



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Appointment of Director of Communications

Information for candidates

May 2024

Reference: OETP

An Introduction

The UK Parliament has two Houses that work on behalf of UK citizens to check and challenge the work of Government, make and shape effective laws, and debate/make decisions on the big issues of the day.

The House of Commons is one of the most scrutinised organisations in the world, and its work is at the heart of our national life. It is a complex organisation, with 650 Members of Parliament and their staff, plus c3,000 people working for the House Administration in a wide variety of roles, including catering staff, security officers, librarians and clerks.

Director of Communications

The Director of Communications for the House of Commons is the most senior professional communications leader in the House Administration, reporting directly to the Clerk of the House.

The post holder provides functional leadership across a communications network, direct leadership of a team of communications professionals in the central Communications Office and provides strategic communications counsel to the Speaker's Office, Commons Executive Board and the House of Commons Commission.

The central Communications Office leads the communications strategy for the House of Commons. The team works to improve access to – and understanding of – the work of the House of Commons and ensure that everyone who works here has the information they need to do their job.

The Communications Office consists of:

- a 24/7 media operation
- a brand, design, content creation team and social media
- an internal communications team supporting the delivery of services to Members of Parliament, their staff and House Administration staff through a number of different communications channels and campaigns.

Under the Director's leadership, the team's impartial, challenging and trusted communications and counsel are at the heart of the organisation, building understanding, connection, and trust with our diverse audiences.

The post holder is required to set a strategic approach to communications, lead structural changes, ensure capability and delivery is to the highest standard whilst navigating a complex, political and changing environment.

The Director of Communications needs to be able to balance the strategic and the reactive and take a proactive approach to anticipating and managing risk and safeguarding the impartiality of the House Administration across all corporate communications output.

They play a leading role in responding around incidents working closely with the Director of Security – as part of the organisation wide Incident Management Team (IMT) – emergencies, state events and ensuring there are adequate out of hours communications arrangements in place. The role is supported by four deputy directors with responsibility for: Media; Creative Content & Strategy; Internal Communications (Operations); Internal Communication (Strategy and Campaigns).

The postholder works collaboratively with the House of Lords Director of Communications, in particular on State Events and significant bicameral projects including the Restoration and Renewal (R&R) programme.

Key responsibilities

Functional Leadership

- Act as Head of Profession for communications, bring together communications leaders from across the House of Commons communications network to align activities and build capability. Attends the Commons Executive Board as a permanent invitee.
- Build House-wide communications capability across the communications network and foster a culture of continuous improvement and skills development through the delivery of a communications academy, professional memberships and standards and advocate for parliamentary communications with external organisations (including think tanks and the Civil Service).
- Chair the Communications Board, produce an annual House-wide communications strategy to align all communications to the House strategy, oversee House-wide communications planning, monitoring and evaluation activities.
- Reduce duplication of cost and effort across the communications network and to continually review and update structures, resources and capabilities in line with this.
- Play a key role on the Executive Board of the Commons and collaborate with fellow executive team members.
- Act as a thoughtful and supportive manager with discretion and integrity.

Internal Communications

- Oversee the development and delivery of internal communications to Members, House staff and Members' staff to ensure everybody who works here is aware of the full range of advice, services and support available to them.
- Advise the House's senior leadership on communication of the corporate agenda and oversee the delivery of key corporate events such as Town Halls, Commons Leadership Group and Commons Management Group and responsibility for the Speaker's internal communication to staff and Members.
- Ensure that the House Administration is using the most effective channels and embedding the new corporate 'We make Parliament happen' campaign and the new intranet.
- Ensure close integration of the internal communications team with the Strategy team, Members Services Team, Chair of Administration Committee and the Speaker's Office to ensure delivery of timely, relevant and important communication.

External Communications

- Lead a 24/7 media operation. The team covers all aspects of the work of the House and the work of the House Administration (the breadth of its responsibilities includes the Chamber, domestic committees, Standards and Privileges Committees, bicameral House Services, such as security and R&R, and the House of Commons Commission). The team additionally supports the Speaker's Office in communications.
- Lead the media team to provide practical solutions for managing the reputation of all parts of the House of Commons, dealing quickly and proactively with politically sensitive, complex and confidential issues.
- Undertake proactive communications media campaigns to increase understanding of, and access to, the work of the House, support the Speaker's External Affairs strategy, and support significant national, international and ceremonial events in Parliament.
- To manage relations with the Press Gallery and broadcasters as users of the parliamentary estate, overseeing the House's offer to the media now and in the future.
- Lead a brand, design, content creation and multi-media team who explain and promote the work of the House of Commons and UK Parliament. The team are also responsible for the Speaker's social media.
- Ensure timely, accurate, trusted and engaging content across all corporate X/Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn accounts and develop new and creative ways to engage audiences.

