



# Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council

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## **Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council Communications Policy August 2017**

Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council's communication policy is a set of guidelines for parish councillors and staff to use when producing digital and print communications and social media output for internal use and the general public.

This policy can be used as a reference document for all published material produced by the parish council. It contains a communications strategy to ensure a consistent voice, common values and best practice across print and social media and when dealing with the press. This document also updates and includes the former parish council media policy from November 2015.

It is recommended that this document is reviewed regularly to keep up with the fast developments in social media.

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## **Editorial guidelines and tone of voice: A basic style guide**

### **1.1 Referring to the parish council**

- Use caps when using the full proper name: Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council.
- Use lowercase when referring to the parish council or the council.
- If using the acronym, write Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council (IFPC) in the first mention, then use IFPC thereafter.

### **Councillors**

- Use capitals when using a councillor's full title: Councillor Fred Bassett or the abbreviation Cllr Anne Squires.
- Use lowercase when referring to councillors, clerk, assistant clerk in a sentence.

### **Chair**

- Use lower case within a sentence: Cllr Fred Bassett, chair of Environment and Churchyards Committee.
- All other professional titles should be capped when used before a name (Prime Minister Theresa May), or lowercase when used after a name, or alone eg Theresa May, prime minister, or prime minister.
- Government, should always be lowercase and singular: the government.

### **Committees**

Use uppercase for a committee title: Planning Committee.

Use lowercase if using 'committee' within a sentence.

### **1.2 General style tips**

#### **Hyphens**

Use hyphens (-), rather than the en dash/en rule (–) and use sparingly.

#### **Numbers**

One to nine in written format.

10 and above in numerals.

## **Date and time format**

Dates should be written in day, month, year format: 21 June 1970

Current year: 21 June

For times use the 12-hour clock: 11am, 2pm

Write midday and midnight in full.

## **Hyperlinks**

When referring to websites drop http:// eg [www.ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk](http://www.ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk).

Use the shortest version of the url possible.

For Twitter, shorten urls in ow.ly to save character count at <http://ow.ly/url/shorten-url>.

## **Apostrophes**

Use double quotes (") for speech and single quotes (') to highlight words.

For quoted speech in newsletter articles and press releases, use a colon, followed by double speech marks. If the quote rolls into two paragraphs or more, speech marks are only need at the start of each paragraph and at the end of the quote.

Example:

IFPC chairperson, Cllr Paul Jeater comments: "In 2016 Fairfield Pond was in 'poor' shape. It was silted up, prone to flooding in winter and there was a nettle bed which was growing out of control. The parish council sought grant aid from the Essex County Council CIF and set about the major task of restoring it.

"By this summer, the pond will once again be an enjoyable feature of village life. An information board, new benches and bins will be in place courtesy of the Essex Heritage Fund and, for the first time in many years, it will be possible to walk right around the pond."

## **Bulleted lists**

There are three formats for bulleted lists:

Use capitals and full stops for bulleted lists when making separate points in each bullet.

Example:

Focus of the inquiry

- Opportunities and challenges in re-shaping UK competition policy post-Brexit.
- The implications of Brexit for the application and enforcement of competition law in the UK.
- Whether UK authorities have the capacity and resources to cope with additional

responsibilities and a greater caseload.

- Potential state aid obligations in any UK-EU free trade agreement.
- Future cooperation between the UK and the EU on investigations and enforcement actions.

When each bullet continues a sentence, only the last bullet should end with a full stop.

Example:

A Neighbourhood Development Order can grant planning permission for specific types of development in a specific neighbourhood area. A Neighbourhood Development Order can therefore:

- apply to a specific site, sites, or wider geographical area
- grant planning permission for a certain type or types of development
- grant planning permission outright or subject to conditions.

Bulleted lists of information do not need full stops.

Example:

Ingatstone and Fryerning Parish Council committees:

- Planning
- Environment and Churchyards
- Communications and IT
- Policy and Resources
- Personnel

## **Twitter abbreviations**

- In Twitter use @IngFryPC when referring to the parish council
- Use cllr for councillor
- Use cmttee for committees

## **2. The website: [www.ingatstone-fryerningpc.gov.uk](http://www.ingatstone-fryerningpc.gov.uk)**

Ingatstone and Fryerning Parish Council launched its website on 5 October 2015.

### **2.1 Basic navigation**

The website includes a basic navigation menu and various panels on its homepage including up-to-date information and quick links to further details. It is mobile friendly and has been designed to automatically resize to fit any device.

