

ALDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Council Document To agree the APC 'House Style' for its communications.	AGENDA item 11 Full Council Meeting 31 October 2022
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Background

Around Radlett Working party (AR WP) at its meeting in September 2021 suggested to have a separate meeting to discuss "APC house style"

Following this meeting Cllr D Lambert has contacted Hertsmeire Borough Council to ask for a copy of their style guide. Three documents (corporate style guide, plain english style guide & writing style guide) have been then circulated for comments to all members of AR WP.

It was then suggested for these to be used as an internal guide of APC house style (once officially adopted by the Council - the documents should be shared with all Councillors and office staff) and to be implemented in the following:

- ✓ Around Radlett articles when editing
- ✓ Website announcements
- ✓ Official APC letters
- ✓ APC reports

It was noted that it is not necessary to follow this style strictly on social media as the social media language should be more relaxed.

Use of logo and Councillors and staff e-mail signature

Members of AR WP have also discussed various e-mail signature options and suggested the following:

For office staff to use the format as shown below with a logo;

Officer's Name

Job Role



Tel 01923 856433 Mob

e-mail –

Like us on [Facebook](#) Follow us on [Twitter](#)

For Councillors (no logo)

Chair's name

Chair, Aldenham Parish Council

Or if not a Council/Committee Chair

Councillor's name

Aldenham Parish Council Councillor

Recommendations

- a) To adopt the revised guide attached in Appendices 1,2 &3 as APC 'House Style '
- b) To adopt two e-mail signature options and suggested above

Reasons for recommendation

The main purpose of having the house style is consistency in written communication (i.e. Aldenham Parish Council (APC) always as singular noun not plural , APC is /has not APC are/have)

Members are asked to consider this report.

Monika Duong
Deputy Clerk



Corporate: style guide

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1. Introduction

Welcome to Aldenham Parish Council's corporate: style guide.

This corporate style guide sets out best practice in communicating with our residents and customers, and the use of the council logo.

Using this guide will make it easier for you to create clear and effective publications and promotional material quickly.

In addition, there is a **writing: style guide** and a **plain English: style guide** to help you.

2. Making information accessible

It's fair

It's the law

It makes sense

Everyone in our community is entitled to understand our services and take part in decision-making.

Following implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act all of us have a legal obligation to ensure blind and partially sighted people have access to our services – that includes the provision of information.

Blind and partially sighted people read information in different ways. For many people well-designed, printed information using a font like Arial at a minimum of 14pt type (as recommended by the Royal National Institute for the Blind [RNIB]) will enable people with some visual impairment to read a document. Those with more serious visual impairment will need information in a more specialised format – large print, audiotape, Braille or electronically.



You need to let your target groups and customers know about your alternative formats – you can do this via a statement within your literature or by using specific organisations.

Font

Our house font is Arial point size 12 for reports and official writing.

For publicity material and leaflets it is best to avoid fonts that are highly stylised as these can be confusing. For example: *this typeface is difficult to read*.

Italics and FULL CAPITALS are also difficult for people with visual impairments to read. Underlining should also be avoided as it makes some letters difficult to read.

Bold or semi-bold text is better to emphasise words or phrases but do not over emphasise large parts of your text.

Type size

Internal documents and letters should always use a minimum type size of 12 point.

Leaflets, magazines and other external publications should be a minimum of 10 point.

Large print documents, produced specifically for the visual impaired should be a

minimum of **16 point** and could range up to **22 point** to improve clarity.

Type weight

The weight refers to the heaviness/thickness of the text. Usually the type used will be its normal format but sometimes designers might use the light version – please avoid this.

Leading and kerning

Leading is the space between one line of text and another, kerning is the gap between letters on a line. Sometimes designers will be tempted to shorten leading or kerning to make text fit, this can cause problems by making the text too dense to read clearly. To help people move between lines leading should be 1 1/2 to 2 times the space between words on a line and kerning should be set at “Auto” rather than adjusted to smaller settings.

Numbers

Numbers of nine and below should always be written in full – this also helps people who have difficulty in differentiating between 3, 5 and 8 – unless in charts and financial data.

Contrast

The contrast between the text and the background on which it appears is very important. Partially sighted people also have difficulties with colour perception, which also causes problems if the text is not strong enough to stand out from its backgrounds. The weight of the text is also important.

Colour blindness

The most common form of colour blindness is a confusion between green and red, so avoid using designs which rely on the separation of these colours (ie red text on green backgrounds).



Paper

Print your document on matt paper, as this will have minimal reflection. Forms should be as simple as possible to read and complete. Leave generous spacing for sections needing completion as the handwriting of the visually impaired may be larger than average.

Diagrams and pictures, as well as text, are useful to convey a message simply and are particularly useful for people who cannot read. When folding paper, avoid creases that obscure the text.

Alternative formats

Alternative format statements should be included in our publications – an example statement is below.

We aim to provide information in alternative formats where possible. If you would like this document in a different format, please call 020 8207 2227 or email: firstname.surname@hertsmere.gov.uk and we will do our best to help.

This information should appear on the outside back page of the document.

3. Publicity planning

Effective publicity requires proper planning and resourcing. Before starting, ask yourself:

- ***When does this information need to be available?***

It is always best to plan ahead – can you tie your information in with national events, when publicity might be most useful? For example, August is not a good time to launch a campaign as many people are on holiday – but it is a good time to promote the use of sunscreens and safe barbecuing!

- ***What is the timescale required to achieve this?***

Remember that any document will take time to write, design, sign off and print – so allow plenty of time.