Person specification

It is essential that in your covering letter you give examples of proven experience against each of the criteria set out below in **Part One** of the person specification. These responses will be developed and discussed with you if you are invited for interview, together with the other criteria in **Part Two**.

Part One

Essential

- **Criterion 1:** High-level experience of effectively leading a communications function within a high-profile organisation and demonstrable, in-depth knowledge of core communications disciplines, including the ability to design communications plans for complex and sensitive subjects.
- **Criterion 2:** Resilient, with the ability to deliver difficult messages to senior stakeholders, and to negotiate for desired outcomes in a complex, multi-faceted environment.
- **Criterion 3:** Understanding of the diverse and evolving media landscape, with recent experience of working with a wide range of journalists and media outlets.
- **Criterion 4:** The ability to work confidently and effectively at a senior management level, with Members and colleagues in both Houses, and with a wide range of other internal and external stakeholders at all levels.
- **Criterion 5:** Experience of managing a diverse team. Ability to get the best out of colleagues at all levels, motivate them and gain their confidence. Ability to line manage staff in a high-pressured environment, address poor performance, and promote the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Desirable

- Familiarity with the workings of the House of Commons, and a wider interest and understanding of Parliament.

Part Two:

- The highest levels of personal integrity, fairness and independence.
- The ability to inspire confidence and respect.
- Tact, discretion and excellent interpersonal skills.
- The ability to forge relationships of trust while retaining independence of thought.
- Respect for Parliament's Values and Behaviour Code and a commitment to inclusive working practices.

Terms of appointment

Appointment Terms

We are offering a permanent position.

The successful candidate will be encouraged to take up the appointment as soon as possible, subject to the successful completion of pre-appointment checks and security clearance.

Salary

The pay band for this role is Senior Commons Staff (SCS) 1A.

Location

The post is located on the Parliamentary Estate. A degree of flexible remote working could be agreed but you would be required to attend the Parliamentary Estate for a significant proportion of the week.

Probation

There is a probationary period of six months.

Impartiality

Professional services provided by House service staff are completely politically impartial and it is a strict requirement that any briefing or advice are not influenced by the personal political opinions of individual members of staff. These requirements also extend to the use of social media where particular requirements and guidance apply to roles such as this. The need for adherence to these requirements will be covered during the application process

Outside appointments

In order to be totally clear on any conflict of interest that has the potential to undermine your impartiality as an employee of the House of Commons, due to a clash between your professional interest or the public interest, and your own self-interest, we do not anticipate that it would be possible to undertake this role in combination with other paid employment or non-executive roles.

We will request that you fill in a conflicts of interest form as part of the application process.

Term and hours

Net conditioned full-time working hours for staff of the House of Commons are 36 hours per week plus such additional hours as the service of the House of Commons may require. This excludes daily meal breaks of one hour. Exact times of attendance each day are to be agreed with management.

Consideration will be given to candidates who wish to work part-time or as part of a job share, however due to the nature of the role we believe it will be difficult to do it on a part time basis. If you are selected for interview please inform the panel of the days/hours you are available to work, alternatively you can inform us at any stage of the process.

Workplace Adjustments

As an inclusive employer, the House of Commons supports individuals in need of workplace adjustments. The workplace adjustment process prevents, reduces or removes problems you might face at work. Adjustments can be requested to help with obstacles relating to mental health, and physical or non-physical requirements. You can request a workplace adjustment if you have a disability or suffer from a difficulty or disadvantage in your workplace.

Benefits

As an employee of the House of Commons, you will be entitled to our benefits such as:

- Annual leave - our annual leave offering is generous.
- Other pay benefits (occupational sickness absence pay scheme, enhanced maternity, paternity and adoption pay)
- Flexible working
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Non-cash benefits (such as interest-free season tickets loans, In-house nursery and gym, and cycle-to-work scheme etc)
- Learning & Development (including training, conferences, financial support and study leave)

Pension

The House of Commons participates in the Civil Service Pension Schemes. As an employee of the House, you will be entitled to join one of these highly competitive pension scheme arrangements.