The website consists of seven main sections:

- **Parish council:** Information about the local parish council, including committees, councillors, staff, meetings, minutes and other documentation.
- **Youth council:** Information about the youth council, including councillors, meetings, minutes and other documentation.
- **Planning:** Information about the Village Design Statement, local development plans and conservation areas.
- **Local info:** Details about local schools, churches, facilities/services, clubs/organisations and other useful contacts.
- **Tourism:** Details about places of interest, village maps and the history of the villages and parish council.
- **News:** Parish council and local new items.
- **Diary:** Dates of upcoming parish council and youth council meetings, plus dates of any other local events the clerk has been notified of.

There is a 'contact us' page with details on how to contact and find the parish council.

The website is updated using the 'off the shelf' Joomla content management system (CMS), which is updated by the clerk on a parish council computer.

## 2.2 How to write good web copy

- Keep sentences short, active and clear.
- Keep punctuation clear and simple.
- Split long sentences into two.
- Keep web pages to a maximum of 300 words in length.
- Keep to one idea per sentence.
- Use subheadings to break up large bodies of text.
- Use adjectives sparingly.
- Avoid shouting at people with exclamation marks! Or asking rhetorical questions. Okay?
- Don't overuse the same words. If you have the same word in a sentence, try and rewrite or find an alternative.
- Never patronise the reader.
- Don't use fragments. Of sentences.
- Use an active verb, for example 'we co-opted a new parish councillor', rather than 'a parish councillor was co-opted'.
- Try and avoid local council/government jargon and hackneyed phrases.
- Use bulleted lists to break up copy.
- Use 'we' and 'you' where possible, rather than formalities like the parish council and parishioners.

## 2.3 Search engine optimisation (SEO)

When compiling online content, use keywords to improve SEO (where we appear on search engine ranking). Integrate SEO keywords into the text naturally, never crowbar them in. The current recommended keyword density per article is five per cent.

## 2.4 Top ranking search terms

Boost search engine ranking by using popular key phrases. The table below lists the most popular phrases typed into the Google search engine (Google Analytics Oct-Dec 2016). Most of them contain the word 'Ingatestone'. 'Clicks' are the number of times someone clicked on the website in the search results for the key phrase. Click through rate (CTR) is the percentage of impressions that result in a click through to the website. The final column shows the average position of the key phrase on the first page of the search engine results.

Key phrase	Clicks	Impressions	CTR	Avg Position
Ingatestone Victorian evening 2016	122	597	20.44%	2.1
Ingatestone parish council	84	120	70%	1.1
Ingatestone fireworks 2016	70	149	46.98%	1.0
Ingatestone fireworks	64	169	27.87%	1.2
Ingatestone Christmas evening 2016	58	165	35.15%	1.0
Ingatestone news	34	874	9.09%	4.8
Ingatestone	28	12,311	0.23%	8.6
Freedom of entry march	25	38	65.79%	2.2

Ingatestone council	25	58	43.10%	1.0
Ingatestone catholic church	23	181	12.71%	3.4
Ingatestone fireworks display 2016	15	58	25.86%	1.0
Fryerning church	14	124	11.29%	2.2
Ingatestone fireworks display	13	50	26%	1.8
Ingatestone fireworks New Year's Eve	13	40	32.5%	1.9
The mayor's charity firework spectacular 2016, 5 November	12	204	5.88%	4.3
Ingatestone church	10	209	4.78%	3.8
Ingatestone's new year's fireworks	8	14	57.14%	2.1
Ingatestone Christmas 2016	7	10	70%	1.0
Shenfield Christmas fayre	7	94	7.45%	4.2

### 3. Newsletter

The parish council newsletter is currently compiled and built by the clerk in Publisher. It consists of short articles on parish council news and events and community stories. It is circulated to around 2,300 homes in the parish and an electronic version is shared on social media and via email every four months.

The design and content development is work in progress. Our aim is to continue this development and circulate an e-newsletter electronically.

### 3.1 Writing newsletter stories

All newsletter stories should include:

- **A headline (eight words maximum with no full stop):** Grab the reader's immediate attention with something snappy. Avoid cryptic headlines or tabloidy puns, just spell it out. Use a capital letter in first instance and then lower case (unless using a name which requires caps).

