

Service Improvement Team - Emails

The Standard

To and Cc -

Only send and copy to the appropriate persons and take account of 'Out of Office' messages. This will mean using 'distribution lists' with care.

In the same context, when responding to emails, use the **Reply All** option sparingly.

Subject -

Always include a subject, this is particularly useful for ongoing topics and helps prioritise dealing with emails.

If the topic changes direction, you can amend the Subject detail.

The Body (Of The Email) -

Only use the standard Regular, Black, Arial font with a size of 10pt to 12pt. Other fonts that appear attractive to the sender can be irritating to the recipient. This is a clean and sharp font that will always be readable by the recipient and other electronic systems.

No logos, 'business card' style images, icons, etc. should be included in the body of an email. In all cases objects such as photographs and other images - and of course text - can be included in an attachment.

Main considerations are:

- Consistency of presentation to our Customers
- Consistency of internal documentation as we move over to Electronic Document Management systems
- 'Bandwidth' issues and the unnecessary load placed on external network systems that are not as advanced as our own – please see comments under Attachments below
- Images, icons, etc may not be interpreted and 'seen' in the same format on the recipient email system. Attachments resolve these issues, provided that the applications we use are also used by the customer – please see comments under Attachments below

Ensure the Caps Lock is off. The recipient can regard emails sent entirely in capitals as 'shouting'!

The 'Signature' -

The example below can be used as an example of a 'signature' to your emails. Additional telephone, mobile, fax numbers may be appropriate. Again, the Standard, Black, Arial font is to be used:

Your Name Your Job Title Telephone: (01233) 330852
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If you do not know how to create an automatic signature, please contact the ICT Help Desk.

Disclaimer / Confidentiality Statement -

Discussions are taking place with our Legal Services and when a disclaimer has been agreed it will be implemented centrally by ICT. The disclaimer will be added to your emails automatically.

All existing disclaimers are to be removed.

Attachments -

Be aware that some of our external Customers do not have the high performance network that Ashford Borough Council enjoys, so restrict file sizes wherever possible. This may require converting files to another format or using compression software to reduce file sizes.

Such utilities as compression software are rarely 'free' and also depend on the recipient having the decompression software installed.

It is also quite possible that, depending upon Operating Systems installed and preferred security settings; certain file types, images, etc will be blocked by the recipient email system. Do not, for example, try to send 'executable' files - .exe. Often Internet Explorer 'files' are blocked and are best sent as a 'link', e.g., <http://www.ashford.gov.uk>.

Try to restrict attachments to our standard Microsoft applications wherever possible. It absolutely cannot be guaranteed that the recipient uses applications we use and take for granted! Adobe Acrobat files are fine if you have the converter. Customers can be directed to the Adobe website for the free Acrobat reader.

Give the attachment a meaningful file name, particularly important when you are sending more than a single file.

Out Of Office Message -

Please make these simple. These are also received externally and reflect upon the Authority. Nothing light hearted.

For example -

I am out of the office until Monday 1st January.

If you require an urgent response to your email please contact

a.person@ashford.gov.uk

or telephone 'Aperson' on telephone number 01233 999999.

Thank you.

You can implement a 'rule' that forwards your emails to a colleague but you would need to take care that you are happy for ALL emails to be forwarded!

If you need help with setting up these functions, please contact the ICT Help Desk.

Spell Checking -

The Microsoft Outlook application includes an automatic spell checker which it is strongly recommended be implemented. The text is checked at the moment you hit the send button. We may be tolerant within the Authority but our 'image' must be protected externally.

Again, if you need help implementing, please contact the ICT Help Desk.

Finally –
General Issues :

- It is quite possible that even internal emails will be read by the public or others – e.g., as a result of a Freedom of Information request. It is essential that ALL emails are compiled with great care and are ALWAYS polite – see ‘Flames’ below.
- Please do not alter Microsoft Outlook settings implemented by the ICT Support Team.
- Please turn off **routine** requests confirming Delivery and Reading of emails.

If you have sent an email internally it WILL be delivered, if external you will receive notification of non-delivery whether the option is set or not.

As a management issue, there are other methods of determining whether your internal emails are being read!

If there are good reasons for very occasional use, this is acceptable.

- Avoid ‘Flame’ emails – emails that are inflammatory or contain critical messages.

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