- ***What do I want to communicate?***

You need to be clear why you are producing this material and the key messages you want to get across.

It can help to plan what you want to say and organise your points before writing:

- set out the essential information you want to include
- group related points
- put the groups in a logical order
- position your most important messages early.

- ***Who is the message for?***

Before writing, it is important to think about your audience – how much knowledge do they have about the subject and what words will they understand?

- ***What is the purpose of the communication?***

Are you providing information about a new scheme? Are you writing to chase payment? Is it a serious or light-hearted topic? All these will influence your tone and style.



• ***What do I want people to do once they receive my information?***

All literature produced by us must have contact details for people wanting further information.

It is important that if you want to encourage a certain outcome, such as fill in a questionnaire or log on to the website, that you make it very clear and easy how people can do this.

4. Language

Before starting, think about your audience and what impressions you are giving of the council. For example the tone may be more formal and serious if the target audience is government. However, if your audience is young people your tone could be warmer and friendlier. If we are describing and promoting the council to other interested parties, your choice of words and vocabulary should be appropriate. Generally the advice is to pitch copy at a level an eight-year-old child could understand.

Some suggestions for making your writing clear, succinct and understandable to a wide range of readers include:

- Using 'you' rather than 'the public'
- Using 'we' rather than Aldenhams Parish Council
- Using less formal vocabulary such as 'the show starts' rather than 'the show commences'
- Simplifying sentences and keeping it short
- Rephrasing jargon that will be unfamiliar to anyone for whom English is not a first language.

Choosing the best words

It is best to use everyday words that your reader will understand and feel comfortable with. Avoid unusual or complex words that may confuse. If you do need to use a technical term that your reader might not understand, and there is no everyday alternative, explain briefly what you mean using non-technical language.

See our guide on plain English for further help.

Avoid slang

We want to present a friendly and approachable face to our readers, but be wary of being over-familiar. We need to be seen as professional and efficient, and using slang words (or overusing contractions) might make us sound sloppy. Only use them when anything else would sound pretentious.

Avoid unnecessary words

Do not use 10 words where one will do.

Any writing intended to inform or instruct should be as plain and direct as the subject and attitude allows. Try to be brief and get straight to your message.

Avoid jargon

Jargon is unnecessarily complicated, technical language used to impress, rather than to inform, your audience.

When we say not to use jargon, we're not advocating leaving out necessary technical terms, but to make sure other language is as clear as possible.



Special terms can be useful shorthand within a group, however for the wider public jargon can cause misunderstanding or alienation.

Avoid clichés

Try to keep your writing original but avoid clichés as they tend to annoy people and may confuse people for whom English is not their first language.

Avoid foreign words or phrases

Avoid most of the foreign words and phrases that once were common in official writing. At best they can be off-putting to some readers, at worst not understood at all.

Avoid sexist language

Any writing which creates a barrier between you and half your readers must reduce the impact of your message. Use sex-neutral terms, which means avoiding words that assume the reader is either male or female.

It is better to avoid 'he', 'his', or 'him' when you intend to include both men and women. An alternative is to use 'their', 'they' and 'them' or rewrite to an active sentence. For example:

The sentence could change from: 'When the parent completes his form' to 'When parents complete their forms' to the preferred 'When you complete the form'.

When referring to two groups of opposite sexes, use **parallel language**.

- men and women
- ladies and gentlemen (but not men and ladies)
- husband and wife (not man and wife)
- men's and women's teams (not men's and girls')

language and age

do not use 'the elderly'; use 'elderly people' or 'older people'.

language and disability

When talking about people with **disabilities**, mention the disability only if it is relevant. If uncertain what term to use, ask the individual his or her preference. Avoid the use of emotional descriptives, such as 'afflicted', 'stricken' and 'confined'. The rule of thumb is do not define a person by their disability and use positive language:

- a person with disabilities (not a disabled person)
- a wheelchair user (not wheelchair bound)
- a person with epilepsy (not an epileptic)
- a person with AIDS/a person who is HIV positive (not a person 'suffering' from AIDS)
- a person with Downs Syndrome (not a 'victim' of Downs Syndrome)

Do not use out-dated and inaccurate words such as 'handicapped', 'crippled' and 'invalid'.



Clare would welcome your views on this part

language, race and ethnicity

Reference to a person's **race, religion or ethnicity** should be avoided unless it is of particular relevance to the context.

Avoid stereotypes, generalisations or assumptions about ethnic or racial groups.

5. A few points of law

Code of Practice

All officers, members and organisations funded by the council must comply with the Code of Practice on Local Government Publicity. The code stipulates that publicity or information campaigns should:

- promote well being
- not be politically partisan
- be balanced, informative and accurate
- not be designed to persuade people to hold a certain view.

The code also reflects the importance of consultation and two-way communication with the community and partners, and our role in community leadership. It stresses the need for good communications such as using plain English and using a variety of media to get information across to the widest possible range of people, for example using electronic media and accessible methods of communicating.

Other legislation

Our communications must also comply with other legislation such as:

- The laws of defamation and contempt
- Data Protection Act
- Human Rights Act
- Disability Discrimination Act
- Equal Opportunities Act
- Freedom of Information Act
- Copyright and Patents Act
- Newspaper licensing
- Copyright licensing
- Equality Act.

