



PROTOCOL FOR MARKING THE DEATH OF A SENIOR NATIONAL FIGURE

Northstowe Town Council



VERSION 1.1

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1. Introduction

This protocol offers guidance to Councillors and Officers to Northstowe Town Council on marking the death of a senior national figure and is based on the advice provided by the National Association of Civic Officers (NACO) and has been adapted to fit in with the requirements of the parish.

It sets out the protocols to be observed by local authorities upon the death of a senior national figure, and to be observed on the death of the Sovereign, which involves all elements of the protocol. This protocol can be used for deaths of other members of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers, a serving Member of Parliament for South Cambridgeshire, a serving Mayor or other Councillor of the Town Council or other prominent person.

All parts of this protocol apply on the death of the Sovereign (those sections around the Accession Proclamation arise **only** upon the Sovereign's passing).

State Funeral Her Majesty the Queen

Ceremonial Royal Funeral The Prince of Wales

Non-Ceremonial Royal Funeral The Duchess of Cornwall, The Duke of Cambridge, The Duchess of Cambridge, Prince George of Cambridge, Princess Charlotte of Cambridge, Prince Louis of Cambridge, The Duke of Sussex, The Duchess of Sussex, Prince Archie of Sussex, The Duke of York, The Earl of Wessex, The Countess of Wessex, The Princess Royal, The Duke of Gloucester, The Duchess of Gloucester, The Duke of Kent, The Duchess of Kent, Princess Alexandra, Prince Michael of Kent and Princess Michael of Kent

This document offers guidance on how to mark a death. It is down to the Mayor/Deputy-Mayor and Town Clerk to decide for whom the protocol is implemented and to what extent.

Flying of flags at half-mast across the parish will **always** be appropriate. Other decisions, may be appropriate and may include:

- To read the Proclamation.
- To insert mourning front page to website.
- To cancel or reschedule meetings or events.
- To have a designated flower laying area.
- To consider dress code.
- To open a Book of Condolence, or
- To mark a silence.

The marking of a Silence (how and location) will be decided by Northstowe Town Council by taking into account the deceased's seniority (if not the sovereign) within the Royal Family or reflect any connections they may have with the parish or county.

The High Sheriff for Cambridgeshire will have responsibility for reading the Proclamation for Cambridgeshire, therefore any questions about arrangements must be directed to the High Sheriff's office. The High Sheriff may work closely with the Lord Lieutenant and may also be able to provide information.

It may also be appropriate to use elements from this guidance when responding to an incident which has led to a large number of deaths, for example, a train crash or terrorist attack.

The Parish Office will hold out-of-hours contact details of **all** those who will be called on to take action. These details will be reviewed on a six monthly basis ensuring that all information remains current and any individual/organisation who has responsibility within these guidelines must submit changes to the Town Clerk.

2. Implementation of the Protocol on hearing of the death

Plans to mark a death should only be implemented when a formal announcement has been made. Reports from news agencies stating *'reports are coming in of the death of...'* **must be treated with caution**. If possible, wait for a definite announcement (generally along the lines of *'it has been announced by Buckingham Palace / Downing Street that ...'*).

For the death of the Sovereign or another senior member of the Royal Family the Town Clerk will implement the protocol with consultation with the Mayor/Deputy-Mayor, and will cascade information through to the community. For other figures, there may need to be consultation at the time on the ways in which the death should be marked.

There is a National Mourning Timetable to be used in all instances as follows:

D Day	Date of Death
D+1	*Proclamation Day (London)
D+2	*Proclamation Day (Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff)
D+?	Middle Sunday – Civic Services
D+4-6 to D+9	Lying in State
D+10	Date of Funeral (though will be D+11 if D+10 falls on a Sunday)

* Sovereign only

3. Flag Flying

On the formal announcement of Death, the Union Flag at Northstowe Churches – where relevant - are to be lowered to half-mast until 0800 hours on the morning following the funeral. **Appendix 1** provides guidance on flag flying and what is meant by 'half-mast'.

In the case of the death of the Sovereign, the day following the death will be D+1 Proclamation Day (the day when the new Sovereign is proclaimed). On Proclamation Day flags will, at the start of the day, be flying at half-mast.