Example headline: Councillors get behind Ingatestone Station ticket office

- **Standfirst, or intro (40 words max with no full stop):** Explain what is coming up in the main body of the story - the who, what and where

Example standfirst: Parish councillors discussed latest ticket office plans during the full council meeting on 6 July, after concerns were raised over potential regional closures

- **Main body text (200-250 words max):** Keep one idea/topic per sentence and keep sentences a digestible length with a new theme per paragraph. Add quotes from the main people involved to give the story weight. Keep the story active and in the present tense where possible.

Example body text: Ingatestone Station ticket office provides an invaluable service to parishioners, from schoolchildren to commuters from surrounding villages. Its staff work hard to ensure a pleasant, clean and safe environment and a helpful and efficient ticket sales service. This role goes far beyond ticket sales.

Ticket office closures and reduced opening hours have recently hit the headlines, with the introduction of more automated ticket machines planned in the future.

Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council (IFPC) wants to encourage parishioners to support the business case for the station and keeping buying tickets over the counter. Did you know, for example, that you can get your online tickets printed out at the ticket office? They will happily provide tickets, no matter how small the journey. Plus, residents from neighbouring villages can travel from Ingatestone and use our large car park.

Parish council chair, Councillor Paul Jeater explains: "IFPC is aware that booking office closures are in the pipeline and people in Ingatestone and the surrounding areas appreciate the service that staff have delivered over the years. The view of the parish council is that it is vital that the ticket office remains staffed to provide a service to local residents and visitors to the area. If we don't use it, we'll lose it."

Ticket office staff are always willing to advise on the best routes, railcards and the most value for money way to travel. So, let's share the word in Ingatestone, Fryerning and with friends in surrounding villages.

- Call to action (CTA): Where to go for more information, website, email address, where to follow on social media or telephone number.

Example CTA: For updates on Ingatestone Station, 'like' us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/IngatestoneAndFryerningCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/IngatestoneAndFryerningCouncil), or follow @IngFryPC on Twitter.

## **4. Social media best practice**

Social media channels, ie Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are great, cost-free tools to communicate about parish council work, events and community involvement, providing they are used properly.

### **4.1 Use of social media by parish council employees**

The parish council encourages employees to make reasonable and appropriate use of social media websites as part of their work. It is an important part of how the council engages with the community.

Employees may contribute to the parish council's social media activities, for example by writing a blogs, managing a Facebook account, or running an official Twitter account.

Employees, or contractors must be aware at all times that, while contributing to the parish council's social media activities, they are representing the parish council.

Employees should use the same safeguards as they would with any other form of communication about the parish council in the public sphere. These safeguards include:

- making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for the council
- obtaining permission from the clerk, or the appropriate committee, before embarking on a public campaign using social media
- ensuring a colleague checks the content before it is published.

Any communications that employees make in a professional or personal capacity through social media must not:

- bring the council into disrepute, for example by:
  - criticising or arguing with colleagues, councillors or the public
  - making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups
  - posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content.
- breach confidentiality, for example by:

- giving away confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague, councillor or a member of the public) which could be a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998
- discussing items, reports or plans that have not been communicated to the public.
- breach copyright, for example by:
  - using someone else's images or written content without permission
  - failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something.
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
  - making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age
  - using social media to bully another individual (such as fellow employee)
  - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.

## **4.2 Social media guidelines for councillors**

It is important to distinguish between member information published by the parish council, such as the member pages on the council's website and personal blogs, or posts, which are the sole responsibility of the individual councillor. Councillors should be aware that what they put on social media is their responsibility.

The reason why this distinction matters is that material published by the parish council is restricted in terms of content. It must not contain party political material, nor promote a particular view or councillor. It should not personalise issues.

Councillors may use social media to improve engagement with the community and provide a leadership role. This can be a very positive activity as social media can reach a huge audience very quickly and may engage with parts of the community that does not engage often with local government.

If councillors do discuss their work on social media (for example, giving opinions on their specialism or the sector in which the council operates), they must include on their profile a statement along the following lines: "The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the parish council."

Provided councillors remain objective and professional in their use of social media there will not be any problems.

### **4.3 Legal code of conduct**

What is unacceptable offline is unacceptable online. Members of the public, fellow councillors, or parish council staff may make a complaint about a councillor if they breach the code of conduct. Key requirements in the code of conduct are:

- Treat others with respect.
- Comply with equality and anti-discrimination laws.
- Do not publish anything received in confidence.
- Do not bring the parish council, or your role as councillor, into disrepute.

