



Parish Office  
Suite2  
4, The Limes  
Ingatestone  
Essex  
CM4 0BA  
Telephone: 01277 676759  
[www.ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk](http://www.ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk)

## **Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council Communications Policy March 2022**

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.

It contains a communications strategy to ensure a consistent voice, common values and best practice across print and social media platforms and for dealing with the press.

Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council Communications Committee will review this document regularly to keep up with developments. This policy can be used as a reference document for all published material produced by the parish council.

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## **1. Community engagement**

Our parishioners are at the heart of any work that we undertake as a parish council and we should communicate with them and engage them in the work that we do.

### **Committee and working group communications plans**

All committees and working groups should liaise with the Communications Committee to develop a communications plan for individual projects for consistency. This includes social media posts, press releases and offline communications, such as posters and flyers.

We have a standard communications plan template [appendix 1] which can be adapted to campaigns for projects.

### **Engagement strategy**

The parish council has a detailed engagement strategy which outlines our aims for involving the community.

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

### **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 is updated via WordPress.

The main website navigation consists of eight main sections:

- Parish council - Information about the local parish council, including committees, councillors, staff, meetings, minutes and other documentation.
- Neighbourhood Plan - Latest developments and stages.
- Planning - Information about local development plans and conservation areas.
- Local info - Details about local schools, churches, facilities/services, clubs/organisations and other useful contacts.
- Seymour Pavilion - Information on facilities and venue hire.
- 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.
- Contact - How to contact and find the parish council.

## **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.

## **4. E-mails**

Email addresses are identifiable personal data under GDPR, so it is important to take care when you include addresses in emails.

Only send emails to those who really need it. If you are sending information to a large group (not necessarily personal data), consider whether the recipients will be happy for their email address to be known by others.

**Do not** use 'reply to all' unless everyone needs to read your response.

Use the Bcc field when sending an email to several recipients when using external email addresses and any personal data.

Make it clear if an email is confidential or should not be forwarded to others.

Do not include personal data in the subject title of emails.

Make sure any attachments which contain personal information have been redacted. Do not save emails containing personal data.

## **5. E-newsletter**

The parish council e-newsletter is produced on a monthly basis. Hard copy versions are delivered to households on request. Members of the public can sign up on the website and via the QR code which is widely available on our village notice boards and social media.

The e-newsletter is produced in Mailchimp [appendix 2] with headlines, standfirsts and images linking to news stories on the parish council website. Stories in the 'local events' section can link to external websites, which must be relevant and of high quality.

Sections of the newsletter include:

- Parish council news: headline stories
- Committee news: information specific to committee work. Can include minutes and agendas.
- Community news: Work in the community that directly involves the parish council, for example, the museum and community garden.
- Local events: External village events, for example, the horticultural show, Blue Flower dementia group and markets.

A test run is sent to the chair, chair of the communications committee and clerk before circulating to the general public.

### **E-news images**

All pictures should be as large as possible at 300dpi or more for the area the picture will be used. Images should be relevant to the story headline.

## **6. Social media best practice**

Social media channels, i.e. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are great, cost-free tools to communicate about parish council work, events and community involvement, providing they are used properly and maintain our integrity as an organisation. Our social media channels are for parish council news and not a repository for all news relating to our villages. We can 'retweet' and 'share' posts by external organisations if the news is not directly related to our parish council work.

### **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, 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:

- a. Making sure that the communication has a purpose and a benefit for the council obtaining permission from the clerk, or the communications committee, before embarking on a public campaign using social media.
- b. Ensuring that a colleague checks the content before it is published.
- c. 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.
- doing 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.

### **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."

### **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:

- a. Treat others with respect.
- b. Comply with equality and anti-discrimination laws.
- c. Do not publish anything received in confidence.
- d. 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**

Do not publish anything that people would consider obscene. Publication of obscene material is a criminal offence.

### **Surveys**

A 'survey' in this context is defined as asking a single or more questions relating to specific parish council projects and/or inviting comments to a statement relating to those projects.

No parish councillor may carry out surveys about such projects in the name of the parish council 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 parish council survey in their own name and then raise the survey at a parish council or any committee meeting which could influence the decision-making process.

The parish council is 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.

### **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.

- Decide with the clerk whether the comment requires an answer, if so then:
  - 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 response to negative posts**

Thank you for bringing this to our attention. Please contact clerk@ingatestone-fryerningpc.gov.uk to discuss the issue. Alternatively, you are welcome to join the next [add appropriate committee] in person to discuss the issue on [add date] at [add venue/zoom details].