Promotional materials

It's worth bearing in mind these points of law when creating promotional materials:

- All material should be legal, honest and truthful
- Copyright protects all published work including images – only reproduce text and use scanned or downloaded images and logos with permission
- There is copyright protection on many symbols, logos, and graphics and Ordnance Survey maps. Please check you have authorisation or have paid royalties
- Do not scan any images or wording to store or reproduce without permission
- Do not quote individuals by name without permission
- Do not photocopy information from a newspaper, book or other publication and circulate it
- Do not use photographs of members of the public (or staff) without their written



permission– this applies particularly to children under 16.

- You should not charge more for a special version of a publication.
- Do not mislead with your message – whatever offer you make must be available as stated, unless you qualify your offer within the publication (eg subject to availability, limited seating, limited number available).

6. The logo

The APC logo is recognised by staff, customers, and our suppliers.

Location

On stationery and forms, the logo should always be positioned in the top left hand corner. E-forms should also include the logo.

On publications and other publicity material, the logo should be positioned on the front of the publication, in the lower portion of the publication and in the centre (see document format section), wherever possible.

Protected area

The logo should appear prominently and without interference from other graphics or written elements. A protected area of 1cm beyond the maximum width and height of the logo should be left clear. For maximum impact space should be left around the logo and nothing allowed within a protected area.

Some material may use the logo over a photograph, other illustration or against a background colour. This is possible only if these do not interfere with the integrity and visual impact of the logo. Under no circumstances should the detail of the illustration or the wording of the logo become unclear.

No distortion, alteration or compression of the logo is permissible to make it 'fit' the design of the publication.

- Joint partners should have their identity and branding illustrated jointly with the appropriate wording.
- Partner logos should be grouped together, not scattered on the page or throughout a document. Ensure they are clearly defined with space around each to make them look less cluttered.
- Always get the permission of partners before using their logo and use a good quality copy.
- In any document or material where a partnership logo is used, all relevant logos of the partnership must be reproduced clearly – ie within a strategy, a section at the beginning could be set aside under the heading 'this partnership is made up of...'.
 - In any media releases the full list of all partners must be given and appropriate contact details included.
- All opportunities possible should be used to show that Hertsmere Borough Council is a member of this partnership and thus identify the partnership with the council.
- If a partnership logo is used clear contact details for the partnership should be given.



7. Branding with contractors

Increasingly services organised and funded by us are carried out by contractors on our behalf. Strong branding is essential to ensure customers are aware of our funding and where to comment on the service.

Clear branding guidelines should be included in all new contracts.

As a contract for a service comes up for renewal, re-tendering or renegotiation it should be scrutinised to ensure our branding is as clear as possible.

All literature, promotional materials, signage, uniforms and vehicle livery should bear the council's logo clearly in line with the standards set out in this style guide.

In cases when our logo appears with that of a contractor working on our behalf, it should be inked with the words 'working for' or 'working with'.

8. Standard A4 letter (210mm x 297mm)

A corporate house style for letterheads presents a consistent and professional approach to everyone who receives correspondence from the council.

Letter style

Font	Arial
Font size	12 14 if audience has visual impairments
Line spacing	Single for the main body of the letter Greeting: Leave one line space after the greeting before the letter starts Ending: Leave one line space at the end of the letter before yours sincerely Signature: Allow at least five line spaces for the signature Copies to: This should be two line spaces after the signatory's job title
Paragraphs	Separate with a double line space, do not indent
Alignment	Left aligned
To emphasise a word	Bold Do not use capitals or underline
Date	6 February 2008 Do not use st rd th or numerical date 6/2/08 If using the day as part of the date within the main body of the letter, put a comma after it for example Tuesday, 6 February 2008
Greeting	If you are writing to Mr P Q Smith use: Dear Mr Smith If you are writing to a councillor in his or her official capacity, use: Dear Councillor Smith If a woman has signed her letter to you 'Jane Smith'



	<p>and you do not know her preferred title, the standard is to use Ms or if you feel that it is appropriate you could begin: Dear Jane If you don't know the person's name use: Dear Sir Dear Madam Dear Sir or Madam Dear Sirs Do not put a comma after your greeting</p>	
Punctuation	<p>Use open punctuation in the name and address. Mrs C D Allardyce 33 Trivet Way Southampton Hants SO21 3PQ</p>	<p>And not Mrs. C. D. Allardyce, 33, Trivet Way, Southampton, Hants. S021 3PQ.</p>
	<p>Please try to limit the address to five lines to ensure correct alignment with window envelopes</p>	
Endings	<p>If you begin 'Dear name', end 'Yours sincerely' If you begin in any other way, end 'Yours faithfully' Do not put a comma after your ending.</p>	
Signatories	<p>Use bold, sign off first name, surname and job title in upper and lower-case letters, for example Tony Jackson Director of Training</p>	
Enclosures	<p>If you mention in your letter that you are enclosing documents, there is no need to list them separately. Just remember to enclose the documents</p>	
Subject headings	<p>Bold, do not put RE or underline Use upper and lower case</p>	

9. Contact details

All publicity material should include clear contact details of the originator and the officer who can provide additional assistance or information.

The contact information consists of the corporate logo, the originating section and contact details including at least a telephone number, address and email address. Fax and mobile numbers are optional. To promote the council's out of hours emergency number this too should be included.

If the contact details for the section publishing the information are the same as the source of further assistance the contact details should be included.