#### **Libel**

If a councillor publishes an untrue statement about a person which causes 'serious harm' to their reputation they may sue the councillor for defamation. This also applies if a councillor allows someone to publish something libellous on their website if they know about it and don't take prompt action to remove it. A councillor can be sued for defamation on the basis of what they have put on Twitter and by retweeting. Simply passing on a comment saying you agree with a libellous comment is enough. A successful claim may result in an award of damages.

#### **Copyright**

Using images or text from a copyrighted source (for example, extracts from publications or photos) without permission is likely to breach copyright. Avoid publishing if there is any doubt or seek permission in advance. Breach of copyright may result in an award of damages.

#### **Data protection**

Do not publish the personal data of individuals unless you have their express written permission.

#### **Bias and predetermination**

If a councillor is involved in determining planning applications, it is best to avoid publishing anything which suggests they have already made up their mind on the matter. This could be challenged as predetermination and bias and runs the risk of the decision being challenged and invalidated. If in doubt advice should be sought.

#### **Obscene material**

Avoid publishing anything that people would consider obscene. Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence.

#### **4.4 Surveys on social media**

A 'survey' is defined as asking a single question, or more online relating to parish council business and/or inviting comments to a statement online relating to business.

No parish councillor may carry out independent surveys about subjects that are related to parish council business without the express permission of the clerk. The clerk must agree the content and must also decide whether or not the survey will in any way compromise the parish council's position and/or influence the decision making process of a full council vote.

No parish councillor may carry out a survey in their own name and then raise the survey at a parish councilor at full council or any committee meeting which could influence the decision making process.

The parish council should be registered for data protection and by registering councillors are covered whilst they are working for the council. If a councillor acts outside of the law they will not be protected by the council's data protection and are liable for their own actions.

#### **4.5 Dealing with negative remarks on social media**

Social media channels are a great tool for engagement and spreading the word, but inevitably they are misused and can attract criticism and complaints.

Negative comments should be brought to the attention of the clerk and dealt with as quickly as possible.

- Keep any replies factual and to the point.
- Do not retweet or apply emojis to the comment.
- If the negative post includes @IngFryPC, reply to the tweeter quickly and succinctly with the correct information.
- Always try to be positive and thank/acknowledge the feedback.
- Never reply to trolls or spam, block them immediately.

#### **Standard responses to negative posts**

- Thank you for contacting us, we are addressing the issue.
- Thank you for bringing this to our attention. Please contact xxxadd emailxxxx to discuss the issue.
- Thank you for your feedback, we have forwarded it to the appropriate contact.

## 4.6 Hootsuite

[Hootsuite](#) is an online dashboard allowing users to update and schedule social media posts in one place.

Scheduling Twitter and Facebook updates in Hootsuite, not only saves time by forward planning, it also works as a safety net. Hootsuite will generally ensure that updates appear in the right place at the right time. The account should only be accessed via the parish council network, not private computers or mobiles. Passwords should only be shared with assigned individuals and should be changed regularly. Log out of the account when not in use.

## 5. Facebook

Facebook was set up in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg as a social network for his fellow Harvard students. Now Facebook has over two billion monthly active users (Facebook figures, June 2017).

Thirty per cent of Facebook users are in the 25 to 34-year-old age group, a demographic made up of active community members (Zephoria August 2017).

### 5.1 How to use Facebook

Where Twitter is for short, punchy updates, Facebook can be used for softer, longer form content, images and videos.

#### Frequency of posts

According to the social media and marketing blog Buffer Social, you can post twice per day before 'likes' and comments begin to drop off.

Research also shows that the best times to post are 9am, 1pm and 3pm, with high engagement occurring at the weekends (Coschedule).

#### Length of posts

Shorter posts are more shareable and get more 'likes'. The optimum Facebook post is approximately 40 characters, or two minutes for a video. Don't forget that you are also creating posts for the small screen. There are 1.74 billion mobile active users on Facebook (December 2016).

We can make Facebook work for the parish council by:

- building 'likes', 'reactions' and 'shares'
- engaging existing 'likers' and followers with interesting status updates

- increasing user engagement with images and videos.

## **Sharing content**

Users like to share content. Posting shareable content and sharing content can help raise your Facebook profile. Ample research shows that users like to share digestible content, for example images, bumper stickers, infographics and 'how to' content. We also like to share content that evokes emotions, from amusement to empathy for worthy causes and anger.

Strong CTAs can drive users to react to and share your content, for example a compelling video or image. But post sparingly, Facebook users do not like to be bombarded with statements and sales pitches.

Powerful content often has a human interest element, for example an inspiring action which inspires users to like and share. Followers like content by real authors that they can relate to, rather than an institution.

