Redditch Borough Council

Our Corporate Identity

including Style Guide
and Guide to Plain English

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

making a difference

Effective from September 2009

www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Contents

1.1 What is a corporate identity?

Identity is about having unique characteristics by which a person or thing is recognised. For a corporate body such as Redditch Borough Council these are shown through our logo, stationery, leaflets and publications, the languge we use when communicating, forms, buildings, uniforms and vehicles. An identity needs to be memorable and distinctive. Customers and our partners should immediately know they are dealing with Redditch Borough Council when using our services or receiving communication from us. The best corporate identities accurately reflect the vision and values of the organisation.

1.2 Aim of our corporate identity

To promote all Redditch Borough Council's activities as part of one organisation with the same vision and values; through the adoption of a Corporate Identity across the Council. The logo is a powerful part of the 'brand' of Redditch Borough Council.

The old Redditch Borough Council logo is no longer current and must not be used except in exceptional circumstances when its use must be approved by the Communications Team on behalf of the CMT. Examples of exceptional use are on identity badges where there is insufficient space for the correct logo, and at the Crematorium for reasons of sensitivity.

1.3 Objectives of our corporate identity

- That our customers recognise Council-provided services through a strong Corporate Identity
- To make it easy for customers to identify what services the Council offers through clear and consistent branding, and distinguish these from services provided by others including those delivered exclusively by the County Council (so helping to reduce public confusion)
- To provide high quality professionally produced information about our services which conforms to the Corporate Identity

1.4   About logos and branding

As mentioned, the logo is a key part of our branding so needs to be used correctly. Therefore;
- All RBC services teams will use the RBC logo and corporate identity guidelines on all publicity / vehicles
- Strategies / projects with partnership funding or other primary external input can use their own logos alongside the RBC logo on all forms of communication
- Specified Council venues and partnerships where RBC takes the lead, are permitted to use their own logos (co-branding) alongside the RBC logo, on all forms of communication
- Copies of all authorised co-branding is registered with the Communications Team and appears later on in this document.

1.5   Our logos and how they are positioned

- The RBC logo must appear on the front of all publications at the bottom or top right of the page. The preferred position is bottom right. See 1.10 below and detailed guidance on use with other logos on page 21.

1.6   Our strapline and its use

- Only the strapline `making a difference` may be used throughout RBC branding

1.7   Describing our services

- All names used to categorise activities, e.g. Leisure Services, must be registered with the Communications Team and used consistently in official communications. Only the terms 'Directorate', 'Service' or 'Team' may be used, except in special cases such as Sure Start Children's Centres

1.8   Staff Uniforms

- Every effort must be made to use the corporate green (Pantone 355)
- Only the RBC logo may appear on badges or uniforms
- Where approved co-branding appears on uniforms or badges, the RBC logo or the words Redditch Borough Council MUST be included
- All uniforms must be approved by Communications Team on behalf of the CMT before an order is placed.
- Some existing uniforms will need to adopt the correct style as they are replaced.

1.9   Signage / vehicle livery

- These must be produced in line with the corporate branding
- Where approved co-branding is used, the RBC logo must also appear.
- For vehicles the only acceptable livery is the logo plus the main Council telephone number (for vehicles only). No other wording or graphics should appear.

1.10 Print

- The RBC Style Guide (see page 24) and Guide to Plain English (see page 32) should be followed.
- Individual and team door signs, in a corporate style, are available from the Communications Team.
- The RBC logo must appear on the front cover, bottom right of all leaflets, brochures and folders. Exceptions to this are some forms, questionnaires and letterheads which may carry the logo top right when it is more practical than appearing at the bottom
- Where other co-branding is permitted, documents must also include the RBC logo on the front cover in the bottom right. See page 21.

1.11 Displays / exhibitions / presentations

- The RBC logo must appear within any display / exhibition / presentation. If this is not possible, the words Redditch Borough Council only should appear.

1.12 Committee reports

- The standard template for committee covers and reports must be used. This is available from either your Directorate Support or from Committee Services.

1.13 General advertisements and recruitment advertisements

- Standard job advertisements placed for RBC paid employees will be designed in line with the corporate recruitment style both in terms of text and design. See page 15.
- Adverts for posts in services / teams with approved co-branding must include the RBC logo.

1.14 Identity badges

- Official staff ID badges with a photograph must be carried at all times by Officers on Council business
- Official Council ID badges with a photograph must be carried at all times by Members within the Town Hall
- Official visitor ID badges must be carried at all times by the public entering staff only areas of the Town Hall

1.15 Communicating with the visually impaired, blind and ethnic minorities

- The RBC logo must appear on all Council 'products'
- Use black type on a white background whenever possible
- Avoid placing type over photographs or background colour as it makes the wording difficult to read
- The Ethnic Access Link (EAL) statement should preferably go on the front of all leaflets for external audiences. On the back is acceptable if the design of the cover does not allow for the statement. You must then send a copy of the document to EAL at 13b Lowesmoor, Worcester WR1 2RS, so they can interpret the document if required.
- The following is recommended wording for people with visual impairment or blind to go on the front or back of all leaflets for external audiences and must appear in at least 14 point type: Copies of Council publications can be made available in large print, Braille or audio cassette. Call (01527) 64252 ext 3002.

1.16 Party political publicity and our identity

The RBC logo may be used on information which is describing exclusively the approved policy or work of the Council. If the information includes party political material, the logo must not be used.

The logo must not be used on information which represents the particular views of individual political parties or factional interests or on information which in any way does not represent the policy or interests of the Council as a whole.