So the information would look like this:

www.hertsmere.gov.uk

For further information contact:

Corporate Communications
Hertsmere Borough Council
Civic Offices
Elstree Way



Borehamwood

Herts, WD6 1WA

Tel: 020 8207 2277

Fax: 020 8207 7550 (optional)

Mobile: 07946 241997 (optional)

corporate.communications@hertsmere.gov.uk

The Hertsmere out-of-hours emergency number is: 08453 000 021

If someone else within the council produces the information but they are not the best point of contact for further information or assistance, add: 'Produced by [section]' between the logo and the 'For further information' section. Thus:

www.hertsmere.gov.uk

Produced by the Chief Executive's office

For further information contact:

Corporate Communications

Hertsmere Borough Council

Civic Offices

Elstree Way

Borehamwood

Herts, WD6 1WA

Tel: 020 8207 2277

Fax: 020 8207 7550 (optional)

Mobile: 07946 241997 (optional)

corporate.communications@hertsmere.gov.uk

The Hertsmere out-of-hours emergency number is: 08453 000 021

If you operate restricted hours for answering calls or for key officers being available, add these to the information, thus:

www.hertsmere.gov.uk

For further information contact:

Corporate Communications

Hertsmere Borough Council

Civic Offices

Elstree Way

Borehamwood

Herts, WD6 1WA

Tel: 020 8207 2277

(please call between 10am and 2pm)

Fax: 020 8207 7550 (optional)

Mobile: 07946 241997 (optional)

corporate.communications@hertsmere.gov.uk

The Hertsmere out-of-hours emergency number is: 08453 000 021

10. Newspaper advertisements

Our advertisements often have to compete for attention with others, it is important they are eye-catching, reflect the corporate identity and get their message across.



Appendix1

Display advertising

All adverts must be clearly branded. The corporate logo should be shown in the bottom right-hand corner of the advertisement. It should be accompanied by our website address.



Writing: style guide

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1. Introduction

Welcome to Aldenhams Parish Council's **writing: style guide**. This guide will help you write and produce a consistent standard of work that is grammatically correct, easy-to-read and of a corporate standard.

Abbreviations

Do not use full stops in abbreviations, or spaces between initials: for example, BBC, USA, mph, eg, 4am, WH Smith, etc.

Spell out less well-known abbreviations in the first instance, with the abbreviation in brackets, thereafter use just the abbreviation.

The award was given by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA)

Words that are frequently abbreviated and well-known do not need to be spelt out, eg:

UK, et al, MSc, TV, BBC

Metric terms should be spelt fully in the first instance



15 metres, 10 kilometres, two litres

Then abbreviated the second time they are referred to
15m, 10km, 2l

Do not use an ampersand '&' unless it is part of an existing company or institution's name, eg Marks & Spencer.

Do not abbreviate months or days of the week (Jan, Weds) or words such as administration or administrative to admin.

Addresses

Write street, road, avenue, drive, close or county in full in addresses.

Leave out all punctuation from the end of addresses.

*Corporate Communications
Hertsmere Borough Council
Civic Offices
Elstree Way
Borehamwood
Herts
WD6 1WA*

The style for contact numbers and addresses is:

*Telephone: 020 8207 7417
Fax: 020 8207 7441*

*Email: firstname.surname@hertsmere.gov.uk
Website: www.hertsmere.gov.uk*

Check that addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and websites are correct, before a document is published.

Americanisation

Beware of vocabulary originating in America – such as specialty is speciality. Always opt for 'ise' over 'ize' unless it is part of an organisation's official name.

apostrophe

The apostrophe is used to indicate contraction, for example:

*We're going to apply (we are)
I can't apply (cannot)*

And missing words, for example:

O'clock of the clock

The apostrophe is used with nouns to show possession. Pronouns - hers, its, theirs, yours - are already possessive and so do not require an apostrophe.
For singular and plural nouns that end in any letter other than s, form the possessive by adding 's:



The man's book

Plural nouns that end in s should take the s':

The officers' cars

When singular nouns end in s, the 's is generally used:

Dickens's novel

Some nouns that would normally take 's to indicate possession take the apostrophe alone because the s sound is not pronounced:

For convenience' sake

For the possessive of a phrase or title, the 's (or s' if plural) should be added to the last word only:

The Minister for Education's signature

Only the last noun has the 's in statements of joint ownership:

The officer and councillor's visit

If the ownership is not joint, each noun has the 's:

The officer's and the councillor's visit

The apostrophe should be kept when such phrases contain a plural form:

Nine years' time

If the name has a final syllable which is pronounced es and would sound unusual with a further 's on the end just use a single apostrophe:

Bridges'

Do not use an apostrophe with decade designations:

1970s not 1970's.

For a name that ends with an s, add 's, as in James's book or Dickens's novel. Some well-known places drop the apostrophe, such as St Albans and Barons Court. Others keep the apostrophe, such as Earl's Court and Shepherd's Bush. Consult a map if you are unsure.

No apostrophe in plurals such as MPs and CDs.

Awards

Claims such as 'we have won numerous awards' should be qualified by the award title and the year of the award. This gives the award authority.

Brackets

Brackets are used to enclose a piece of information that is relatively unimportant to the main text. It is better to keep brackets to a minimum; they tend to break up the flow of the text and make the sentence harder to read. If you find yourself putting a lot of text in brackets this may indicate the information could be better presented in another way, such as a table or list.



If a whole sentence is within brackets, put the full stop/question mark/exclamation mark inside:

If you would like further support and information please call reception. (All conversations and emails remain confidential.)

If an incomplete sentence appears with brackets at the end of the sentence, punctuation goes outside the brackets.

The council probationary period lasts six months (but can be extended if deemed necessary by the line manager).