## **7. Facebook**

Facebook can be used to share longer form content, images and videos and run campaigns.

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.

### **Frequency of posts**

Research shows that posting once per day is optimal, with a maximum of two posts per day. Hubspot found that pages experienced a 50 per cent drop in engagement per post if they posted more than once per day. At a minimum, you should post three times per week.

Studies show that the best time to post to Facebook is between 1pm and 3pm on weekdays and Saturdays. Engagement rates are higher on Thursdays and Fridays.

### **Length of posts**

Shorter posts are more shareable and get more 'likes'. The optimum Facebook post is approximately 40 characters, or 15 seconds or less for a video.

### **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, memes, 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.

## **8. Twitter**

A Tweet is a short 280-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.

### **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 e.g. #ingatestone.
- To reply to a question, respond with @Twitterhandle and then your tweet.
- Use ow.ly url shortener to reduce the length of shared urls.

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

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

#### **Events, meetings and agendas**

Example: @IngFryPC wants to hear your ideas on climate change. Come along to Climate Emergency Working Group at 7.30pm on 30 June at Seymour Pavilion

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

#### **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
- Other organisations' news which should be retweeted
- 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.

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

#### **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 group on WhatsApp 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 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.

### **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 become a first port of call for parish information.

### **9. 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.

#### **When should the parish council use Instagram**

- A post a week minimum should be uploaded to Instagram. The term post includes Instagram stories, we have an Instagram highlight titled 'Our Community' where local events and work that the parish council is involved in can be highlighted in story format.

### **10. Use of images**

#### **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.

If a minor (under 16, according to McNae's Essential Law for Journalists 25th edition) is recognisable or the main subject in an image, you should seek permission to use the image from the minor's parents or guardians.

No permission is needed when using photographs of adults in crowds or a public place (Ofcom) or children if they are not recognisable, but it is prudent contact teachers, parents or guardians for permission.

You do not need permission to photograph buildings, landscapes, highways, public footpaths, common land etc. provided the photograph is taken from a public place (or a place where you have permission to photograph by the landowner). The only exceptions are military establishments displaying a sign that they are a prohibited place under the Official Secrets Act 1911.

A public place is anywhere the public have free access to without having to gain permission from the land owner or paying a fee.

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

Some images are available under a free-to-use licence. Many images are the subject of creative commons licensing, which renders them free for anyone to use.

If the parish council commissions an image to be taken (paid for or free) the copyright remains with the parish council, unless otherwise agreed. Images that are used by the parish council with permission, but without copyright should be credited to the photographer.

### **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.

### **11. 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, Zoom, 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.

### **Hybrid meetings**

Section to be added on policy approval.

### **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/communications officer 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/communications officer 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 communications committee.

## **12. 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 (see below) is only to be used by the parish council.

The 'supported by' logo below, is to be used for events that are either funded or resourced (in part or fully), but not run by the parish council.

If there is doubt about which logo should be used the matter should be referred to the parish council office.

The current logo is used by the parish council:

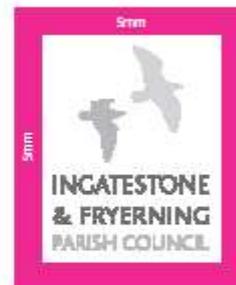
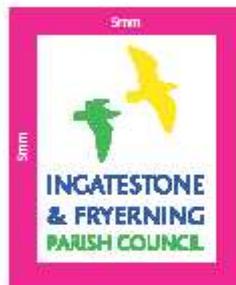


## LOGOVARIATIONS



When using these logos, the colours must not be altered, font or shape changed or distorted in any way. If there is a coloured background, the transparent version of the logo must not be used.

There must be no less than 5mm space around the edge of the logo 'box' (see below).



There are a few exceptions to the rules:

- For the website header panel, the text has been moved to the right of the birds and the blue background of the logo has been widened (see below) or [www.ingatestone-ryerningpc.gov.uk/](http://www.ingatestone-ryerningpc.gov.uk/)



- The Twitter and the website favicon used by browsers to bookmark/identify website, just a square version of the two birds in the blue logo is used. (See <https://twitter.com/IngFryPC>)
- On the Facebook page, a square version of the logo is used. In this instance the blue background has been made wider so it becomes a square. (See [www.facebook.com/IngFryPC/](http://www.facebook.com/IngFryPC/))



The bird part of the logo (individually, in a group of 3 or 2) can be used separately for bullet points or to accentuate a



piece of work. They may also be 'flipped horizontally'. The birds are not to be used lower than a transparency of 15%.

