EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS) serves the Unitary Authority areas of Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. It has 21 operational fire stations, together with offices, covering all areas, with its Head Quarters based in Portishead, near Bristol. AF&RS Control Centre, where emergency calls are handled, is situated in Lansdown, near Bath.

With an annual budget of around £50 million, AF&RS delivers a wide range of fire, rescue and community safety services across a geographic area of approximately 514 square miles with a residential population of more than one million people.

AF&RS employs over 800 staff made up of: Service Delivery including whole-time and on-call Firefighters, and staff in its Control Centre, Service Delivery Support, and Corporate Services.

This post is within the Corporate Communications Team, within the Corporate Services Directorate, and reports to the Head of Corporate Communications. This post is responsible for the management of two assistant business partners.

With effect from July 2023, UK legislation was amended to enable Fire & Rescue Services to undertake standard Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all employees. All AF&RS posts therefore require a standard DBS check, with a few defined roles requiring an enhanced DBS check. **(**This post is subject to a standard DBS check.) These DBS checks will be renewed throughout employment.

Safeguarding is the duty of every member of staff at AF&RS: as a public authority we have a responsibility to ensure that the adults and children we interact with are kept safe from harm.

Job Description, Core Values and Person Specification

Job Title	**External Communications Manager**
Post Number	**1633**
Grade	**HAY 5**
Duration of Post	Permanent
Hours	37 hours per week.
Directorate	Corporate Services
Unit or Team	Corporate Communications
Reports to (give job title)	Head of Corporate Communications
Line management or supervisory responsibilities	Yes
If yes, for which team/s or post/s	Assistant Business Partner – Media and Engagement Assistant Business Partner – Marketing and Major Projects
Responsibility for managing a budget	Yes
If yes, approximately how much (to nearest £10,000)	£30,000
Date job was evaluated	October 2026

Purpose of Job: *Line Manager to briefly summarise what needs to be done and why. Try to limit this to three or four sentences. Include a structure chart to show where the job sits.*

- To lead the development and delivery of AF&RS' external communications and engagement strategy, taking a data-driven and proactive approach to identifying opportunities, managing reputational risk and positively influencing awareness, understanding and behaviour.
- To lead and project manage AF&RS' external communications, public relations, media relations and external engagement activity, building positive and productive relationships with local, regional and national media and external stakeholders. To maximise proactive and reactive opportunities across media, digital, social media, events and other external channels to strengthen the Service's reputation and ability to communicate effectively with its communities.
- To act as a trusted strategic advisor to teams and departments across the Service, providing expert advice on external communications, media and reputational matters and supporting senior leaders in responding effectively to external issues and opportunities. To deputise for the Head of Corporate Communications as required.
- To lead and manage a small team, to ensure the effective delivery of external communications to achieve departmental, directorate and organisational objectives.

Structure Chart:



Responsibilities and Duties:

1.	Lead and set the strategic direction for the Service's external communications and public relations, developing and delivering integrated communications plans that support organisational priorities, respond to community need, maximise opportunities and manage reputational risk.
2.	Act as Senior Media Advisor to the Chief Fire Officer, Service Leadership Board, Service Leadership Team and wider organisation, providing authoritative advice on external communications, media and reputation. Deputise for the Head of Corporate Communications as required and represent the external communications function.
3.	Lead the Service's crisis and incident communications function, providing strategic communications advice at tactical and strategic briefings, coordinating appropriate 'warn and inform' communications, working with multi-agency partners and acting as an official spokesperson where required, including through the out-of-hours media rota.
4.	Lead the Service's media relations strategy, developing and maintaining trusted relationships with local, regional, national, trade and community media. Proactively identify opportunities to promote the Service's achievements, priorities, initiatives and community safety messages and ensure effective responses to media enquiries.
5.	Own and develop the Service's external social media strategy and policy, ensuring it reflects organisational priorities, audience expectations and the evolving digital landscape. Provide strategic direction to stations, departments and staff in the creation and delivery of effective, engaging and appropriate external social media content.
6.	Lead the Service's external communications approach to vulnerable, underrepresented and communities experiencing barriers to engagement, working with the Prevention and Protection Directorate and relevant partners to understand community risk, strengthen engagement and ensure community insight informs external communications and Service decision-making.
7.	Lead strategic external consultation, engagement and stakeholder communications associated with the Community Risk Management Plan and other major Service plans and