Brackets within brackets should always be round and avoided if possible. Square brackets should only be used to add comments/explanations by the writer/editor to direct speech:

“Let them [the public] learn about council life in a work environment.”

To use ordinary, round brackets implies that the words inside them were part of the original quote.

Bullet points

Bullet points are helpful to emphasise specific points and break up chunks of text. They direct readers to important pieces of information.

There are different ways to punctuate a list.

A list in which each point is a complete sentence should have a capital letter to start and a full stop at the end of the list only.

Bullet points are an invaluable writing aid:

- *They help readers to focus on important pieces of information*
- *Readers can do so quickly and easily*
- *They act as a good reference point.*

A list in which is a continuous sentence should have a full stop at the last point only and does not need capital letters.

When writing a list, please make sure you:

- *extract the points*
- *write clearly*
- *use simple language.*

Each point should follow on when read in conjunction with the opening sentence.

Capitals

Avoid unnecessary capitals in all headings and text.

In headings the first word should be capitalised with the remaining words capitalised only if a proper noun, name or if a specific title or position is involved.

For positions and titles, use title case when written in-conjunction with a name, but lower case when written on their own.



Keely Smith, Corporate Communications Officer
but

The corporate communications officer started her job on November 15.

Official bodies should be title case in the first instance with the name written out in full eg Hertsmere Borough Council. When referring back however, use council.

Centuries, seasons and points of the compass (north, south, east, west), not part of a place name, are always lower case.

Political divisions require capitals for clarity.

Major events should take title case, for example Second World War, Gulf War.

**Use 'the Government', but 'a government', 'the Queen' and 'a queen'.
(See job titles and names on page 10).**

Use lower case for internet, net, email and web.

Use capitals for people's names, place names, months and days of the week, as in:

Keely Smith

Borehamwood

November

Friday

First letters of personal names	<i>Jon Black, Kay Mellow, Jane Thomas</i>
Names of nationalities	<i>British</i>
Premises when giving full name BUT Not if talking generally	<i>Borehamwood Civic Offices</i> <i>Report it to your local area office</i>
Full names of organisations or institutions BUT Lower case when generally speaking	<i>Hertsmere Borough Council, the University of Hertfordshire</i> <i>The council, the university</i>
Specific governments BUT Lower case when using government adjectivally or generally	<i>The Federal Government, the Government</i> <i>government officers, local government</i>
Official titles BUT Lower case in subsequent references	<i>Chief Executive Joe Bloggs, Managing Director Jake Tear</i> <i>The chief executive, the director, the planning officer</i>
Members	<i>Members should be lower case</i>
Councillors	<i>Councillors should be spelt out and upper case in the first instance. After that it can be abbreviated to Cllr</i>
Portfolio Holder	<i>Should be capped up, as it is an official title.</i>



For all staff use their job title and full name in the first instance. For subsequent references the use of title/name depends on two factors:

- The person's preferred use of title.
- The content/style of what is being written.

You can use just first names, or a salutation (Mr, Miss, Dr, Rev etc) depending on what is being written.

Commas

The comma indicates a pause in a sentence and should be used guide readers through a sentence.

My line manager, Catherine Feast, is on holiday

When listing items in a sentence, separate each item with a comma not a semicolon. If the items listed have commas in them, use a semicolon to show the reader where one item starts and another ends.

Keely Smith, Corporate Communications Officer; Joe Bloggs, Planning Officer; An Other, Processing Officer.

Names and necessary descriptions should be separated with commas.

Keely Smith, Corporate Communications Officer.

Contractions

As a general rule avoid using contractions, for example: don't, doesn't, isn't, in official corporate documents.

Contractions are really only acceptable if they are being used in a quote or in literature aimed at a young audience. Sometimes contractions can help the flow of the copy, but should be used sparingly.

Colons

We use a colon to introduce a list, see the bullet points section on page five.

Colons can be used to make a break when we expect something to follow, for example:

She had achieved her ambition: she was a member of the board

When using a colon to introduce part of a sentence, there is no need to capitalise the following word.

Do not use a colon followed by a dash (:-).

Dashes

We can use two dashes – but only in the middle of a sentence – in the same way that we use brackets. A single dash can be used in the same way that we use a colon – to mark a break when we expect something to follow.

No more than one pair of dashes per sentence, and ideally not more than one pair



per paragraph.

Dates

Dates should be written day, date (with no st, nd, rd, th after the number), month and year, written out in full.

Friday 26 January 2013

Spans of time should be written as 2002 to 2003 (not 2002-03)

Periods of time should be written as:

the 1990s

the 20th century

75 BC

AD 66

Exclamation marks

An exclamation mark is used to show strength of feeling, but should not be used in business writing.

Try to avoid the over use of exclamation marks anywhere in copy or in headlines and never use more than one at a time.

Forward slash

There should be no space preceding or following a forward or back slash.

green/brown bin

Headings and subheads

Headlines must be relevant to the article, of a similar tone and style to the copy and aim to interest the reader instantly.

Watch out for the use of title case, plurals, question marks and other punctuation. Try to make them active and descriptive, not just labels:

How do I apply?

Rather than 'Application procedures'

In headings the first words should be capitalised with the remaining words capitalised only if a proper noun, name or specific title or position.

External publicity and support

Not

External Publicity and Support

Do not put a full stop at the end of the heading or title.