Use [hashtags on Facebook](#) to join a trending topic, for example #neighbourhoodplan. You can search for hashtags in the Facebook search box and they will become clickable links in your update.

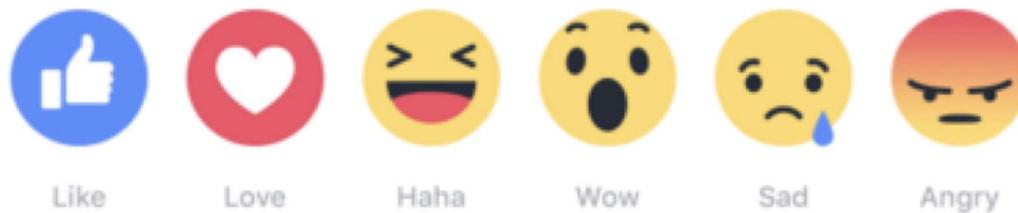
## **5.2 Tips for writing Facebook posts**

- Write in the active voice and present tense.
- Use a trustworthy tone.
- Stick to one topic per post.
- Add CTAs and hyperlinks for more information/content (avoid 'click here').
- Use hashtags (sparingly).
- Link to images and video to add interest.
- Avoid exclamation marks.
- Use a capital letter to start the post and then lower case.
- Avoid rhetorical questions.
- Avoid council jargon.

## 5.3 Facebook tools

### Reactions

Users now have more ways to express the way they feel about content. In February 2016, Facebook launched [reactions](#), emoticons for love, ha-ha, wow, sad or angry, to the like button.



### Facebook Live

[Facebook Live](#) can be used to broadcast live video clips of events and meetings. You can notify users ahead of the broadcast and post teasers in advance.

### Facebook notes

Longer form content like articles, press releases, (non-personal) blogs, white papers and reports, can encourage discussion on Facebook.

For longer updates, use [Facebook Notes](#) to add headers, highlights, quotes, image captions and hyperlinks.

## 6. Twitter

A Tweet is a short 140-character post giving a 'useful' piece of information to your 'followers'. It is a great way for the parish council to spread the word, publicise events and talk about its good work.

Twitter is not just about broadcasting your news, it is a great way to engage with people, debate and communicate.

The parish council's Twitter handle is [@IngFryPC](#) and should be promoted where possible in publications and on other social media channels.

### 6.1 How to use Twitter

- Post short updates and snippets of information with images, video or hyperlinks that may appeal to your 'followers'.
- 'Follow' individuals or organisations that you are interested in.

- 'Retweet' posts that you want to share.
- Link to trends using 'hashtags'. A hashtag in your tweet can be used to link information on a subject eg #ingatestone.
- To reply to a question, respond with @Twitterhandle and then your tweet.

You can see the number of people you are following, your followers and trending hashtags underneath the profile image:



## 6.2 Tips for writing good Tweets

- Join Twitter conversations with hashtags, #ingatestone is always a good start. But don't overload Tweets with hashtags. Use two or three per Tweet.
- Use shorthand to save character count, for example cllrs, cmttee and @IngFryPC.
- Write in the active voice and present tense - social media is about the 'here and now'. Avoid using the past tense, yesterday and last week.
- Keep Tweets straightforward and uncluttered - keep to the point.
- Avoid official jargon.
- Add images and video.
- Use engaging language, for example watch, sign up, come along, join etc.
- Keep to one subject per Tweet
- Frontload keywords at the start of your tweet. Readers look at the first five characters
- If you are struggling with the 140-character word limit, try removing extra words like 'the'.
- Shorten hyperlinks short with [ow.ly](http://ow.ly).
- Omit full stops from the end of Tweets.

## What Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council should tweet about:

- Community matters

Example: @IngFryPC wants to hear your ideas to improve our play areas. Come along to playground working group at 9.30am on 30 June in the library

- Events, meetings and agendas

Examples: @IngFryPC cllrs look forward to meeting you at #Ingatestone Summer Show tomorrow, come along & meet us & find out about #neighbourhoodplan

Parish cllrs from @IngFryPC to attend #dementia event at Ingatestone Community Club at 12.30 today. Hope to see you there!