	initiatives, ensuring that community and stakeholder insight is effectively captured, evaluated and used to influence strategic decisions.
8.	Set the strategic direction for Service-wide external communications and marketing campaigns, including community safety, recruitment and other priority campaigns. Ensure activity is evidence-based, audience-focused, accessible and aligned with the Service's priorities, values and brand.
9.	Lead the identification, assessment and management of external communications and reputational risk, horizon scanning local, regional and national issues and providing timely strategic advice and communications responses to protect and enhance the Service's reputation and public confidence.
10.	Build and maintain effective external relationships with partner agencies, community organisations, local and national stakeholders and communications professionals, ensuring the Service's external communications are informed by audience needs, partnership priorities and emerging issues.
11.	Commission and oversee external communications capability, including media, social media and crisis communications training, media and social media monitoring and management tools, ensuring the Service has the skills, resources and intelligence required to communicate effectively with external audiences.
12.	Establish and monitor external communications objectives, KPIs and measures of effectiveness, providing insight, evaluation and performance reports to the Head of Corporate Communications and using evidence and learning to drive continuous improvement.
13.	Lead, manage and develop the press and external communications team, ensuring clear accountability, effective deployment of resources, appropriate professional development and a culture that supports innovation, high performance and effective external communications.
14.	Manage allocated external communications budgets, forecasting expenditure, identifying future resource requirements and developing business cases for investment where required, ensuring resources are used effectively and provide value for money.
15.	Lead external communications activity that supports the Service's Corporate Social Responsibility, including sustainability, environmental responsibility, ethical practice and community-focused initiatives, ensuring these activities enhance organisational reputation and support corporate priorities.
16.	Ensure high standards of quality, accessibility, accuracy and brand consistency across all external communications, including media materials, social media, website content, campaigns, publications and other public-facing communications.
17.	Work collaboratively across the Corporate Communications Team and wider Service to ensure external communications are coordinated and aligned with organisational priorities, while maintaining a clear distinction between external communications and the Service's internal and change communications functions.
18.	Own the on-call press rota while providing support and resilience in relation to tactical media handling and public affairs as part of a programme of 24/7 media cover, this will include being on an on-call rota and you may be required to provide a presence at incidents or give telephone/online advice.
19.	Undertake any other reasonable and appropriate duties as agreed with the line manager.
Special Notes or Conditions:	
1.	AF&RS requires all staff and leaders to promote equality and diversity by: • ensuring that, both in your dealings with other employees and with members of the public, you comply with all aspects of the Service's Equality Policy and legislation that outlaws discrimination; • treating members of the public and other AF&RS staff with respect, dignity and in line with the expectations determined by our Service values at all times; and taking action

	when witnessing an act that could be considered discrimination or harassment, challenging it and/or raising with managers.
2.	This role is currently based at Police & Fire HQ in Portishead. Although you are based at a specific location, for efficiency or other business reasons we may require you to travel to and/or work from any base within AF&RS service area or work from home, for which we will pay allowances where appropriate. Please note that the role is expected to move to Severn Park (Smoke Lane, Avonmouth, Bristol BS11 0YA) around April 2028. Applicants should be comfortable with travelling to and being based at the new location once the relocation takes place.
3.	If based at Police and Fire Headquarters, this is a secure site and therefore appointment to this post may be subject to passing the required vetting process.
4.	Many posts in AF&RS are hybrid-working with the facility to work from home and from an AF&RS work-base. Your manager will confirm if this applies to this post.
5.	Your job may involve working out of normal office hours, for which mutually agreed compensatory time-off will be given.
6.	Your job may involve you dealing with highly confidential and sensitive information. It is essential that you ensure this information is held and processed securely and that you act with tact and discretion at all times and comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Confidentiality must be maintained, even after leaving this post or AF&RS employment.
7.	You should maintain an awareness of environmental regulations in relation to the remit of your role. All employees have a responsibility to carry out their duties in an environmentally-conscious way and to actively support AF&RS's Environmental Strategy, Policy and objectives.
8.	You must ensure you maintain an awareness of Health and Safety Regulations relevant to the duties and tasks you carry out and report any situations or incidents which could be considered hazardous. You have a responsibility for your own safety and must not endanger that of colleagues/visitors in the workplace or the public.
9.	There may be times when you are required to wear specific clothing suitable to the type of work you are undertaking. This may include AF&RS branded corporate clothing (for example when representing AF&RS externally), or protective clothing for the work being carried out, as deemed appropriate by your line manager.
10.	All AF&RS posts require a standard DBS check, with a few defined roles requiring an enhanced DBS check. **(**This post is subject to a standard DBS check.) These DBS checks will be renewed throughout employment.
11.	Safeguarding is the duty of every member of staff at AF&RS: as a public authority we have a responsibility to ensure that the adults and children we interact with are kept safe from harm.