The logo may be used by Members in conjunction with their work on behalf of the council, in relation to their appointed positions and as Ward Councillors, but not in any party political work.

The logo should be used on information published by the Council in accordance with these guidelines.

1.17 Coding of leaflets and publications

Leaflets and other publications should be coded on the reverse bottom right. The month and date should be added in 6 or 7 point typesize e.g. 909 for September 2009.

1.18 Monitoring correct application of the Corporate Identity

The Corporate Identity policy will be enforced and if necessary publicity not conforming to the policy can be withdrawn and reprinted at the originating Directorate's expense.

The Communications Team will take responsibility for monitoring the Council's corporate identity on behalf of the CMT. The team will:
• Offer advice and assistance to help officers maintain the corporate identity
• Monitor and review all Council communications as part of the Communications and Engagement Strategy

Print and Design staff, within the Communications Team, will check proofs of all items printed either by them or through the print brokerage to ensure they meet with the policy guidelines.

All teams must ensure all their communication is in line with the policy. They should:
• send copies of all printed literature to the Communications Team
• have registered their service names and any co-branding with the Communications Team - please contact ext 3002 room 4.4 Town Hall

It is the responsibility of all officers to ensure the Council retains its Corporate Identity.

1.19 Reviewing the Corporate Identity

This policy should be reviewed annually from its date of adoption.

1.20 Further guidance on the Corporate Identity

A short summary and CD are available with this guide. Contact the Communications Team on (01527) 64252 ext 3059 / ext 3002 or email commsteam@redditchbc.gov.uk for details.

If you are unsure of how to produce information in line with the Corporate Identity contact the Communications Team.

2.1 Introduction

The Redditch Borough Council corporate logo consists of three main elements
• the main logo
• strapline (making a difference)
• website address

These elements should only be used in the form indicated as they follow a precise and carefully considered relationship. Together they are a statement about what the Council does and where customers and stakeholders can find us online.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL — The main logo

making a difference — Strapline

www.redditchbc.gov.uk — Website address
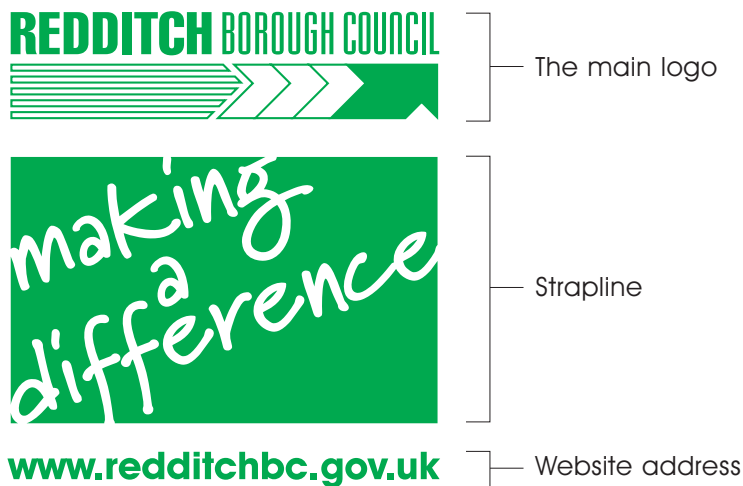
The Corporate Identity is a brand which includes our logo. This helps customers and stakeholders identify our work and builds the idea of the Council as one organisation offering a range of services.

2.2 Corporate Logo - colour and other versions

Below are the approved versions in which the logo should always be used. The identity must always be clearly visible and never redrawn. All variations are available on the available CD or the Intranet.

Master logo - colour version.
Available specified in spot and CMYK.

Master logo - black version

Master logo - reversed out or white version

2.3   Exclusion zone and positioning

The logo is protected by a restricted exclusion area as defined below. This is defined as the depth of the word Redditch plus the graphic lines underneath. This measurement is to be used to determine the exclusion area around the logo.
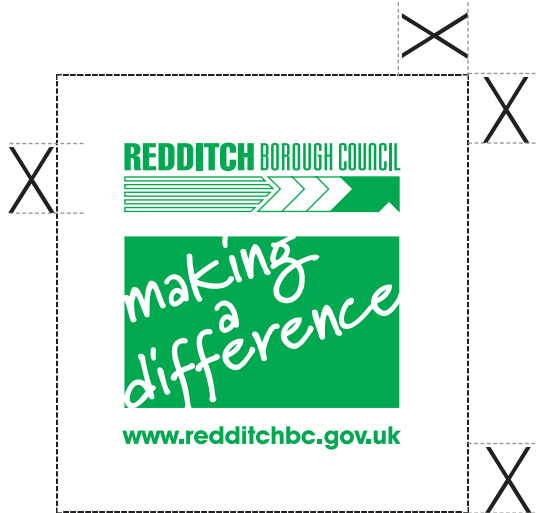
Positioning

Wherever the logo appears, the exclusion zone formula must be applied to the logo.

2.4 Limitations of use

When positioning the logo, the basic guidelines must be followed. The bottom right hand side of a page is the preferred position, with the exclusion zone employed to protect the visual impact of the logo.

Size specification

The minimum size specification is to protect the clarity of the logo and to ensure that it is always clearly recognised and legible; therefore the corporate logo should not be produced any smaller than 25mm in width on leaflets or brochures.

In some circumstances, when appearing on some business cards, small adverts less than 80mm in width and some promotional products, it may be reduced to 18mm in width.