The flag will then be flown at the Mast-head from 1100 hours on D+1 (Proclamation Day) to coincide with the Reading of the Principal Proclamation (London). It will continue to fly at full-mast until 1300 hours the following day i.e., D+2. to coincide with the Proclamations being read in each of the other city capitals. At 1300 hours on D+2 it should be returned to half-mast.

4. Book of Condolence

A Book of Condolence will be opened on the first working day after the day of death, D+1 to create a record of the sentiments expressed by local people on the death of a national figure. A loose leaf Book of Condolence will be made available at The Wing and will be set on a table with a suitable cloth, a chair, a clean blotter, pens and a small flower arrangement.

The space will be easily accessible and quiet enough to allow those signing the book some privacy and quiet reflection.

Any pages which may include comments which are deemed questionable, shall be quietly removed until such time as a decision can be made by the Mayor/Deputy-Mayor and Town Clerk on whether they should be permanently excluded.

The Mayor/Deputy-Mayor may wish to agree a form of words for a message, expressing sorrow at the news of the death. This may form the words to be included in a press release, on the website, Facebook or any other social media platform.

The Book of Condolence will be available until 1700 hour on the day following the funeral. At this point the Book will form part of the Town Council's archive. A letter will be sent to Buckingham Palace confirming its existence and the letter will in turn form part of the Royal Archives acting as an effective cross reference

5. Organisation of local events during the period of Mourning

On the death of the Sovereign large numbers of people may wish to pay their respects and to take part in events that mark not just a sad passing, but a moment in history. The focus will inevitably fall on London, which many will perceive to be at the centre of events, however, Northstowe Town Council along with partnership organisations will help local residents to come together collectively to express their sadness and their respects.

The reading of the Proclamation by the High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire will stand as the first opportunity for people to gather and this will be followed by Proclamation readings in Districts and towns across the United Kingdom.

Residents may choose to express their sadness by laying flowers; in order to manage such activity safely, the Town Council has identified the following sites:

The Green, Northstowe

The Mayor, or representative, will lay flowers at the time the Proclamation is read by the High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire. Should residents wish to lay flowers during the time of mourning, they may do so but it is important to note that all plastic wrap should be removed before laying them.

All flowers will be removed a week after the funeral has taken place (or once the flowers have died). All flowers will be taken away to be composted, and with the compost a tree will be planted at a location in the community, agreed by the Council, in memory of the Sovereign.

Church Services may also provide a setting for people to come together and collectively express sadness. Councillor and staff attendance at such services is encouraged to add to the sense of the community coming together in a unified expression of grief. Recommendation by NACO is to ensure that such services bring together other denominations and other faiths and they address the wants and needs of those within the parish having no personal beliefs to enable effective bringing together of the whole community. This information will be shared with local churches.

6. Cancellation of Existing Planned Events

From the day of death until the day after the funeral, careful thought will be given to the types of events and activities which the Mayor should host or attend. Scheduled Town Council meetings will be reviewed for postponement or rescheduling. Other events may not fit with the mood of that Nation and as a mark of respect may need to be cancelled or postponed. This will be a local decision and one which needs to be reached with great sensitivity.

Visits to the local schools and sheltered housing will be scheduled for the Mayor/Deputy-Mayor to spend time with the community, talking about the events that are unfolding. This again will need to be done with great sensitivity and should not be pressed upon a Mayor/Deputy-Mayor who does not feel comfortable taking on such a role.

It is impossible to create hard and fast rules around cancelling long-planned events which fall between a death and the funeral. There are so many 'unknowns'. The sense of public shock, anger and bewilderment following deaths that have occurred in violent terrorist attacks in the past has differed from, for instance, the public reaction at the time of the Queen Mother's death peacefully at the age of 102, which was akin to quiet sadness and acceptance. However, in both circumstances, there is a wish to see the passing marked in a dignified, solemn and dignified manner.

It is best to forget about the cost and the inconvenience of cancelling and be guided by the mood of residents. Public opinion can be volatile and change quickly in such emotional circumstances. There is a risk of public criticism if the decision to go ahead is seen to go against the grain.

When the time comes, the question to ask is not **'do we cancel'** but rather **'why is it really necessary and appropriate for this event to go ahead?'**.

7. Proclamation Day

As stated in 2 above, Proclamation Day is set to be the day following the death of the Sovereign (Day of Death plus 1).