Avon Fire & Rescue Service – NFCC Core Code of Ethics

We are in the process of embedding the principles of the Core Code Of Ethics - NFCC, on joining the service you will be involved in co-creating what these principles mean to us.

- Putting our communities first
- Integrity
- Dignity and respect
- Leadership
- Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Signed confirmation that this Job Description accurately reflects the requirements of the job:

Job Holder's Manager		**Date**	
Signed agreement to carry out the responsibilities of this Job Description, and of acceptance of NFCC Code of Ethics:			
Job Holder		**Date**	

See following page for Person Specification …….

Person Specification				
Job Title	**External Communications Manager**			
Post Number	**1633**			
Grade	**HAY 5**			
Qualifications, knowledge, experience, skills and personal attributes required for the job:				
	E=Essential D=Desirable	**Measured by: A = Application T = Test I = Interview**		
		A	**T**	**I**
Qualifications/Knowledge				
Degree, relevant professional qualification or equivalent knowledge and experience in communications, public relations, marketing, journalism or a related discipline.	E	X		X
Extensive knowledge of external communications, media relations and public relations, including the development, implementation and evaluation of communications strategies.	E	X	X	X
Strong knowledge of crisis and incident communications, reputational risk and the principles of effective media management.	E	X	X	X
Knowledge of audience insight, digital and social media, stakeholder engagement and accessible and inclusive communications.	E	X		X
Recognised leadership or management qualification, such as ILM Level 3 or equivalent.	D	X		X
Knowledge of behavioural change, community engagement or public information campaigns.	D	X		X
Experience				
Significant experience in a senior external communications, media relations, public relations or closely related communications role.	E	X		X
Proven experience of providing strategic communications and media advice to senior leaders and stakeholders.	E	X	X	X
Significant experience of developing and delivering integrated external communications, media relations and engagement campaigns across a complex organisation.	E	X	X	X
Proven experience of managing crisis, incident or sensitive communications, including working with senior leaders and external partners.	E	X	X	X
Proven experience of leading, managing and developing staff, including performance management.	E	X		X
Experience of managing budgets, resources and competing priorities effectively.	E	X		X
Experience acting as an official spokesperson or providing media interviews on behalf of an organisation.	E	X	X	X

Experience working in multi-agency or strategic partnership environments during major incidents.	D	X		X
Experience developing communications for vulnerable, underrepresented or harder-to-reach communities.	D	X		X
Experience managing social media strategies, digital campaigns or external communications platforms.	D	X		X
Experience commissioning external communications suppliers, agencies or specialist resources.	D	X		X
Skills				
Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to develop compelling communications and deliver effective media briefings, presentations and advice.	E	X		X
Strong strategic, analytical and project management skills, with the ability to use insight and evaluation to inform communications decisions.	E	X		X
Strong stakeholder management, influencing and consultancy skills, with the ability to build trusted relationships with senior leaders, media and external partners.	E	X	X	X
Strong media relations skills, including the ability to identify opportunities, manage media enquiries and provide effective advice in high-pressure situations.	E	X		X
Ability to develop creative, effective communications for diverse audiences across media and digital channels.	E	X		X
Strong attention to detail, accuracy and quality assurance.	E	X		X
Proficiency in Microsoft Office, SharePoint and relevant digital, social media and communications platforms.	D	X		X
Experience using media monitoring, social media analytics and communications evaluation tools.	D	X		X
Strong facilitation and presentation skills, including delivering briefings and engagement sessions.	D	X		X
Able to drive with a full current valid driving licence, or ability to arrange suitable alternative transport to travel to various work locations.	E	X		X
Personal Attributes – these are generic and apply to most posts				
Willingness to accept and work to the NFCC Core Code of Ethics during the course of employment.	E	X		X
Adaptable with a flexible approach to work, to meet business needs.	E	X		X
Able to work effectively both individually and as part of a team.	E	X		X
Professional in conduct.	E	X		X
Strong stakeholder ethic with customer orientated approach.	E	X		X
Committed to undertake relevant training and continuous professional development opportunities.	E	X		X