18mm

25mm
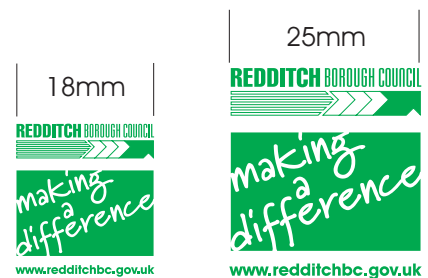
Incorrect usage of logo

The logo must never be surrounded by box rules or text or distorted in any way.
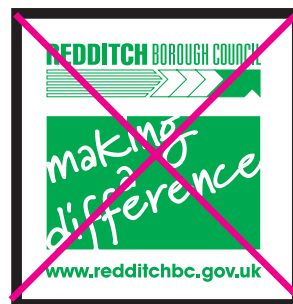
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consevtetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonnummy euisimod rom tempor incidunt ut et labore et dolore magna aliquam erat volupat Ut enim ad minim emm veniam, quis nostrund exercitation ullamcorpor suscris laboris nis Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consevtetur adipiscing elit, sed diam nonnummy
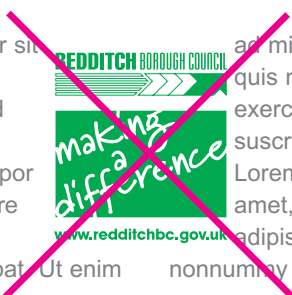
2.5 Colour palette

Wherever possible the logo should be reproduced 100 per cent in the corporate green Pantone 355. However, in certain circumstances, due to printing costs or restrictions, it may be produced in black and white.

Pantone 355	30%
C 94 M 0 Y 100 K 0	

www.redditchbc.gov.uk
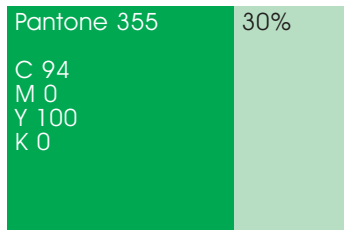
There is also a selection of complementary colours available to enhance the Corporate Identity.

Pantone 389	30%
C 25 M 0 Y 85 K 0	

Pantone 207	30%
C 0 M 100 Y 43 K 19	

Pantone 2597	30%
C 85 M 100 Y 0 K 0	

Pantone 300	30%
C 100 M 44 Y 0 K 0	

Pantone 3292	30%
C 100 M 0 Y 49 K 46	
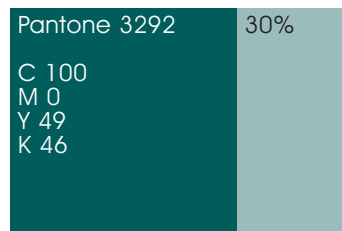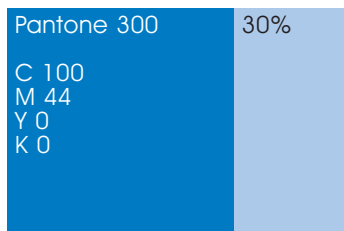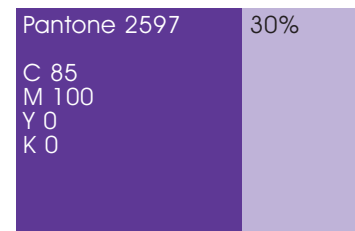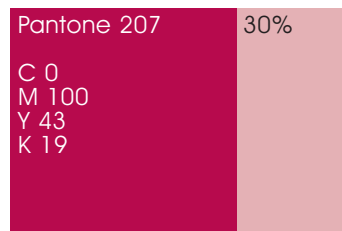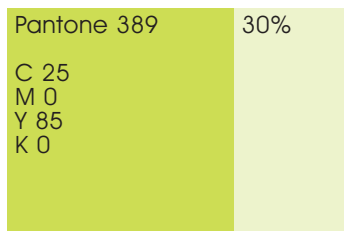
Please refer to a Pantone colour swatch for accurate colour matching.

2.6 Font usage

The main authorised typeface is Arial, a selection from which is shown here. It is ideal for internal documents, stationery and forms. All weights and associated styles, including italics, may be used from this family.

Avant Garde is the preferred typeface for professionally designed literature (see below), but is not available on most PCs. However, designers do have access to Avant Garde.

Size specifications
12 point is the recommended minimum font size for letters and 10 point on 12 point leading for publications.

Arial (available on all PCs)

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890!@£$%^&*()_+

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234567890 !@£$%^&()_+*

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234567890 !@£$%^&*()_+

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234567890
!@£$%^&*()_+

Avant Garde (usually on professional design systems e.g. Applemac)

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890!@£$%^&*()_+

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234567890 !@£$%^&()_+*

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz1234567890 !@£$%^&*()_+

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz 1234567890!@£$%^&*()_+

2.7 Good practice tips

The average line length should be no more than 70 characters.
The minimum font size is10 point for all documentation.

No hyphens should appear within headlines or the main body of text.

All headings and body text should be left justified.

When producing forms and agendas leave enough space for the recipient to reply. Use dotted fine lines to indicate areas in which a response is required.

Instead of underlining type to emphasise words, a bolder / thicker typeface should be used. Arial Black is recommended

Avoid using all capitals in headlines and sub headings.

NEW INITIATIVE PLANNED   **New initiative planned**

3.1 Using partner logos with our logo

The Redditch Borough Council corporate logo has been developed to work on all Council publications. Positioning and size should follow these guidelines.