- Community calls to action

Example: Get involved and follow @IngFryPC on Facebook for latest #parishcouncil news, updates and events [ow.ly/vHII30cVq2W](https://www.facebook.com/ow.ly/vHII30cVq2W)

- Topics of public interest

Example: Road closure & 'no stopping' restrictions announced for Ingatestone High St between The Furlongs & Maldon Rd, starts 1 Aug

## What not to Tweet

- Business adverts
- Weather forecasts
- Traffic jams
- Lost and found
- Fly tipping

## Retweets and modified tweets

When another Tweeter's information is directly relevant to @IngFryPC, it is good practice to retweet the information. Example:



Retweets should only come from a trusted source. Do not retweet business adverts or the opinions of individuals. All retweets should be impartial.

### 6.3 Updating Twitter

Because of the immediacy required when updating social media posts, dealing with the press and posting on social media, we have set up a communications subcommittee to react in a timely manner. This subcommittee will handle all immediate social media communications on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram that need to be sent out.

When an event requires immediate coverage on social media channels, an assigned member of the subcommittee, or clerk, will draft a social media post and suggest images for Twitter, Facebook or Instagram. The post will then be circulated via email or a WhatsApp group to the other members of the subcommittee. When the author receives 'sign off' emails from two other sub-committee members, the post can then be updated on social media.

All Tweets should be planned and logged in the [IFPC social media updates document](#) for recording purposes.

### 6.4 Building an audience on Twitter and Facebook

We want to increase our number and range of followers on Facebook and Twitter, to involve people in what we do and communicate to them. We can help increase our following by:

- publishing interesting information, including events and facts
- making regular updates to keep our audiences interested
- joining trending conversations by including hashtags

- linking to interesting online content, images and video
- retweeting information relevant to the parish council and proactively retweeting @IngFryPC tweets ourselves
- running ongoing social media campaigns to engage followers from different age groups and backgrounds
- publishing press releases and newsworthy announcements, so that our social media channels become a first port of call for parish information.

## 7. Instagram

Instagram is a social network for sharing photographs and videos. It can be used to follow other people and, although it can be viewed online, photographs must be uploaded via a smartphone.

### Top tips for using Instagram

- Post interesting, colourful photos and videos.
- Try not to overdo the filter effects.
- Use hashtags sparingly.
- Use the Explore tab (popular page) to find new content.
- Post often to keep followers interested.
- Use Instagram Direct (the messaging tool on Instagram) to get into contact with specific users.
- Interact with your followers.
- Don't be tempted to purchase followers.
- Experiment with shoutouts.
- Stay on top of the latest Instagram trends.

(source: <https://www.lifewire.com/instagram-tips-for-beginners-3485872>)

For further information and a beginner's guide please see:

<http://mashable.com/2012/05/29/instagram-for-beginners/#Qhst.AZ3mZq3>.

## 8. Use of images

### 8.1 Image copyright

Please gain permission for use of images that are not the property of the parish council. Once permission is agreed, images must be credited as follows:  
Copyright/name of source.

Stock images sourced from external image libraries for parish council use but be royalty free.

## 8.2 Image resolution

Images used on social media, online and in the newsletter should be as high a resolution as possible. 72 dots per inch (DPI) is the standard for web images, while 300 DPI is standard for print. The higher the DPI, the more pixels are squeezed in per inch of image and the better the quality.

## 9. Filming, recording and photographing meetings

Where a meeting of IFPC and its committees include an opportunity for public participation, the media may speak and ask questions. Public participation is regulated by the parish council's standing orders.

The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a meeting of the council and its committees (which includes using a mobile phone or tablet, recording for a TV/radio broadcast, providing commentary on blogs, web forums, Skype, or social networking site such as Twitter, Facebook Live and YouTube) which enables a person not at the meeting to see, hear or be given commentary about the meeting is permitted unless (i) the meeting has resolved to hold part or all of the meeting without the public present (ii) such activities disrupt the proceedings or:

- The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of a child or vulnerable adult

at a council or committee meeting is not permitted unless an adult responsible for them has given permission.

- The photographing, recording, filming or other reporting of the council or committee

meeting shall be directed to the person speaking at that point. Members of the public who are not taking part in the meeting and are attending to watch the proceedings shall not be recorded.

- Oral reporting or commentary about a council or committee meeting by a person

who is present at the meeting is not permitted.

The council shall, as far as it is practicable, provide reasonable facilities for anyone taking a report of a council or committee meeting and for telephoning their report at their own expense.

## **10. Communicating with the media**

Parish councillors and employees should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the council in all their dealings with the media.

The clerk is the primary point of contact with the media followed by the chair of the parish council. When responding to approaches from the media, the chair or clerk should be the authorised contacts with the media. The clerk should ensure that contacts at local newspapers, magazines and radio stations are aware of this policy.

