



ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Website advertising:  
**Ashford Borough Council**

Site-wide advertising content policies and technical standards

May 2009



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## Introduction

### 1.1. Background and document purpose

1. Ashford Borough Council allows businesses to advertise on the main Ashford Borough Council website.
2. This document defines the site-wide content policies and technical standards to be applied.
3. Policies and technical standards may also be developed for individual placements.

### 1.2. Scope and readership

4. This document is designed to be read by any organisations or individuals who advertise or who may be interested in advertising on the Ashford Borough Council website.
5. Ashford Borough Council Officers and Members may also find the document useful in understanding the approach which the Authority applies in respect of advertising on the website.



## 2. Advertising policy

### 2.1. General content controls

#### 2.1.1. General approach

6. Ashford Borough Council is looking to maximise revenue from advertising and, wherever possible, will therefore permit advertising.
7. That said, there is clearly a need to ensure that the process of accepting and displaying advertising does not conflict with other, more dominant policy or operational objectives. Such broader objectives can include the need to generate revenue through promoting certain services provided by the Authority and it would not be appropriate to display advertising for 'competing services.' There will be other examples of advertising which might conflict with broader Council objectives and a flexible approach will necessarily be taken during the first months of advertising. Where advertising cannot be accepted due to conflict with broader objectives, the reasons will always be clearly explained to advertisers or their agents. The general policy toward 'conflicting advertising' will be reviewed as required.
8. The expectation, however, is that most advertising from local and other businesses will generally be acceptable. The Authority certainly does not take a 'white listing' approach (which is when permitted advertising is defined) but rather follows a 'black listing' approach (which is when the basic assumption is that advertising is permitted unless it falls into a number of prohibited categories, as generally discussed above and defined in more detail below).
9. Any advertising must however comply with all and any relevant regulations and the basic standards of honesty and decency. Regulation of advertising on the internet is still an evolving area but, where there is any doubt that a regulation or Statute applies, the assumption should and will be that it does.
10. Ashford Borough Council also takes note of the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, which seek to protect consumers from unfair, misleading or aggressive marketing practices and requires all advertisers to strongly comply with not only the letter but also the spirit of these regulations.

#### 2.1.2. Clear explanation of the nature of the relationship with the advertiser

11. The Authority believes that it is important that all citizens should be aware that in accepting and displaying advertising on the website, the authority is not in any way endorsing the product, service or company being advertised.
12. The word 'Advertisement' will therefore be clearly displayed alongside the advertisement itself. When 'clicked', this word will open a new page which gives a simple explanation of why the Authority is accepting advertising and that explanation will contain the following paragraph:
  - *Ashford Borough Council thanks the local and national businesses who have decided to advertise on the Authority's website but cannot and does not endorse any of the products or services being advertised.*

#### 2.1.3. Prohibited products, services and advertisers

13. The basic approach taken by the Authority is to maximise the number of advertisements and advertisers which are permitted and encouraged to advertise on the Ashford web site and minimise the number that are prevented from doing so by any policy controls or restrictions.
14. Although there are some specific categories of products and services which may not be promoted on the Ashford web site, as defined below, most products and services may be



promoted, providing there is no conflict with broader operational or policy objectives or advertising regulations.

15. Political organisations may not advertise on the web site. Ashford Borough Council, while actively encouraging the engagement of citizens and community groups in policy setting and other democratic processes, does not encourage and will generally not permit advertising from what might broadly be called ‘lobby groups’, whether those lobby groups be very local and temporary, perhaps centred on a particular planning decision, or national or international and more permanent in nature.
16. In particular, Ashford Borough Council takes full account of the Government's issued Code of Practice on publicity and will not publish at any time any material which in whole or in part appears to be designed to affect support for a political party. Assessment of whether the content or style of an advertisement does so will be made by Ashford Borough Council and assessments will be particularly rigorous in any "pre-election periods".
17. Advertising for gambling or betting services is permitted provided, as with all advertising, that there is full compliance with any and all regulations in force at the time.
18. In addition to the categories listed immediately below, there may also be some specific controls and policies associated with individual placements.
19. The specific categories of organisations, products or services which may not advertise or be advertised on the Ashford Borough Council are as follows:

Category	Prohibitions	Note
Types of organisations	Political organisations Manufacturers and distributors of tobacco products Manufacturers and distributors of alcohol products	Advertising from ‘Lobby Groups’ will not generally be permitted.
Named organisations	None specified	
Types or products and services	Tobacco, alcohol, pornography & adult content.	Ashford Borough Council wishes to ensure that there can be no questions as to content suitability. Therefore, any content or advertising which has an overtly sexual ‘tone’ will also be excluded.
Named products and services	None specified	

20.

#### 2.1.4. ‘Style’ and content of advertising

21. Ashford Borough Council wishes to take an equally open approach to styles of advertising.
22. Advertisers must however recognise that public sector organisations cannot permit advertising which is sexual in nature, which features partial or complete nudity or which appears to promote or give undue publicity to illegal or even just ‘inappropriate’ behaviour or lifestyles.
23. Humour in advertising is also to be approached with caution since much humour can often mock specific groups of citizens or poke fun at particular types of behaviour or situations. Even if kindly and affectionately done, such mockery would not be acceptable on the website of a public sector organisation.



24. Deciding whether or not the style or content of an advertisement makes it inappropriate for display is clearly a question of judgement and balance but, certainly for 2009, Ashford Borough Council would prefer to take a conservative approach in respect of advertising styles and content.
25. That said, the Authority does not wish to take an unnecessarily strict approach and will allow 'innocent humour', providing there is no innuendo or subtext which could cause offence.

### 2.1.5. Creative approvals

26. All Creatives (advertisements) which are to be displayed on the Ashford Borough Council web site will be subject to review of the product or service being promoted and the style and content of the advertising.
27. This review will primarily be undertaken by agents appointed to handle to sale and delivery of advertising on the Ashford Borough Council website but Ashford, on occasions, may also directly wish to view and approve creatives prior to display.

### 2.1.6. Behavioural targeting, cookies and privacy

28. Ashford does not encourage the use of cookies or any other devices which collect, store and analyse detailed user behaviour on the Ashford web site in order to tailor advertising on the Ashford web site, even if such data could not be linked to an individual, and where Ashford is able to do so, such use will be prohibited. However, Ashford is not always able to prevent the use of such devices in that advertising may occasionally flow directly to the user from other advertising servers. Site visitors are however able to protect themselves through adjusting privacy settings in their browser. This document is not the place to discuss browser privacy settings.
29. Ashford does allow the use of cookies and other technology which maintains a simple count of the number of times the same advertisement has been shown to a visitor providing the data is completely anonymous, is not combined in any way with any other data, can never be linked to an individual person and is destroyed within 1 month.
30. Ashford does allow the use of cookies and other devices to gather data to monitor web site traffic (such as with Google Analytics and other, 'cookie based' traffic monitoring tools).

## 2.2. Technical

### 2.2.1. Placement sizes and technical specifications

31. Placement sizes will be varied from page to page but will generally adhere to an industry standard size.
32. Flash and animated GIF's are permitted but animations may only loop a maximum of 2 times. The Authority also wishes to ensure that flash advertising and some other rich media forms are sufficiently 'accessible' - excessive animation or fast moving or difficult to read text is therefore to be avoided and any creatives which would clearly cause either irritation to fully sighted visitors or difficulties to partially sighted visitors will not be permitted.
33. The units, size, weight limits, permitted animation and border requirements are as specified in the table below.

Name	Size	Weight limits		Animation	Border
		GIF / JPEG	FLASH		
Leaderboard	728x90	60k	60k	15 secs max	None
Medium Rectangle	300x250	60k	60k	15 secs max	None



Wide Skyscraper	160x600	60k	60k	15 secs max	None
Rectangle	180 x 150	60k	60k	15 secs max	None

34. Video and audio advertising is not currently permitted.
35. The policy in respect of video advertising may be reviewed and advertisers who wish to run video advertising should initially raise the requirement with t-nwc.

Document end.