Logo size on A4 size – 35mm wide
Logo size on A5 size – 30mm wide
Logo size on DL size (A4 folded to a third) – 25mm wide

DL

This area is
reserved for
partner logos

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL
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A5

This area is
reserved for
partner
logos

Ethnic Access Link statement

آپ انگریزی میں مدد چاہتے ہیں– نسلیاتی رسائی
[Ethnic Access] سے رابط کریں ٹیلیفون: 01905 25121

ইংরেজি ভাষার বিষয়ে সাহায্য চান – এথনিক অ্যাকসেস্
[Ethnic Access] এর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করুন, টেলিফোনঃ
01905 25121

'Potrzebujesz pomocy z Angielskim – skontaktuj się z
Ethnic Access Tel: 01905 25121'

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A4

This area is
reserved for
partner
logos

Ethnic Access Link statement

آپ انگریزی میں مدد چاہتے ہیں– نسلیاتی رسائی
[Ethnic Access] سے رابط کریں ٹیلیفون: 01905 25121

ইংরেজি ভাষার বিষয়ে সাহায্য চান – এথনিক অ্যাকসেস্ [Ethnic Access]
এর সঙ্গে   যোগাযোগ করুন, টেলিফোনঃ 01905 25121

'Potrzebujesz pomocy z Angielskim – skontaktuj się z
Ethnic Access Tel: 01905 25121'

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3.2 Photographic style

Photographs illustrating most service areas are available to view on the Intranet for use in Council publicity material. All photographs available have secured the necessary permissions (see below) and are copyrighted to the Council.

Please note that officers should complete photographic consent forms for any pictures taken of members of the public and staff (as appropriate). The forms are available from the Communications Team, room 4.4 Town Hall.

3.3 Exhibition graphics, signage and vehicle livery

When producing signage and exhibition graphics the standard guidelines for the logo must be implemented. The logo must appear top or bottom right and follow the position and exclusion rules as outlined on page x.

Banners are to be used to raise people's awareness of the identity of the Council and provide a focus for the event.

Occasions for use should include:
• Public consultations
• Publicity events
• Backdrops
  for meetings

Please ensure the erection of a banner does not infringe any planning regulations. If in doubt check with a Planning Officer.

Display boards and banners

Image and text here

Image and text here

Corporate signage

Text here

This area is reserved for any partner logos
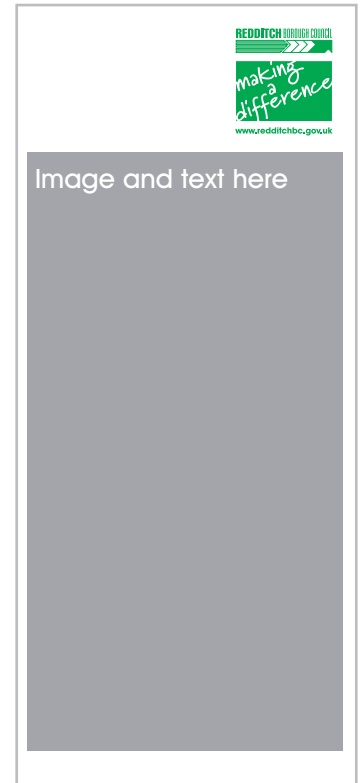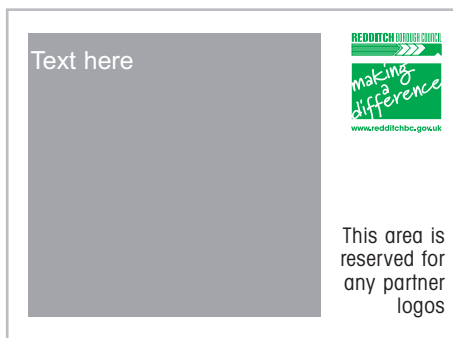
Vehicle livery

Co-branding signage

Text here
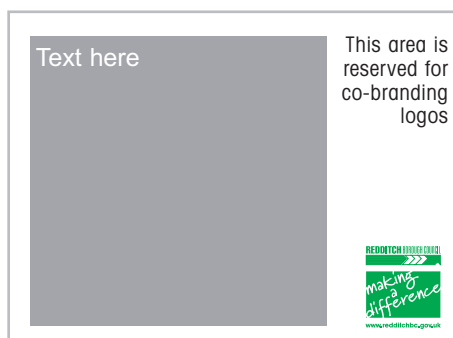
This area is reserved for co-branding logos

3.4 Advertisements and recruitment

The RBC logo must appear on the bottom right of all adverts and must be designed along corporate lines in both terms of design and text. Where approved co-branding is used, the advert or recruitment advert must also include the RBC logo. See below for examples:

Area for text /images

area for contact details
and partnership logos
if applicable

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL
making a difference
www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Area for text /images

This area for co-branding logos

area for contact details
and partnership logos
if applicable

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL
making a difference
www.redditchbc.gov.uk
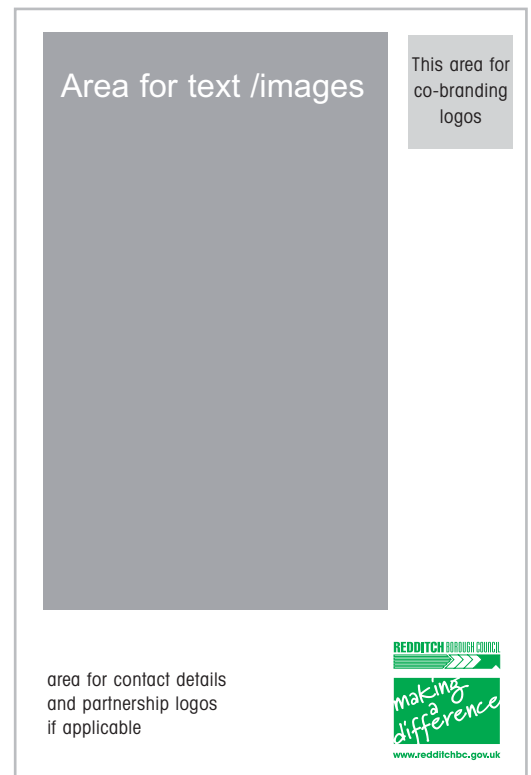
3.5 Letterheads and compliments slips