## COLOURPALETTE



**DARK BLUE**  
C94 M76 Y0 K0  
R42 G72 B152



**GREEN**  
C74 M0 Y95 K0  
R62 G170 B63



**LIGHT BLUE**  
C44 M12 Y0 K0  
R151 G197 B234



**YELLOW**  
C0 M6 Y100 K0  
R255 G227 B0



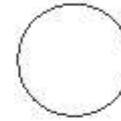
**GREYSCALE**  
K73



**GREYSCALE**  
K33



**GREYSCALE**  
K20



**GREYSCALE**  
K0

## FONTFAMILY

'Bliss' font family is used for the logo, text in the newsletter and other media.

Bliss Light / BLISS LIGHT  
- used for Body Text.

Bliss Medium / BLISS MEDIUM  
- used for Paragraph Headings and bold within text (signatures and website/email details).

Bliss Bold / BLISS BOLD  
- used for Titles and Headings.

*Please note: the website is still using the similar Didact Gothic font for content because the three Bliss web font licenses are quite expensive to purchase.*

## MEDIAGUIDELINES

Requirements for the newsletter and other media:

### Text

Please can editors provide:

- Fryerning and Ingatesone - 'and' to be used in main article not '&'. 'Fryerning & Ingatesone' can however be used in the main title
- No '&' in body text
- Double carriage returns after paragraphs. No spaces before paragraph to separate please (usually in word documents provided)
- Single spaces between sentences, no double spaces
- Lower case: parish council, parish, council, committee, policies, planning
- Articles to be signed as Cllr, not Councillor
- Website addresses to be www..... rather than http://www.....

- Dates should be 6 June format, no th's or rd's
- No 'the' before council names (for example, Brentwood Borough Council)
- Text is not to be written in capitals
- All stories should be kept to 250 words max. The main two news stories can be a bit longer but no more than 500 words max

### Images

- Front cover of newsletter has to be 216mm wide (this can be 213 as there is no bleed on the left) at 300dpi minimum. This can be sent via Drop Box or Dropsend
- All pictures should be as large as possible at 300dpi or more for the area the picture will be used. For guidance, one column in the newsletter is 90mm
- Images are to be sent as CMYK (if only have the images as RGB, this can easily be changed to CMYK)



# Brand Guidelines - December 2021

## LOGO VARIATIONS

When using these logos, the colours must not be altered, font or shape changed or distorted in any way. If there is a coloured background, the transparent version of the logo must not be used.

There must be no less than 5mm space around the edge of the logo 'box' (see below).



## COLOUR PALLETTE



**DARK BLUE**  
C94 M76 Y0 K0  
R42 G72 B152



**GREEN**  
C74 M0 Y95 K0  
R62 G170 B63



**LIGHT BLUE**  
C44 M12 Y0 K0  
R151 G197 B234



**YELLOW**  
C0 M6 Y100 K0  
R255 G227 B0



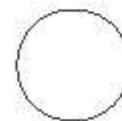
**GREYSCALE**  
K73



**GREYSCALE**  
K33



**GREYSCALE**  
K20



**GREYSCALE**  
K0

### **13. Notice boards**

The parish council maintains four notices boards in Ingatestone and Fryerning, located at

- On the bus stop at Market Place
- On the side of the pavilion in Seymour Field Pavilion
- On the drive at Fryerning Parish Rooms
- At the entrance of the Under 12 play area in Fairfield

The notice boards are refreshed by council staff once a week. Full council agendas (within seven days of the meeting) and minutes are also displayed.

Notice boards should normally give the current list of councillors and contact numbers for them and staff, plus any emergency numbers, should the office be closed.

The parish council can also use the boards to impart important information to parishioners.

The layout of the special message should include the following:

- Short title in large bold letters
- Description
- Action required
- Contact

#### **Sources**

Website section: Sue Lees Consultancy, [www.suelees.co.uk](http://www.suelees.co.uk)

Legal guidelines: Elizabeth Howlett, solicitor, [www.ejhlegal.co.uk](http://www.ejhlegal.co.uk)