Statements made must reflect the council's opinion. Other councillors can talk to the media but must ensure that it is clear that the opinions given were their own.

Caution should be exercised with submitting letters to the editor for publication in newspapers. There are occasions when it is appropriate for the council to submit a letter, for example to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents. However, such letters should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks.

Letters representing the views of the council should only be issued by the clerk, following agreement by the parish council or relevant committee.

### **10.1 Writing press releases**

The purpose of a press release is to provide important public information or to explain the council's position on a particular issue. Press releases must all be issued by the clerk following agreement by the chair of the council, the council or relevant committee in order to ensure that the principles outlined above are adhered to and that there is a consistency of style across the council and that the use of press releases can be monitored.

#### **How to write a good press release**

- Write a headline which says what your story is about in a sentence. Do not use puns or try to come up with something funny. Let the journalists do that!
- The first paragraph should be a summary of your story which is slightly longer, and says why it's interesting. Journalists are busy. They need to understand everything they need to know in that first paragraph. If they are interested, they will read on.
- Make sure that you mention Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council in the first sentence, this is part of what makes it interesting for local journalists.
- Make the release as simple and direct as possible. Do not say something in 10 words which you could say in five.
- Make sure your press release includes a quote from someone prominent, for example the chair, and make it interesting. Standard practice would be for

the quote to be written by the person writing the release, and then approved by the person the quote is being attributed to. This makes sure that the quote is interesting, and relevant.

- Don't make it too academic. Whilst statistics can be really interesting and should be included if they are relevant, give your press release some personality too.
- Wherever possible, include a relevant image or two when you send over your release. It makes it much easier for the journalist to use your release. These must be high quality. Mobile phone images are unlikely to be good enough.
- Make sure that your email subject line is interesting and catches the journalist's attention. Sell your story!
- Add clear contact details at the end, so that journalists can follow up for further information, interviews and quotes. Journalists like to be direct, so a phone number is useful if you want to sell in your story.
- Provide backgrounder and corporate information in the 'notes to editors' section.

Example press release:

**March 2017**

### **Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council makes major improvements to Fairfield Pond**

Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council (IFPC) is pleased to announce key developments to Fairfield Pond, which will be completed this spring.

Fairfield is an area of recreational green space, located in the heart of Ingatestone village, which is leased and maintained by IFPC. It is a hub of local activity, enjoyed by children of all ages, families and dog walkers and has been home to Ingatestone and Fryerning Cricket Club for over 150 years.

Fairfield is an important part of the village's heritage. The area dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century when it was owned by Barking Abbey and used for grazing livestock. The land was sold to the Petre family during the Dissolution of the Monasteries and remains in their ownership today.

The developments to Fairfield Pond are led by the IFPC's Churchyards and Environment Committee and have been made possible with funding from Essex County Council's Community Initiatives Fund (CIF). Work includes flattening the pond's silt, removing fencing, seeding and introducing native pond plants to encourage wildlife.

Finishing touches to the area includes three new benches, bins, a colourful new picnic table built from recycled plastic and an illustrated information board charting Fairfield's natural history. These are funded with grants from Essex Heritage Trust.

IFPC chairperson, Cllr Paul Jeater comments: "In 2016 Fairfield Pond was in poor shape. It was silted up, prone to flooding in winter and there was a nettle bed which was growing out of

control. The parish council sought grant aid from the Essex County Council CIF and set about the major task of restoring it.

“By this summer, the pond will once again be an enjoyable feature of village life. An information board, new benches and bins will be in place courtesy of the Essex Heritage Fund and, for the first time in many years, it will be possible to walk right around the pond.”

## **Contact**

For more information, please contact [clerk@ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk)/01277 353315.

## **Notes to editors**

### **About Fairfield**

- Fairfield is owned by Lord Petre and leased and maintained by IFPC.
- There is a fenced play area for under 12's and a separate area for older children with a hard court, climbing wall, youth shelter and skate park.
- As well as the pond and play area, Fairfield includes a cricket pavilion and pitch (home to Ingatestone and Fryerning Cricket Club) and two public footpaths leading to the railway station and Ingatestone Hall.
- The pond was originally used by a hand operated fire engine which was run by the Parish Council in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **About Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council**

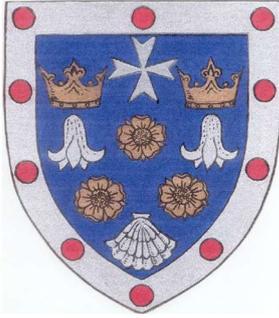
IFPC is the first tier of government and represents the interests of around 4,500 parish members. It consists of 15 councillors who freely give up their time to serve their community. Raising money through council tax, IFPC are involved in the maintenance of Fairfield and its playgrounds, Fryerning Cemetery and the closed churchyards. It is working towards securing Seymour Field and its pavilion for future generations.