Hyphenation

We should use a hyphen to avoid confusion. For example: a *geriatric ward nurse* might not be the same as a *geriatric-ward nurse*

The hyphen should be used to distinguish between similar words, such as: resign and *re-sign*



We can also use a hyphen for words:

- that may look strange if closed up, such as, co-operation, anti-inflammatory
- when the second component consists of more than one word, such as, non-English-speaking
- when one of the prefixes stands alone, such as, macro and micro-economics
- that contain prepositions, such as, sisters-in-law, next-of-kin.

For example:

An up-to-date style but *That style is up to date.*

A day-by-day account but *She will take the situation day by day.*

Stay-at-home mum but *She will stay at home*

Fractions should be written out in full such as:

two-thirds, three-quarters unless relating to financial data.

Use hyphens in ages, such as nine-year-old boy, 22-year-old man.

Also use hyphens in words which contain:

- Great – *great-grandparent*
- Vice – *vice-president*
- Ex – *ex-teacher*
- Self – *self-esteem*
- Elect – *mayor-elect*
- Odd – *thirty-odd*
- All – *all-seeing, all-important*
- Half (in most cases) – *half-term, half-hourly*
- Cross (in most cases) – *cross-country, cross-examine, cross-index*
- Semi (if followed by a word beginning with i) – *semi-isolated*
- Non (in most cases) – *non-academic, non-hereditary (exception nonverbal).*

Generally so-called 'temporary' compounds are spelt open. For example:

neighbourhood group, teacher aide

unless they are used in an adjectival sense to qualify another word, for example:

neighbourhood-group meeting, teacher-aide award.

Compounds formed by joining a noun and the -ing form of a verb do not usually require a hyphen. For example:

decision making, problem solving

However, when such compounds are used adjectivally to qualify another noun they need a hyphen, for example:

decision-making process, problem-solving lesson.

Well-established compounds are usually closed up, such as:

- Those containing grand – *grandmother*
- Those ending in book, house, like, wide and fold for example, *storybook, clubhouse, childlike, worldwide, fourfold.*
- Those comprising an adverb and a verb, for example, *downgrade, outdo, throwaway, uphold.*



- Those comprising a noun and a verb, for example, *hitchhiker*, *troublemaker*, *waterproof*.

The exception to this is if the verb comes first and ends in *-ing*, *-er*, *-s*, for example, writing pad, teaching aid.

For ease of reading, retain hyphens in lift-out, plug-in, wind-up.

Numbers:

Spell out whole numbers for one to nine, use figures for numbers 10 and above.

Exceptions to this rule are:

- numbers starting a sentence should be spelt out
- when writing measurements (8kg), sums of money (£8.20), or percentages (5.2 per cent) they should be written as numerals
- when used in tables, grids or graphs.

Numbers should be written as such:

100

1,000

10,000

100,000

1,000,000

Common sense sometimes calls for a word instead of a figure, as in *'I have told you a hundred times.'*

Decimals smaller than one should take a zero before the point (0.2).

Percentages:

Use the words per cent in text, however the % sign is acceptable in graphs and financial data.

Measurement:

Where possible measurements should be given in the metric form – for example, kilograms and kilometres rather than pounds and miles.

The names of units of measure are always written in full when used without a number. For example:

The car was only metres from the car park.

Time:

Use only the 12-hour clock with a full stop between the hour and the minute, for example: *10.30am* not *10:30am*. I prefer 10:30. But happy either way provided we are consistent

No full points are needed between 'a' and 'm'

Do not use dashes (10am-2pm) to separate time. Sometimes, this is necessary if space is tight.



Midday, midnight or noon. Not 12 noon, 12 midday.

Do not use 00 for time on the hour:

2pm not 2.00pm

When writing about something that happens between certain times it should be written as:

The event will run from 10am to 2pm.

or

The event will run between 10am and 2pm.

Quotations

When introducing a person's direct quotes use their name and title, then a colon and a space, and then open speech marks:

Keely Smith, Corporate Communications Officer, said: "Quoting is easy."

For a quotation within a quotation, use a single quotation mark within the main quote:

Keely Smith said: "I should have answered 'no' to that question."

Within a quotation use the exact spelling and punctuation of the original, even if it is wrong. Use [sic] to indicate that the original spells or reads incorrectly.

If leaving out material from a quotation, use three ellipsis points (...).

You need to use quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph that the person is continuing to speak. Only close the speech marks when the person has finished speaking altogether.

Put the full stop inside quotes eg: *"He was frustrated."*

Semi-colon

The semi-colon acts as a weak full stop to separate two very closely related sentences, for example:

We have studied this problem; there are no easy answers.

Web and email addresses

It is unnecessary to include http:// when writing web addresses. Avoid writing web addresses over two lines. If you do have to, split it at a logical point, for example after a forward slash.

The word email does not need either a space or anything else between the 'e' and the 'mail'. It is all lower case.



Appendix 3

Plain English:

Contents page

1. Introduction
2. Plain English dictionary of alternative words

1. Introduction

Welcome to Aldenham Parish Council's **plain English: style guide**. This guide is to help you to select words appropriate for the council's diverse customers and that are easy to understand by all.

It aims to cover the main words you are likely to come across and their alternatives. It is listed in alphabetical order for ease of reference.

In addition, there is **writing: style guide** to help ensure your documents are corporate and easy to understand. Our thanks go to the Plain English Campaign for the production of the information.

If you need further advice or guidance when preparing a document, please contact Corporate Communications.

Most of the suggestions below are ways to make a communication less legalese and easier to understand, particularly for those who struggle with reading, or for whom English is a second language.