From April 2010 a template for letterheads supplied to us by Worcestershire County Council will be used. The template will be able to be adapted to suit different contact details. Please contact your Directorate Support to access the template and / or create specific contact details for your service / team, from April 2010.

Compliments slips are pre-printed by the Print Team and can also be over-printed with specific contact details.

Approved co-branding stationery

The approved logo will appear top right with the RBC logo bottom right which must follow the position and exclusion rules. Any Partnership logos should appear bottom left. See page 21 for approved primary or co-brand logos.

Adding a special designation

If you would like to add a Charter Mark, Quest or similar to your stationery this would appear bottom right (or bottom left in the case of co-branding).

A4 RBC letterhead

3. Applications

RBC compliment slip

with compliments

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Service or Team Name
Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square,Redditch, Worcestershire B98 8AH
tel: (01527) 534123 ext: 2345   mobile: 07889 838211   fax: (01527) 65216   minicom: 595528   DX: 19106 Redditch
email: information@redditchbc.gov.uk

A4 Co-branding stationery

area for
approved
co-branding
logo

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Co-branding compliment slip

area for
approved
co-branding
logo

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

making a difference

www.redditchbc.gov.uk

3.6 Email footers

Email footers are how you sign off your RBC emails. With most correspondence carried out by email these days, it is important that they too follow a corporate style just as you would use for an RBC letter, with clearly spelt out contact details.

The following are examples of how your email footer should look:

- for somebody working in the Town Hall;
- at an outside Council office;
- for a co-branded venue or partnership where RBC takes the lead;
- for somebody working for a shared service but based here;
- for somebody working jointly across Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils.

Please adapt the details for your needs but you **<u>must</u>** follow the template. Note the vision for Redditch and ownership of the Palace Theatre is in green. This is deliberate to reflect the Council's corporate colour.

It is acceptable to have a temporary message below the Council's vision to promote a departmental consultation or new activity, for example.

Letters should appear after your name if you have these and want to use them. Mobile phone numbers can be added as `Mobile:` on the same line as `Tel:` (same applies for fax or Minicom numbers, if required).

After your job title please use your discretion as to whether you include your service name or Directorate. Some jobs e.g. Director, Chief Executive do not require either.

Email footers can be created or changed using Microsoft Outlook. Click on Tools – Options - Mail Format – Signatures – Edit, then save your message and it should appear every time you start a new email. We suggest Arial 11 point for your contact details.

You **<u>must not</u>** use background colours, border designs or similar as part of your email. The footer should be as shown on a plain white background.

3. Applications

Example for Town Hall based

John Smith, Landscape Officer, Environment and Planning Directorate

Redditch Borough Council, Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch,
Worcestershire B98 8AH
Tel: (01527) 64252 ext 8444
Email: john.smith@redditchbc.gov.uk Website: www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Redditch's vision is an enterprising community which is safe, clean and green

Please don't print this e-mail unless you really need to.

Example for Outside Council office based

John Smith, Tenancy Participation Assistant, Housing Services

Redditch Borough Council, Woodrow Centre, Woodrow, Redditch,
Worcestershire B98 7RY
Tel: (01527) 534188
Email: john.smith@redditchbc.gov.uk Website: www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Redditch's vision is an enterprising community which is safe, clean and green

Please don't print this e-mail unless you really need to.

Example for Working for a co-branded venue or partnership

John Smith, Marketing Assistant

Redditch Palace Theatre, Alcester Street, Redditch, Worcestershire B98 8AH
Tel: (01527) 61544
Email: john.smith@redditchbc.gov.uk Website: www.redditchpalacetheatre.co.uk

The Palace Theatre is owned and managed by Redditch Borough Council

Please don't print this e-mail unless you really need to.

Example for Working for a shared service

John Smith, Electoral Registration Officer

Redditch Borough Council, Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch,
Worcestershire B98 8AH
Tel: (01527) 64252 ext 8444
Email: john.smith@redditchbc.gov.uk
Website: www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Bromsgrove District Council, The Council House, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove,
Worcestershire B60 1AA
Tel: (01527) 881288
Email: john.smith@bromsgrove.gov.uk
Website: www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

Please don't print this e-mail unless you really need to.

Example for Working in a joint role for both Councils

John Smith, Joint Emergency Planning Officer

Redditch Borough Council	**Bromsgrove District Council**
Town Hall	The Council House
Walter Stranz Square	Burcot Lane
Redditch	Bromsgrove
Worcestershire B98 8AH	Worcestershire B98 8AH
Tel: (01527) 64252 ext 8444	Tel: (01527) 881288
Email: john.smith@redditchbc.gov.uk	Email: john.smith@bromsgrove.gov.uk
Website: www.redditchbc.gov.uk	Website: www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

Please don't print this e-mail unless you really need to.

3.7 Presentations using PowerPoint

For presentations by PowerPoint, please use the template as shown below. This is available on the CD and Intranet.