The IFPC office is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, from 9am to 5pm. Follow us on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com/IngatestoneAndFryerningCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/IngatestoneAndFryerningCouncil).

## **11. Branding**

Branding is an essential for any organisation to position itself and define its goals, priorities and ethos. Elements of branding include: logos, fonts, colour palettes and an editorial tone of voice.

The current logo is used by the parish council is only 96 DPI and needs to be improved:



A black and white version is used on letterheads:



The current font used is: Century Gothic

## Sources

- Website section: Sue Lees Consultancy, [www.suelees.co.uk](http://www.suelees.co.uk)
- Legal guidelines: Elizabeth Howlett, solicitor, [ejhlegal](http://ejhlegal.com)
- Facebook data: <https://investor.fb.com/investor-news/press-release-details/2017/Facebook-Reports-Second-Quarter-2017-Results/default.aspx>
- Facebook timings: <https://coschedule.com/blog/best-times-to-post-on-social-media/>
- Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council Media Policy, Nov 2015  
[http://www.ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk/images/documents/parish\\_council/media\\_policy\\_nov\\_15\\_1.pdf](http://www.ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk/images/documents/parish_council/media_policy_nov_15_1.pdf)

## Appendix

### Communications and IT Committee Terms of Reference

#### Prime objectives

To supervise the communications and IT activities of the Council as a whole. To implement, regulate and maintain policies and best practice for the Council's presence on social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) by the adoption of a social media policy. To oversee the development and optimisation of the current Parish Council website, alongside a new Council smartphone app, e-newsletter and other further digital developments.

To manage and update the Council's media policy and oversee any IT arrangements. These objectives should be achieved within the constraints of the annual budget.

The committee will meet once per quarter and consist of up to eight members. Three members of the committee will be required to be present in order to be quorate.

Where funds exceeding £5,000 or contracts with a cumulative annual value exceeding £5,000 are required to be spent the Communications and IT Committee will defer final decision to the Policy and Resources Committee.

#### Key tasks

1. **Media policy** – To review and update the current media policy adopted by the Full Council on 4 June 2015 and make recommendations for communications with the press and issuing press releases, quotes and statements.
2. **Social media policy** – To create and adopt a Council social media policy which benchmarks the Council's management of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in accordance with the legal requirements and restrictions that apply.
3. **Social media subcommittee** – Because of the immediacy required when updating social media posts, dealing with the press and posting on social media, it is best practice to set up a communications subcommittee to react in a timely manner.

This subcommittee will handle all immediate social media communications on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram that need to be sent out.

When an event requires immediate coverage on social media channels, as assigned member of the subcommittee, or clerk, will draft a social media post for Twitter and Facebook. The post will then be circulated via email or a What's App group to the other members of the sub-committee. When the author receives 'sign off' emails from two other sub-committee members, the post can then be updated on social media.

4. **Facebook** – To ensure that the Ingatestone & Fryerning Parish Council Facebook page is kept up to date on a regular basis, remains reactive and reflects the work of the Council, by publicising news, meetings and events. To increase the traction and the number of followers, likes and shares on the existing Facebook page.
5. **Twitter** – To set up Twitter account, develop a following and update this community regularly with news, meetings and events
6. **Instagram** – To create a Parish Council Instagram account that allows the Council and Parish community to share pictures of Ingatestone and Fryerning.
7. **E-newsletter** – To investigate the distribution of an electronic version of the current newsletter and develop an email mailing list within data regulations.
8. **Website** – Make recommendations for development and improving content on [www.ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk](http://www.ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk) within proposed budgets. Improve the website's search ratings and search engine optimisation based on recent traffic reports and ensure that any bugs are fixed.
9. **App** – To investigate and make recommendations for the development of a Council app, to update parishioners on the latest events, news and meetings.
10. **Images** – To review and improve the current stock of images used on social media, newsletters and online.
11. **IT Equipment** - Check that the Parish clerk and staff have adequate IT software and equipment. Make recommendations to the Council for any changes or additions required.
12. **Major Projects** - In conjunction with other committees, identify communications projects that would significantly enhance the Parish and its community.