Wimborne Minster Town Council - editorial guidance for all published documents

Author: L Harrison, Town Clerk, Wimborne Minster Town Council, 16 August 2023

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Based on Local Government Association's writing style guide https://www.local.gov.uk/about/creating-content-lga

1. Font type - Ariel size 12 (headings can be in a larger font size)
2. Font colour - black
3. Line spacing 1.15
4. Paragraph margins justified or aligned left depending on the content and style of document
5. Everything in lower case unless it is a proper noun (specific name)
6. Council to be referred to as Wimborne Minster Town Council
7. Any names repeated always used full name first followed by (shorter reference) e.g. Wimborne Minster (the Town), Wimborne Minster Town Council (the Council) except for well know exceptions (e.g. UK, BBC, EU, MP, ICT, GP)
8. No abbreviations or acronyms – names in full (e.g. Dorset Council)
9. Values and dates – dates in full without st th etc - 16 August 2023, specify the time period in question, rather than saying 'this year' or 'last month. Use words for numbers one to ten then from 11 onwards use numbers except for financial sums, time references, dates, percentages, temperatures and qualifications. For financial years and academic years write 2020/21. Write the time using numbers, with a full stop (rather than a colon) to separate hours and minutes. Always use a 12-hour clock (e.g. 2.30pm, 9am)
10. Only use the ampersand (&) when it is part of a company or organisation's formal name
11. Use apostrophes to indicate possession or the omission of one or more letters e.g. the council's new mayor. Words that end in 's' usually have an apostrophe at the end to indicate possession. This is not always the case with names, where you should use the possessive 's' wherever possible (Burns's, Jones's, Charles's). However, this is not set in stone and you can be guided by pronunciation. For the names of organisations, use the style they use – for example, St Thomas' Hospital in London. Apostrophes are not used in the possessive 'its' (in its own time; on its merits). They are used if you are shortening 'it is' (it's at nine o'clock; it's not). Try not to use contractions such as it's, they're, don't or can't in formal documents and reports. Contractions can be used in articles or forewords written in the first person, in reported direct speech, in bulletins and in social media.
12. Use bullet points to make text easier to read. Present a list of words or sentences, make sure that they follow on from a lead-in line:
    - the bullet points must not end with full stops, commas or semi-colons
    - each bullet point must begin with a lower-case letter, unless the word is a proper noun
    - each bullet point should be short
    - the symbol used should be round (not square or any other shape)
    - the final bullet point should end with a full stop.

When bullet points include more than one sentence or are full sentences on their own (without a lead-in line), each must begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop, as in usual sentence structure.

To create a bullet point within an already bulleted list, follow the example below using hollow bullet points:

- jump
- run
  - jogging
  - sprinting
- swim
- cycle.

13. When writing reports use a numbering reference list for paragraphs (1.1, 1.2 etc).

14. Colons introduce something: an idea, a list, an explanation, or a spoken or written remark. Always use a simple colon, not a colon followed by a dash. Colons should always be followed by a lower case letter unless the next word is a name, quote or title. Semi-colons separate complete but closely related sentences and can be used to add clarity in complex lists (e.g. There were 15 council representatives at the event: three from Munich, Germany; two from Stockholm, Sweden; four from Dublin, Ireland; and six from various cities in the UK).

15. Use commas to link words.

16. Please ensure you write all contact details as in the following example:

Louise Harrison
Town Clerk
Wimborne Minster Town Council

01202 881655
louise.harrison@wimborne.gov.uk

37 West Borough, Wimborne Minster, Dorset BH21 1LT

www.wimborne.gov.uk

17. Refer to councillors as councillors not members. When referring to a specific councillor, use 'Councillor' and their full name at first mention, and 'Cllr' and their surname subsequently. For agendas and minutes any first use of councillor should Councillor (Cllr) – see point 7

18. Gender identity and sexuality - Gender identity means how people feel or present themselves, distinct from their biological sex or sexual orientation. People can choose their gender identity (such as man, woman or non-binary) and their pronouns (such as she/her, he/his, they/theirs). When writing about an individual, wherever possible use the terms that they prefer.

Gender-neutral terms should always be used for job titles and roles, for example firefighter, refuse collector, spokesperson.

19. Use accessible hyperlinks for documents that are going to be published online only as webpages. When you create a hyperlink, use meaningful text as links (rather than 'click here').
20. Hyphens should only be used to make the meaning of a sentence clearer. Use the short hyphen symbol.
21. Italics are only to be used in Council minutes to show a subsequent action following a meeting.
22. Names – Mr / Mrs / Dr / Professor (and so on) followed by their initial and surname.
23. Use plain, everyday words as much as possible – sometimes referred to as 'plain English' - clear and concise language that avoids jargon, overly formal words and technical terms. It also avoids using foreign words (including Latin words and phrases) in place of English equivalents. It makes information more accessible for every reader. Consider your audience and write appropriately for them (spending rather than expenditure)
24. Double quotation mark indicate direct speech.
25. Single quotations mark the title of a publication, book, film, when emphasising or referring to a word or for foreign words or phrases
26. Use one space between sentences, not double spacing. Sentences should not be too long: aim for around 15 to 20 words.
27. And finally…our words should say what they mean and give clear information and be easy to follow. Plan a structure, grouping the points you want to make under headings. Put the important news early because this will grab the reader's attention. Write short sentences, each making only one point – aim for sentences of 15 to 20 words. Keep paragraphs short – ideally four to six lines.
Use the active voice and avoid abstract nouns, which sound impersonal and wordy (abstract nouns refer to things like actions, feelings, ideals, concepts and qualities). Don't use a long word when a short one will do. If a word is not necessary, cut it out. Beware of jargon and only use it if absolutely necessary.
Keep the style and layout of our documents consistent.
28. Full Council / Committee agendas and minutes to include meeting name, date and page number in footnotes.
29. Any appendix documents for Full Council / Committee meetings to have the relevant appendix number contains in the header and page number in footnotes.

[end]