PowerPoint template

3.8 Business cards

Business cards are available pre-printed from the Print Team. Your details are then printed on to the card. As with email footers, you can include a mobile phone number if you wish or reduce your address details, if desired. Below are two versions of the business card, for somebody working for Redditch Borough Council, and somebody working for both Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils.

RBC business card

Officer name
Job title

Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square,
Redditch, Worcs B98 8AH

tel: (01527) 64252 ext 1234
mobile: 07899 123456
fax: (01527) 65216   minicom: 595528

email: info@redditchbc.gov.uk

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www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Joint working business card

Officer name
Job title

Redditch Borough Council
email: info@redditchbc.gov.uk
tel: (01527) 64252

Bromsgrove District Council
email: info@bromsgrove.gov.uk
tel: (01527) 123456 (direct line)

mobile: 07654 891234

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making a difference
www.redditchbc.gov.uk

Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

Co-brand business card

Officer name
Job title

Venue
Address

tel: (01527) 12345 ext 1234
mobile: 07899 123456
fax: (01527) 123456

email: info@redditchbc.gov.uk

Managed by Redditch Borough Council

Area for co-brand logo

3.9 Website and Intranet

When writing copy for the website and Intranet, or supplying images / photographs, all the principles outlined in these guidelines should apply for our website and Intranet. In particular, please refer to the Style Guide and Guide to Plain English for producing and supplying copy.

However, writing for the website and Intranet and adding copy to these sites is a specialism and to help you, a separate guide has been produced. This is available on the Intranet or from IT Services.

4. Co-branding

4.1 What is co-branding
and how it should be used

Below are examples of other Council approved co-brand logos. When they are used the RBC logo must appear on the front at the bottom right of any leaflet or document produced and follow the position and exclusion rules as outlined on page 8.

Any new Council co-brand logos must be approved and registered with the Communications Team before their introduction. See below for current approved logos.


Revising in July 2009

For Civic use only.

This area is reserved for co-brand logo

This area is reserved for partner logo

example of an A5 leaflet with a co-branding, partnership and RBC logo.

4.2 Logo to use when we financially support or sponsor projects / activities

Below is a new logo that can be used when Redditch Borough Council financially supports or sponsors external projects and activities. The logo should be used by external organisations in colour if at all possible, although it is acceptable for external organisations to reproduce this logo in black and white as an alternative. Please ensure the external organisation uses the correct Pantone colour (green 355).

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

making a difference

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5 Style Guide

This Style Guide has been designed to be quick and easy to understand and, if used correctly, will help staff write better, more consistent communications. Consistency is key to developing a strong brand for the Council, so it is important that we all use the same 'tone of voice' and our communications follow the same set style.

Abbreviations

Try to avoid the use of abbreviations. They can look unprofessional, are not understood by everyone and can be seen as a lazy way of writing. On occasion, for example a listing in a leaflet, it is acceptable to use a hyphen between times of day or shorten the months of the year. But best to avoid if you can.

Avoid	Replace with
ie	in other words or that is
eg	for example
Jan, Feb, Nov	January, February, November
&	and
/ (except for financial years, example of 2009/10)	and, or
- (8.30am-5pm)	to (8.30am to 5pm)
NB	Please note:

Etc
Never use 'etc' because it leaves unexplained what the rest of list consists of. We can't assume people will know.

Councillor
When referring to a specific elected member, the word councillor can be shortened to Cllr. But when writing about councillors in general it must be spelt out.

Example
Cllr John Smith is the portfolio holder.
Councillors decided to agree to the officer's recommendations.

Ext
Always use ext for extension numbers not X.

Style

Some words, such as CD, DVD, AIDS, NATO MORI, are always written in their abbreviated form because this is how they are best known to the general public. You rarely hear about people going to the shop to buy a compact disc.

All other words should be spelt out the first time they are used in a piece of writing. The abbreviation can be placed next to it in brackets and can then be used throughout the rest of the piece of work.

> *Example*
> The Corporate Management Team (CMT) will be holding a meeting on Monday.
> CMT members are expected to make a decision by the end of the week.

Capital letters

Capital letters can be overused and can look messy within a large piece of writing.

Never use block capitals for full sentences BECAUSE THEY ARE TOO DIFFICULT TO READ AND LOOK UGLY.

Headings

Always write headlines and headings in lower case unless there is a name or title within the heading which needs to be capped.
Example
Families get crafty with the new Family Learning Programme

Job titles

Council job titles can be capped and written out in full when talking about an individual such as Media and Communications Officer, Communications and Marketing Manager.

But when referring to a group of people there is no need for capital letters. For example officers, councillors, directors, managers, heads of service.

The exception

Members should be referred to as councillors whenever you are writing for the public. When you do use Members use upper case to make it clear that you are referring to the Council's **M**embers rather than general members of a group or a team.

The Council

When referring to the Council for the first time it should be called its full name – Redditch Borough Council.

After that it can be referred to as the Council, with a capital c.

Other groups work the same but do not need a capital letter when you refer to it for the second time.

Example

Redditch Borough Council is aiming towards its new vision. **The Council** adopted this vision earlier this year and staff and councillors are now working towards making it a reality.

Bromsgrove District Council is working with Redditch Borough Council. The two **councils** plan to complete the project by the end of this year.

West Mercia Police is working with Redditch Borough Council on a new project to improve safety. The **police** have dealt with these issues before and the **Council** will be taking advice from officers.