Annual leave

Annual leave entitlement is 30 days (increasing to 35 days after one year's service) plus public and bank holidays.

Valuing diversity, equality and fairness

The House of Commons has a full Diversity and Inclusion Strategy outlining our aims until 2023 to 2027. Please refer to the full strategy here: <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/offices/commons/house-of-commons-commission/hoc-diversity-inclusion-strategy>.

The House of Commons recognises and values the diversity of its staff and is committed to developing working practices which will allow everyone to contribute his or her best, regardless of race, sex, marital status, religion or belief, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or any other irrelevant factor.

You will also be required to comply with the Behaviour Code for Parliament and will be subject to internal grievance/disciplinary processes.

In order to help the House of Commons monitor the success of its commitment to diversity and inclusion, all applicants are requested to complete the online Diversity Monitoring Form. This form is used for monitoring purposes only and will not be made available to the selection panel.

The House of Commons reserves the right to disclose details of successful applicants to meet legal, regulatory and public policy requirements, and also any other duty it may have, to provide information to Parliament.

Pre-appointment Checks

Successful candidates will be required to complete pre-employment checks. Pre-appointment the successful candidate will be vetted to Counter Terrorist Check (CTC) level and must pass these checks before an offer can be confirmed.

To enable meaningful checks to be carried out you will need to have lived in the UK for a sufficient period of time. To undergo a CTC, you must have normally resided in the UK for a minimum of 3 years out of the last 5 years.

Please [click here](#) for further information.

How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the House of Commons on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through their website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **OETP**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload:

- A CV (maximum two sides of A4).
- A short supporting statement (maximum two sides of A4) giving evidence of the strength and depth of your ability to meet the criteria for the role. Please provide specific examples to demonstrate how you meet each of the essential experience criteria listed and any of the desirable criteria.
- The names and contact details for two referees. These must be people who know you well enough to comment on your suitability for the post and will be expected to have authoritative and personal knowledge of your achievements. Please include the details in your CV.
- A completed conflicts of interest form.

Please also complete the online diversity monitoring form. This form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application.

The closing date for applications is noon on **Monday 3rd June**.

As a Disability Confident Leader, it is important that we are able to make appropriate arrangements or adjustments where necessary in order to create a full and equal participation in the selection process. If you require any reasonable adjustments, please contact the team at Saxton Bampfylde to see how we can meet your needs.

If you are unable to apply online, please contact Maria Dodson at Maria.Dodson@saxbam.com.

Disability Confident Scheme

The House of Commons is a committed Disability Confident employer and as such, operates a Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS) for candidates with a disability. We are committed to interviewing all applicants with a disability who provide evidence of meeting the minimum requirements necessary for the post, as set out in this applicant pack.

To be eligible, your disability must be within the definition laid down in the Equality Act 2010. A disabled person is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as someone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities. For the purposes of this policy, these words have the following meanings:

- ‘substantial’ means more than minor or trivial
- ‘long-term’ means that the effect of the impairment has lasted, or is likely to last, 12 months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions)
- ‘Normal day-to-day activities’ include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.

Further Information

If you have any questions about the role or would like to confidentially discuss the post further, please contact: Maria Dodson at Maria.Dodson@saxbam.com.

Interview panel

The composition of the selection panel is expected to be as follows:

Tom Goldsmith – Clerk of the House of Commons

Marianne Cwynarski – Director General (Operations) of the House of Commons

Richard Shoreland – HR Director of the House of Commons

Alison Giles – Director of Security of the House of Commons

Regardless of the panel’s decision and outcome, Saxton Bampfylde will provide feedback to candidates at all decision points.

How we will deal with your application

We will process your application as quickly as possible and will keep you informed at key stages. Once you have submitted your application, its receipt will be acknowledged.

- Your application will be assessed against the essential criteria and your experience for the post. Please ensure that you provide written evidence in your supporting statement to demonstrate how you meet the criteria. Submitting a CV alone will not be sufficient.
- Interviews will be held at the Palace of Westminster.

Informal chats

Shortlisted candidates may also have the opportunity to have an informal conversation with a senior manager in the House of Commons prior to the final selection panel interview to learn more about the role, context and the organisation. You will be given further details about this after the shortlist meeting.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

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