on feedback from the community.
- Influence Service and Corporate plans to reflect community needs
- Develop, deliver, and improve access to services based on an awareness and understanding of the diverse community
- Promote equality of opportunity in service delivery

Working within the Political Arena

- Understand and actively support the role of Councillors.
- Understand and actively support the democratic process within Northumberland Council.
- Recognise the impact of Government and legislation on Council strategy and services.
- Consult, support, and keep Councillors informed.

Delivering Excellence

- Understand how corporate performance is measured.
- Monitor and evaluate services in relation to objectives and performance indicators.
- Establish a culture that embraces the agreed Vision and Values.
- Be positive ambassadors for the organisation.
- Contribute to strengthening corporate leadership capacity.
- Identify opportunities where organisational performance could be improved.

Focusing on the Future

- Scan the external environment, look ahead, assess strategic options, and develop the Council in the medium and long term.
- Lead the development and implementation of corporate policy at a strategic level.
- Challenge what we do and how we do it.
- Influence relevant national and regional organisations and partners.
- Connect plans, policies, strategies, and services to provide consistent service delivery.
- Generate innovative ideas.
- Translate strategy into action.
- Consider the implications of decisions across the Council and act in the overall interests of Council performance.

Building Shared Vision and Values

- Scan the internal environment and engage employees in compelling visions of the future.
- Create an environment in which a culture embracing our Vision and Values can thrive.
- Involve all stakeholders in building a vision for the future.
- Have a clear picture of the direction the organisation is taking and communicate it with insight, energy, and vision.
- Translate the Council's vision into practical and achievable plans.

Strengthening Corporate Leadership Capacity

- Continuously develop the political leadership and managerial interface.
- Operate with others as a cohesive senior managerial team.
- Create time with staff and other managers for discussion about their development rather than firefighting.
- Coach and mentor staff and other managers.
- Lead, delegate and empower others at a strategic level.
- Identify and develop potential senior managerial successors.

Promoting and Facilitating Change

- Critically evaluate the reasons that prompt change and take appropriate action.
- Proactively steer internal change.
- Proactively manage the exchange of information between the public and the organisation.
- Consider the resource implications of change.
- Anticipate and respond to emotional and morale issues brought about by change.
- Monitor and evaluate the change process to ensure aims are met.

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PART C: PERSON SPECIFICATION

DIRECTORATE:	Chief Executive
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GRADE:	Band 14

Qualifications/Professional Development
Relevant professional qualification or equivalent experience which demonstrates understanding of devising Communications and Engagement strategies and plans in a complex setting.
Evidence of relevant management training.
Evidence of recent relevant Continuous Professional Development to demonstrate up to date understanding of innovative best practice in communication and engagement activity.
Experience, Knowledge, and Skills
Proven achievement of success working in a large and complex organisation with demonstrable experience of devising effective communication and engagement strategies which create and maintain trust and confidence internally and externally and monitoring impact.
Proven track record in using social media to engage a broad range of people. This should include understanding how to deal with people who use these channels inappropriately.
Experience of creating innovative opportunities to engage with diverse communities and especially those who may be harder to reach or who may be reluctant to express a view.
Experience of building and working with different tools to ensure the workforce feel well informed and involved in shaping their working arrangements, practices and impact. This needs to particularly evidence success in helping the workforce deal with major change.
Ability to operate sensitively in a political environment, developing relationships with all members gaining respect, trust, and confidence and being accountable for effective decisions and delivery within a challenging environment.
Significant experience of positive and productive working with the media to help the organisation engage and communicate with a wide range of stakeholders and use information transparently.
Significant experience of building campaigns and other initiatives which help the Council implement a successful strategy for reputation and brand management and marketing.

Evidence of working within an organisational culture that models and embeds the practice of co-production and collaboration with people inside and outside the organisation.
Evidence of success in developing positive external relationships and influential partnerships that have delivered tangible benefits and created a collaborative environment.
Well developed ability to devise long term plans which are relevant and adaptable bringing in new ideas based on best practice, innovation , and proven solutions.
Adept communicator who communicates with clarity, conviction and enthusiasm and can demonstrate integrity, create rapport, and build trust and confidence to positively influence outcomes.
Ability to translate complex ideas and information into meaningful and 'user-friendly' information which recognises the diversity of the population ; 'tells the story' to bring people along and ensure all audiences understand the key messages.
Ability to develop strong relationships with colleagues where there are opportunities to learn from each other and share learning.
Strong personal and professional integrity and credibility that establishes respect, trust, and confidence.
Demonstrate personal resilience and ability to thrive in challenging circumstances.
Model and demonstrate organisational values and leadership behaviours, creating a shared purpose and positive permission culture that enables people to thrive through development, involvement, and well-being.
Motivation
Confident manager with a vision for Northumberland with high levels of energy, stamina, and resilience.
Fully committed to the principles and values underpinning the Council
Demonstrably strong corporate orientation and a commitment to tackling issues that inhibit organisational progress to high quality service delivery.
Personality, behaviour, conduct and credibility that engages and commands the confidence of Council Members, senior managers, staff, the public, external partners, and other stakeholders.