

Public Speaking for Leaders

A specialist coaching and training programme for senior public sector leaders, elected representatives and spokespeople

Public sector communications specialists

- A communications consultancy with deep roots in local government and public service communication
- Strong understanding of the local government media environment, political context, member-officer dynamics and the pressures facing senior public sector spokespeople
- Experienced in helping leaders explain difficult decisions clearly and credibly across media, scrutiny, stakeholder and community settings
- Trusted by councils and public bodies to combine strategic communications insight with training that feels relevant, grounded and immediately usable
- A track record of working with senior officers and elected members on communications that serves both the organisation and the public interest
- Understanding of the political landscape that shapes what local leaders need to communicate, and how they need to communicate it



Introduction

Westco is pleased to offer a high-trust, practical public speaking programme designed for those who lead in public. This is not generic presentation training. It is **specialist communication coaching** built around the real demands facing senior officers, elected representatives, cabinet members and public spokespeople in local government and the wider public sector.

Delivered by **Cormac Smith**, a local government communications leader with more than 20 years' experience as an international speaker and coach, the programme combines a rigorous public speaking methodology with a dedicated storytelling strand. Participants leave knowing not just how to speak with confidence, but how to make their message connect, resonate and stick with the audiences that matter most.



Why this matters for public sector leaders

What leaders need to do	Where the training fits
• Explain difficult decisions clearly and credibly to residents, staff, partners and the media • Build trust under pressure in scrutiny, community meetings, media interviews and online environments • Balance transparency with political sensitivity, especially when managing complex member-officer relationships • Inspire confidence in their organisation and its values, even when the news is hard • Adapt their communication style for very different audiences, from council chambers to community forums to national media	• Senior officers often need to brief, advise and appear alongside elected members - understanding what politicians need from those moments is critical • Elected representatives carry political accountability and must communicate with authority and authenticity, often on contested or emotive issues • The training is built around real public sector scenarios and is explicitly tailored to reflect the different expectations, risks and communication objectives of officers and members • A central strand addresses what politicians are looking for — from briefings, from officers in public, and from the communications support around them

What the programme covers

The training is modular and tailored, but a full offer typically includes the following core components.



Authentic presence and credibility

Speaking as yourself rather than imitating others; building authority through integrity, calm leadership presence, and what Aristotle called ethos — credibility and trust earned through character.



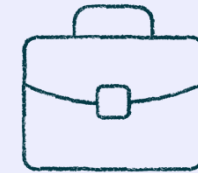
Storytelling that lands

Turning policy, performance and service delivery into stories, examples, analogies and 'so what?' explanations that audiences can follow, feel and remember. Using pathos to move people, not just inform them.



Speechwriting and speech clinic

Writing for the ear, not the page; shaping strong openings and endings; editing for brevity and impact; and testing upcoming speeches, announcements or presentations ahead of live use.



Understanding what politicians need

A specific strand for senior officers on what elected representatives look for when being briefed, advised or supported in public. How to help members feel confident, well-prepared and properly supported — without crossing the line.

What the programme covers

The training is modular and tailored, but a full offer typically includes the following core components.



Narrative structure and message discipline

Simple, powerful frameworks — headline-detail-summary, attention-explanation-call to action, and clear signposting, so complex messages become easy to follow and hard to forget.



Delivery: voice, body language and pace

The craft of delivery: tone, pace, pauses, posture, eye contact, gesture, and the WISE framework (Warm, Intelligent, Sincere, Enthusiastic/Empathetic), including for online and hybrid settings.



Handling scrutiny, challenge and pressure

Managing nerves, thinking on your feet, answering difficult questions composedly, and staying credible under pressure in scrutiny committees, media interviews, community meetings or contentious staff events.



Practice, playback and peer feedback

Recorded speaking exercises, immediate playback and structured peer review against clear criteria, so improvement is visible, specific and sustained. This is where theory becomes skill.

Tailored for officers and members

Senior officers and elected representatives do not enter the room with the same responsibilities, risks or communication objectives. The programme is explicitly shaped around member-officer dynamics, political context, public accountability and the expectations politicians have of senior leaders when they brief, advise or appear alongside them. Where mixed groups attend, exercises are designed with this in mind. Separate, bespoke sessions can be delivered for each group.

How we deliver it

Our approach

Discovery and design

A scoping conversation and pre-session research to understand the client context, participant mix, live issues, political sensitivities and any upcoming speaking moments to build in.

Tailored content

Scenarios and exercises drawn from live issues: budget savings, service change, scrutiny, staff engagement, community concern with different emphasis for officers and elected representatives.

Live coaching

A strong emphasis on learning by doing. Participants speak early and practise repeatedly, working on speeches, presentations, answers and story-led messages that reflect real public sector demands.

Recorded practice and feedback

Exercises are recorded and played back so participants can see what is working and what

needs attention, including for virtual or hybrid delivery. .

Action planning and follow-through

Individual next steps and recommendations for follow-on coaching, refreshers or speech clinics, with clear markers of what good looks like after the session.



How we deliver it

Delivery options	Typical exercises
• One-to-one coaching for individual leaders or spokespeople • Small group training for cabinet members, senior management teams or communications leads • In-person, virtual or hybrid delivery • Standalone sessions or an ongoing leadership development pathway • Optional speech clinic ahead of a live event or public moment	• Three-minute and 90-second message drills • Speech openings and endings clinic • Policy-to-story conversion exercise • Scrutiny, awkward audience and media Q&A practice • Key message brainstorm and 'so what?' test • Briefing the politician role-play scenarios for officers

Formats

Optional – all training is delivered in-person

Full day programme (expanded with more live coaching)

Half-day programme (condensed with live coaching)

Your trainer: Cormac Smith – Practitioner, Coach and Trainer



- Over 20 years as a keynote speaker across the UK and internationally, principally on excellence in professional communication practice
- Two decades coaching senior managers and politicians in public speaking and media handling, often as the most senior communications professional in the room
- 15 years developing and delivering formal media and public speaking training programmes for in-house teams and external clients
- Approximately 400 broadcast interviews and podcasts across nine countries since January 2022, providing expert analysis as a Ukraine and defence commentator — frequently in high-pressure, time-critical situations
- Nearly two decades as a senior local government communications leader
- Deputy Director of Communications, UK Cabinet Office
- Strategic Communication Adviser to the Foreign Minister of Ukraine
- 10 years as a member of the national professional body for public service communications; four years as Chairman
- Extensive experience in crisis communications, including high-profile national and international incidents

Investment

£2,495 for a full day programme (excluding VAT and travelling costs)

£1,675 for a half-day programme (excluding VAT and travelling costs)

Westco can tailor this programme around your leaders, your issues and your political environment. Get in touch to discuss your needs.

Contact simon@westcocommunications.com
or visit westcocommunications.com



Thank you

For more information get in touch with

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