Groups

Titles of established Council groups or committees should be capped and should be written out in full the first time it is referred to. It can then be shortened and lower case or abbreviated.

Example

The **Planning Committee** is due to meet next week. The **committee** will be discussing five planning applications.
The **Corporate Management Team** is meeting soon. **CMT** will be looking at how it will work.

Government

When referring to the Government of the country, a capital letter is needed. Political parties such as Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives should also be capped.

Seasons and events

Use lower case for spring, summer, autumn and winter. But use initial capitals for religious festivals such as Easter. The words new year can be lower case but cap up New Year's Day or New Year's Eve.
Use capitals when writing the full name of an event such as Holocaust Memorial Day, but you can then refer to the event as memorial day in lower case.

Is or are?

Although organisations are made up of a number of members of staff, when we write about them we see them as one single group.

Example

The Council is
The Council has
The Council does

Dates and times

Dates should be written in the format of 3rd July 2009. Never use 'the' before a date and do use th/nd/rd/st.

> *Date and time examples*
> 3rd July 2009
> 3rd July
> 1950s (notice no apostrophe)

Times are written without a space between the figure and am or pm. ***Do not*** use noughts, do not use a colon and do not use the 24-hour clock.

> *Example*
> 4am
> 7.30pm
> 12noon (not 12pm)

Numbers

Never start a sentence with a figure, but if you must always write it out in full. Numbers one to nine should be spelt out in words while 10 and up should be written as figures.

> *Example*
> One in 10 people said the Council needed to…..
> The 21st time or the fifth time.

Use a comma to break up numbers over 1,000. While m can be used for million.

> *Example*
> £2,500
> £13,600
> £10m

Telephone numbers should be written out in full with brackets used for the area code. (01527) 64252.

When writing percentages the word 'per cent' must always be written out rather than using % except in tables.

In tables please align all figure to the right.

Financial years

Write as 2008/09, 2010/11 to avoid any confusion and make it clearer to read.

> *Example*
> The budget for the financial years 2008/09 and 2009/10.
> ***Rather than***
> The budget for financial years 2008 to 2009 and 2009 to 2010.

Measures and weights

Metres = 10m
Kilometres = 10km
Kilograms = 10kg
Pounds = 10st 2lbs
Feet and inches = 6ft 2ins

Fonts

The standard font for the Council is Arial 12 point and should be used at all times for letters, press releases and emails.
The smallest point size generally permitted is 10 point.
Arial is professional, clear and easy to read compared to other popular fonts such as Times New Roman and Comic Sans.

Italics

Italics can be used to show that we are writing about a book, film or song title, such as *Pride and Prejudice.*

Common mistakes to look out for

Amount and number

Amount refers to a collection of something which cannot be counted individually such as rice or sand.
Number refers to individual items which can be counted, generally larger items like sausages or envelopes.

> *Example*
> Who we can serve depends on the amount of rice left.
> Who we can serve depends on the number of sausages left.

Less and fewer

This is a common mistake seen in nearly all supermarkets across the country.
The well-known sign '10 items or less' should actually read 10 items or fewer.
Less refers to an amount which cannot be counted – we have less rice.
Fewer refers to a number which can be counted – we have fewer sausages.

Affect and effect

A good way to remember this is that people are affected by an effect.

> *Example*
> How does this affect me?
> What effect will this have on me?

Americanisms

Avoid Americanism at all times. Be careful while doing a spell check as this often wants to turn the correct English spelling into the American version.

Example
Use lorry **rather than** truck
Use rubbish **rather than** garbage
Use organisation **rather than** organization
Use recognise **rather than** recognize
Use progra<u>mme</u> **not** progra<u>m</u>

Help with punctuation

Apostrophes

Apostrophes are very often either over used or under used, can be complicated to understand at first and there are exceptions to the rule.

The easiest way to remember the rule is to think that the apostrophe is there to show possession.

For example 'that is John**'s** wallet'. This shows that the wallet belongs to John.

It can also work for groups. The committee**'s** members talked for hours. The members belong to the committee.
It also works the same for expressions of time. This week**'s** meeting, one month**'s** time. In a sense we are saying the meeting belongs to this week or the time belongs to that month.

Where to put the apostrophe?

Committee**'s** – when there is one committee
Committee**s'** – when there is more than one committee
One week**'s** work – there is only one week
Two week**s'** work – there is more than one week
Women**'s**/children**'s** – Women/children is already a plural so the apostrophe goes before the s.

Apostrophes **do not** automatically appear in abbreviations unless they are possessives. *Example* GCSEs, DSOs.

Use an apostrophe to show that something has been missed out, although it looks more professional to write words out in full.

Examples
don't (do not)
can't (cannot)
we'll (we will)
they've (they have)

The exception

It's – ***only means it is***. Unless you are saying a shortened version of it is, ***never*** use an apostrophe.

> *Example*
>
> It's wrong – it is wrong
>
> The dog wagged its tail – the tail belongs to the dog but we do not use an apostrophe to show that.

Commas

Commas are also very commonly over or underused. If used correctly they can make a piece of writing easy to read and follow. Commas are very much common sense. Read your sentence out loud and think where you would need to pause.

Commas can be used to separate a series of words or phrases of the same kind.

> *Example*
>
> Officers should always write in clear, concise, accurate English.
>
> He provided information, gave advice, took notes and thought hard about it.

Commas can also be used to break up a sentence.

For example, The committee agreed, subject to funding, that the plans would go ahead.

Do not use commas to lengthen sentences that could be broken down into two or three shorter sentences.