The Proclamation will be made at St James' Palace at 1100 hours (or 1400 hours if it is a Sunday). The Proclamation is then cascaded:

At noon on Proclamation Day, it will be read at the Royal Exchange in the City of London.

At noon on D+2 it will be read:

- In Edinburgh by Lord Lyon King of Arms at Mercat Cross and at the drawbridge to Edinburgh Castle;
- In Cardiff by Wales Herald Extraordinary at Cardiff Castle;
- In Belfast by Norroy and Ulster King of Arms

Once those Proclamations have been made it is appropriate for the Proclamation to be read at County, City, District and Parish level.

The High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire will cause the Proclamation to be read at County Level, and it is likely that the Lord Lieutenant will be alongside them, at 1230 hours.

The flag will be returned to half-mast at 1300 hours.

8. Dress Code

A view will be taken locally on what is the correct dress code in the event of the death of a Senior National Figure. Whilst flags are at half-mast, it will be appropriate for black ties and arm bands to be worn by Council members and the Town Clerk. An adequate supply of arm bands has been made available by the Parish Office for councillors.

9. Website and Social Media

Following the official announcement from Buckingham Palace / Downing Street, Northstowe Town Council will activate a holding page for the website consisting of a black page with a photograph of the deceased, the year of birth to the year of death and links to the following information: Condolence Book, Church Services, Flowers and Flags. Each link will lead to a website page which has been drafted with the relevant information but remains unpublished until such time as it is required. The pages will be activated as soon as an official announcement is made.

10. Marking a Silence

The death of a Senior National Figure may be marked by a National Two Minute Silence.

On the death of the Sovereign there will be Two Minute Silence at 1100 hours on the day of the funeral (D+10).

It may be that the Silence will be kept for other members of the Royal Family. However, action on a Silence for members of the Royal Family other than the Sovereign should await an announcement from Buckingham Palace.

11. Letter of Condolence

It is usual, in the case of the death of a member of the Royal Family, for letters to be sent to the Private Secretary of the deceased, asking that condolences be passed to the next of kin and other members of the family (except in the case of the Sovereign's death, in which case they should be sent to the new Sovereign's Private Secretary asking that condolences be passed to the new Sovereign). In each case, other than exceptional local circumstances, one letter of condolence only should be sent.

Appendix 1: Flying Flags at Half-Mast

(Information taken from <https://www.flaginstitute.org/wp/british-flags/flying-flags-in-the-united-kingdom/british-flag-protocol/#index21>)

Half-mast means the flag is flown two-thirds of the way up the flagpole, with at least the height of the flag between the top of the flag and the top of the flagpole. Flags cannot be flown at half-mast on poles that are more than 45° from the vertical, but a mourning cravat can be used instead (see below).

When a flag is to be flown at half-mast, it should first be raised all the way to the top of the mast, allowed to remain there for a second and then be lowered to the half-mast position. When it is being lowered from half-mast, it should again be raised to the top of the mast for a second before being fully lowered.

When a British national flag is at half-mast, other flags on the same stand of poles should also be at half-mast or should not be flown at all. Flags of foreign nations should not be flown, unless their country is also observing mourning.

The Royal Standard never flies at half-mast. It represents the Monarchy, which is continuous, and it would therefore be inappropriate for it to fly at half-mast.

Flags should be flown at half-mast on the following occasions:

1. From the announcement of the death until the funeral of the Sovereign, except on Proclamation Day when flags are flown at full-mast following the proclamation.
2. From the announcement of the death until the funeral of a member of the Royal Family styled 'Royal Highness', subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case.
3. On the day of the announcement of the death and on the day of the funeral of other members of the Royal Family, subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case.
4. The funerals of foreign Rulers, subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case.
5. The funerals of Prime Ministers and ex-Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case.
6. The funerals of First Ministers and ex-First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case. Unless otherwise commanded by the Sovereign, this only applies to flags in their respective countries.
7. At British Embassies, High Commissions and Missions when flags in the host country are flown at half-mast, subject to the discretion of the Chef de Mission.
8. Any other occasions where the Sovereign has given a special command.