2. Plain English dictionary of alternative words

A

(an) absence of	no, none
abundance	enough, plenty, a lot (or say how many)
accede	to allow, agree to
accelerate	speed up
accentuate	stress
accommodation	where you live, home
accompanying	with
accomplish	do, finish
according to our records	our records show
accordingly	in line with this, so
acknowledge	thank you for
acquaint yourself with	find out about, read
acquiesce	agree
acquire	buy, get
additional	extra, more
adjacent	next to
adjustment	change, alteration
admissible	allowed, acceptable
advantageous	useful, helpful
advise	tell, say (unless you are giving advice)
affix	add, write, fasten, stick on, fix to
afford	an opportunity let, allow



Appendix 3

afforded	given
aforesaid	this, earlier in this document
aggregate	total
aligned	lined up, in line
alleviate	ease, reduce
allocate	divide, share, add, give
along the lines of	like, as in
alternative	choice, other
alternatively	or, on the other hand
ameliorate	improve, help
amendment	change
anticipate	expect
apparent	clear, plain, obvious, seeming
applicant	(the) you
application	use
appreciable	large, great
apprise	inform, tell
appropriate	proper, right, suitable
appropriate	to suitable for
approximately	about, roughly
as a consequence of	because
as of the date of	from
as regards	about, on the subject of
ascertain	find out
assemble	build, gather, put together
assistance	help
at an early date	soon (or say when)
at its discretion	can, may (or edit out)
at the moment	now (or edit out)
at the present time	now (or edit out)
attempt	try
attend	come to, go to, be at
attributable	to due to, because of
authorise	allow, let
authority	right, power, may (as in 'have the authority to')
axiomatic	obvious, goes without saying
B	
belated	late
beneficial	helpful, useful
bestow	give, award
breach	break
by means of	by
C	
calculate	work out, decide
cease	finish, stop, end
circumvent	get round, avoid, skirt, circle
clarification	explanation, help



Appendix 3

combine	mix
combined	together
commence	start, begin
communicate	talk, write, telephone (be specific)
competent	able, can
compile	make, collect
complete	fill in, finish
completion	end
comply with	keep to, meet
component	part
comprise	make up, include
(it is) compulsory	(you) must
conceal	hide
concerning	about, on
conclusion	end
concur	agree
condition	rule
consequently	so
considerable	great, important
constitute	make up, form
construe	interpret
consult	talk to, meet, ask
consumption	amount used
contemplate	think about
contrary to	against, despite
correct	put right
correspond	write
costs the sum of	costs
counter	against
courteous	polite
cumulative	added up, added together
currently	now (or edit out)
customary	usual, normal
D	
deduct	take off, take away
deem	to be treat as
defer	put off, delay
deficiency	lack of
delete	cross out
demonstrate	show, prove
denote	show
depict	show
designate	point out, show, name
desire	wish, want
despatch or dispatch	send, post
despite the fact that	though, although
determine	decide, work out, set, end



Appendix 3

detrimental	harmful, damaging
difficulties	problems
diminish	lessen, reduce
disburse	pay, pay out
discharge	carry out
disclose	tell, show
disconnect	cut off, unplug
discontinue	stop, end
discrete	separate
discuss	talk about
disseminate	spread
documentation	papers, documents
domiciled	in living in
dominant	main
due to the fact of	because, as
duration	time, life
during which time	while
dwelling	home
E	
economical	cheap, good value
eligible	allowed, qualified
elucidate	explain, make clear
emphasise	stress
empower	allow, let
enable	allow
enclosed	inside, with
(please find) enclosed	I enclose
encounter	meet
endeavour	try
enquire	ask
enquiry	question
ensure	make sure
entitlement	right
envisage	expect, imagine
equivalent	equal, the same
erroneous	wrong
establish	show, find out, set up
evaluate	test, check
evince	show, prove
ex officio	because of his or her position
exceptionally	only when, in this case
excessive	too many, too much
exclude	leave out
excluding	apart from, except
exclusively	only
exempt from	free from
expedite	hurry, speed up



Appendix 3

expeditiously

expenditure

expire

extant

extremity

F

fabricate

facilitate

factor

failure to

finalise

following

for the duration of

for the purpose of

for the reason

formulate

forthwith

forward

frequently

furnish

further to

furthermore

G

generate

give

grant

H

henceforth

hereby

herein

hereinafter

hereof

hereto

heretofore

hereunder

herewith

hitherto

hold in abeyance

hope and trust

I

if and when

illustrate

immediately

implement

imply

in a number of cases

in accordance with

as soon as possible, quickly

spending

run out

current, in force

limit

make, make up

help, make possible

reason

if you do not

end, finish

after

during, while

to, for

that because

plan, devise

now, at once

send

often

give

after, following

then, also, and

produce, give, make

consideration to consider, think about

give

from now on, from today

now, by this (or edit out)

here (or edit out)

after this (or edit out)

of this

to this

until now, previously

below

with this (or edit out)

until now

wait, postpone

hope, trust (but not both)

if, when (but not both)

show, explain

at once, now

carry out, do

suggest, hint at

some (or say how many)

as under, in line with, because of



Appendix 3

in addition (to)	and, as well as, also
in advance	before
in case of	if
in conjunction with	and, with
in connection with	for, about
in consequence	because, as a result
in excess of	more than
in lieu of	instead of
in order that	so that
in receipt of	get, have, receive
in relation to	about
in respect of	about, for
in the absence of	without
in the course of	while, during
in the event	of/that if
in the majority of instances	most, mostly
in the near future	soon
in the neighbourhood of	about, around
in view of the fact	that as, because
inappropriate	wrong, unsuitable
inception	start, beginning
incorporating	which includes
incurred	have to pay, owe
indicate	show, suggest
inform	tell
initially	at first
initiate	begin, start
insert	put in
instances	cases
intend	to will
intimate	say, hint
irrespective	of despite, even if
is in accordance with	agrees with, follows
is of the opinion	thinks
issue	give, send
it is known that	I/we know that
J	
jeopardise	risk, threaten
L	
(a) large number of	many, most (or say how many)
(to) liaise with	to meet with, to discuss with, to work with
(whichever is more descriptive)	
locality	place, area
locate	find, put
M	
magnitude	size
(it is) mandatory	(you) must