Sentences rarely need to be more than 20 words long.

Speech marks

When you are quoting someone directly as a separate sentence then double quote marks must be used.

> John Smith said: "I am enjoying it here." – notice the full stop.

If you are not quoting someone's exact words do not put them into speech marks, just paraphrase.

> John Smith said that he was enjoying it here.

Or only use speech marks on the direct quotes

> John Smith said that he was "enjoying it here". – notice the full stop.

Colon

Generally introduces lists of things but do not over use.

Semi-colon

Again do not over use - a comma can nearly always be used instead.

Hyphen

Hyphens should be used to show that two words belong together to create one meaning.

Example
Twenty-four
Vice-president
Well-known
Seven-year-old
Much-needed

Placing a hyphen in the wrong place can change the meaning of a sentence. This means that getting it right can more important than you would think.

Example
A rusty-nail cutter – is an object which cuts rusty nails
A rusty nail-cutter – is a rusty object which cuts nails.
A man eating chocolate is less scary than a man-eating chocolate.

Letters

Letters must always be justified left and Arial 12 point. They should include a signature followed by your name and job title.
If you know the name of the person you are writing to, use yours sincerely, if you do not, use yours faithfully.

Reports to committees

Number all pages on internal and external documents. Footers showing useful information such as your name, the date or title of the document should also be used.

Confidentiality - assume reports will be open for public consideration, other than in extreme and clearly defined circumstances (Freedom of Information / Access to information law refers)

Line through - use line through to indicate text you propose to delete from a document.

Bold text – use **Bold text** to indicate standard sections of the report and the recommendation(s). Elsewhere faint / underlined text indicates sub-headings (or, less often BLOCK CAPITALS).

Author - the Report Author at the head of a report will normally be the relevant Head of Service. Occasionally the relevant Director / Chief Executive will be the Author, or Monitoring Officer, Returning Officer, for examples. The Author at the foot of the report will be the actual person(s) who originated the report.

5. Style Guide

Length - the target length is four sides of A4, including standard formatting / layout / font size. For lengthy reports, please consider a short summary of this length, with detailed appendices, as appropriate.

Electronic versions - since January 2007, all reports and attachments must be available in electronic format in order that they can be published on the website and / or sent electronically to Members / press etc.

Colours - Committee agendas will normally be printed, at corporate expense, in black only over a maximum of 4 colours of paper:

Cover – Black over approved colour artwork
Agenda list – Black over white paper
Public reports – Black on cream
Confidential reports – Black on purple

As part of the editing process, Committee Support and Office Services staff are authorised to amend reports, or other corporate documents, in accordance with the above (and agreed report formats) without reference to the originator of the report.

6 Guide to Plain English

Introduction

Plain English is about clear communication.
It is about writing so that you cannot be misunderstood.
It involves thinking about your purpose.
It means keeping words and sentences short.
It is about avoiding clichés and jargon.

The Guide to Plain English offers simple tips for writing clear, concise English. None of it is rocket science, just common sense. Its purpose is to make sure that Redditch Borough Council communicates effectively.

Purpose

What are you writing - a report, a letter, text to go on a poster?

Who are you writing to or for - councillors, a resident, journalists, someone you know well?

Why are you writing - to apologise for a delay in fixing someone's leaky tap, to inform the local paper about a new park, to complain about a contractor's work?

These factors will affect the tone, content and length of what you write, for example:

- text for a poster needs to be as short and snappy as possible while still getting over the points you need to make

- an email to a friend will be less formal than one to the director of a partner organisation who you don't know

- a letter of apology needs to have a suitably apologetic tone.

Structure and style

Good communication means getting your point across as quickly and clearly as possible. Whatever you are writing, make it clear to the reader straight away why you are doing so. Don't bury your point several paragraphs in

Think about your reader. Nobody wants to be faced with a huge, cramped wedge of text. It is difficult to read. Put a line space between paragraphs. Use headings and sub-headings to break up reports. A diagram or chart could convey information more clearly and concisely than words

Keep paragraphs as short as possible. If you've moved on to a different theme, start a new paragraph

Keep sentences short. A sentence should not need to be any longer than 20 words. If you need to break it up with several commas it is too long

Never use a long word if a short one will do

Keep to basic punctuation such as commas and full stops wherever possible

Keep sentences active rather than passive. This means having people doing things, for example

- **The Council is launching its Play Ranger service** rather than **The Play Ranger service is being launched by the Council.**

Clichés and jargon

Try to avoid using clichés. They are an easy way to express a familiar idea. Because of this, they can easily be ignored. Examples include:

- **at the end of the day**
- **at this point in time**
- **back to the drawing board**

Every profession has its jargon, or private language. You may understand it, your colleagues may understand it. But it's a fair bet that residents or even staff in other Council teams will have no idea what you are talking about. Always try and use everyday language. A good tip for avoiding jargon is to think about how you would explain something to a friend. Examples of jargon and everyday words you could use instead include

- **stakeholders** - try **residents** or **people**
- **members** – try **councillors**
- **toolkit** – try **guide**.

7 Contacts and updates to guidelines

RBC logo artwork and PDF files of both this guide are available on CD, please use these for all reproduction purposes and pass on to any appropriate external design agencies you are working with.

If you have any questions about the guidelines or want copies of the CD please contact the Communications Team as follows:

Tel: (01527) 64252 ext 3059 / ext 3002
Email: bobbie.ashby@redditchbc.gov.uk
       adrian.marklew@redditchbc.gov.uk

NB: Updates to these guidelines will be issued as appropriate.