Appendix 2: Action to be Taken

Action Required	Implemented by	Other Notes
<p>Implementation of Protocol Northstowe Town Council’s protocol on the death of a Senior National Figure will be implemented on the formal announcement of the death of anyone of those persons named in Appendix 3</p>	Implementation will be authorised by the Town Clerk or Mayor/Deputy-Mayor	
<p>Flag Flying (where relevant). Immediately at the request of the Town Clerk or the Mayor/Deputy-Mayor, the Union Flag will be flown at half-mast.</p>	Northstowe Churches	Appendix 1 sets out the correct procedure for flying a flag at half-mast.
<p>Applicable only following the death of the Sovereign: On Proclamation Day (D+1) (the day following the death of the Sovereign, when the new Sovereign is proclaimed) flags will at 1100 hours be raised to full mast and flown throughout the day at full mast.</p>	Northstowe Churches	
<p>On Day of Death +2: Flag returns to half-mast at 1300 hours.</p>	Northstowe Churches	
<p>Book of Condolence On the day following the announcement of the death of the Sovereign, The Prince of Wales, The Duchess of Cornwall, the Duke of Cambridge or the Duchess of Cambridge, a Book of Condolence will be opened at The Wing.</p>	Town Clerk or Mayor/Deputy-Mayor	<p>Consideration will be given at the time of each death on whether Books of Condolence should be opened for other members of the Royal Family.</p> <p>Town Clerk to ensure there is adequate paper available in the book. Pages that have been defaced or include offensive or other questionable comments will be quietly removed until such time a decision can be</p>

taken on whether they be permanently excluded.

Events During the Period of Mourning

To review any engagements to be undertaken by the Mayor/Deputy-Mayor to ensure it is appropriate in a time of national mourning and that it sits comfortably with the national mood.

Mayor/Deputy-Mayor and
Town Clerk

Church Services

Northstowe Town Council members will be sent details of any services to be held in the Parish.

Town Clerk and
Northstowe churches

Flowers

Areas allocated for residents to lay flowers during the period of mourning will be advertised. The Green, Northstowe has been allocated.

Town Clerk

Ensure there is adequate space to lay flowers without impeding necessary access routes.

Dress Code

Black arm bands held in and available from the Parish Office.

Stock to be issued and
maintained by the Town
Clerk

When reviewing the Protocol, consideration is needed to the number of items in stock, their condition and the need of replacement if necessary.

Marking a Silence

Where the death of a senior member of the Royal Family is to be marked by a silence, an announcement will be made by Buckingham Palace

Town Clerk to circulate
information

Consideration will be given at the time of each death on whether a Silence will be kept for other members of the Royal Family.

Website

Website provider to design the appropriate holding pages.

Town Clerk & Vision ICT.

The holding page will be black with a photo of the deceased, the year of birth to the year of death and links to information relating to the period of mourning.

Information for the Book of Condolence, Flowers, etc. to be drafted ready for website content.

Town Clerk

Letter of Condolence

Letter of Condolence to be drafted.

Town Clerk

Appendix 3: National Figures for Whom the Protocol Applies

The Protocol sets out the action to be taken in the event of the death of:

- Her Majesty the Queen
- The Prince of Wales
- The Duchess of Cornwall
- The Duke of Cambridge
- The Duchess of Cambridge
- Prince George
- Princess Charlotte
- Prince Louis
- The Duke of Sussex
- The Duchess of Sussex
- Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor
- The Duke of York
- The Earl of Wessex
- The Countess of Wessex
- The Princess Royal
- The Duke of Gloucester
- The Duchess of Gloucester
- The Duke of Kent
- The Duchess of Kent
- Princess Alexandra
- Prince Michael of Kent
- Princess Michael of Kent
- The Prime Minister
- Any former Prime Minister, such as Sir John Major
- Members of Parliament for South Cambridgeshire

Appendix 4: Mayor's Statement

A statement will be issued by the Mayor on the announcement of the death of a Senior National figure, other prominent figure or in the case of a disaster or act of terrorism.

The statement should begin with a suitable expression of the sadness of Northstowe Town Council on hearing the announcement.

It will then state that flags at Northstowe churches – where relevant - will be flown at half-mast. It is an occasion when a Book of Condolence will be opened, and reference will be made to this and notification that residents may lay flowers out of respect in the designated areas.

When a decision has been made on the Mayor's (or any Councillor's) engagements for the authority, it will be stated that these have been cancelled/postponed as a mark of respect or will start with a period of silence.

Document History

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