Appendix 3

manner	way
manufacture	make
marginal	small, slight
material	relevant
materialise	happen, occur
may in the future	may, might, could
merchandise	goods
mislaid	lose
modification	change
moreover	and, also, as well
N	
negligible	very small
nevertheless	but, however, even so
notify	tell, let us/you know
notwithstanding	even if, despite, still, yet
numerous	many (or say how many)
O	
objective	aim, goal
(it is) obligatory	(you) must
obtain	get, receive
occasioned by	caused by, because of
on behalf of	for
on numerous occasions	often
on receipt of	when we/you get
on request	if you ask
on the grounds that	because
on the occasion that	when, if
operate	work, run
optimum	best, ideal
option	choice
ordinarily	normally, usually
otherwise	or
outstanding	unpaid
owing to	because of
P	
(a) percentage of	some (or say what percentage)
partially	partly
participate	join in, take part
particulars	details, facts
per annum	a year
perform	do
permissible	allowed
permit	let, allow
personnel	people, staff
persons	people, anyone
peruse	read, read carefully, look at
place	put



Appendix 3

possess	have, own
possessions	belongings
practically	almost, nearly
predominant	main
prescribe	set, fix
preserve	keep, protect
previous	earlier, before, last
principal	main
prior to	before
proceed	go ahead
procure	get, obtain, arrange
profusion of	plenty, too many (or say how many)
(to) progress something	(replace with a more precise phrase saying
what you are doing)	
prohibit	ban, stop
projected	estimated
prolonged	long
promptly	quickly, at once
promulgate	advertise, announce
proportion	part
provide	give
provided that	if, as long as
provisions	rules, terms
proximity	closeness, nearness
purchase	buy
pursuant	to under, because of, in line with
Q	
qualify for	can get, be able to get
R	
reconsider	think again about, look again at
reduce	cut
reduction	cut
referred to	as called
refer to	talk about, mention
(have) regard to	take into account
regarding	about, on
regulation	rule
reimburse	repay, pay back
reiterate	repeat, restate
relating to	about
remain	stay
remainder	the rest, what is left
remittance	payment
remuneration	pay, wages, salary
render	make, give, send
represent	show, stand for, be
request	ask, question



Appendix 3

**require
requirements**

reside

residence

restriction

retain

review

revised

S

said/such/same

scrutinise

select

settle

similarly

solely

specified

state

statutory

subject to

submit

subsequent

subsequently

substantial

substantially

sufficient

supplement go

supplementary

supply

T

(the) tenant

terminate

that being

the question

thereafter

thereby by

therein

thereof

thereto

thus

to date

to the extent

transfer

transmit

U

ultimately

unavailability

undernoted

need, want, force

needs, rules

live

home, where you live

limit

keep

look at (again)

new, changed

the, this, that

read (look at) carefully

choose

pay

also, in the same way

only

given, written, set

say, tell us, write down

legal, by law

depending on, under, keeping to

send, give

to/upon after

later

large, great, a lot of

more or less

enough

with, add to

extra, more

give, sell, delivery

you

stop, end

the case if so

as to whether whether

then, afterwards

that, because of that

in that, there

of that

to that

so, therefore

so far, up to now

that if, when

change, move

send

in the end, finally

lack of

the following



Appendix 3

undersigned	I, we
undertake	agree, promise, do
uniform	same, similar
unilateral	one-sided, one-way
unoccupied	empty
until such time	until
utilisation	use
utilise	use
V	
variation	change
virtually	almost (or edit out)
visualise	see, predict
W	
ways and means	ways
we have pleasure in	we are glad to
whatsoever	whatever, what, any
whensoever	when
whereas	but
whether or not	whether
with a view to	to, so that
with effect from	from
with reference to	about
with regard to	about, for
with respect to	about, for
with the minimum of delay	quickly (or say when)
Y	
you are requested	please
your attention is drawn	please see, please note
Z	
zone	area, region

Words and phrases to avoid

The words and phrases below often crop up in letters and reports. Often you can remove them from a sentence without changing the meaning or the tone. In other words, they add nothing to the message. Try leaving them out of your writing. You'll find your sentences survive and succeed without them.

- a total of
- absolutely
- abundantly
- actually
- all things being equal
- as a matter of fact
- as far as I am concerned
- at the end of the day
- at this moment in time
- basically



Appendix 3

- current
- currently
- during the period from
- each and every one
- existing
- extremely
- I am of the opinion that
- I would like to say
- I would like to take this opportunity to
- in due course
- in the end
- in the final analysis
- in this connection
- in total
- in view of the fact that
- it should be understood
- last but not least
- obviously
- of course
- other things being equal
- quite
- really
- really quite
- regarding the (noun), it was
- the fact of the matter is
- the month(s) of
- to all intents and purposes
- to one's own mind
- very