

# Exminster Parish Council

## Protocol following the Death of the Sovereign, a Senior National Figure or Local Holder of High Office

This protocol offers guidance to the elected Members, staff and population within the Parish covered by Exminster Parish Council on marking the death of a senior national figure. It sets out the protocols to be observed on the death of the Sovereign, which involves the greatest number of ceremonial elements.

This document is derived from the template supplied by the National Association of Civic Officers (NACO) and is the adopted template of interpretation and implementation within Exminster parish.

This protocol is constructed in a way to enable appropriate elements when marking the death of other members of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister/former Prime Minister, a serving Councillor or other prominent person.

All parts of this protocol apply on the death of the Sovereign (note: those sections around the Accession Proclamation arise only upon the Monarchs death).

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The Queen will be given a State Funeral.

The Duke of Edinburgh and The Prince of Wales will be given a 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, The Duke of York, The Earl of Wessex, The Princess Royal, The Countess of Wessex, The Duke of Gloucester, The Duchess of Gloucester, The Duke of Kent, Prince Michael of Kent, Princess Michael of Kent and Princess Alexandra will be given Non-Ceremonial Royal Funerals.

As the names suggest, the distinctions rest with the level of ceremonial involved (for example, in a State Funeral the coffin is carried on a gun carriage pulled by men and women of the Armed Forces. In a Ceremonial Royal Funeral, the gun carriage is drawn by horses).

The above list is subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case.

### 1. Implementation of the Protocol on hearing of the death

Plans to mark a death must be implemented **only when a formal announcement** has been made (i.e. where news agencies say 'reports are coming in of the death of...' **will be treated with caution**. Wherever possible wait for a more definite or specific announcement (i.e. 'it has been announced by Buckingham Palace/Downing Street that...')

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For the death of the Sovereign or another senior member of the Royal Family the clerk will cascade information through the community to ensure timely decisions and notifications can be made. For other figures, there may need to be consultation at the time on the ways in which such a death should be marked.

### **2. Flag Flying (see 7 below – Proclamation Day)**

Flying of flags at half-mast across the parish will be appropriate

### **3. Books of Condolence**

The provision of 'Books of Condolence' will remain within the power of Teignbridge District Council.

### **4. Website Guidance**

Many local authorities will be replacing their website home page on the death of The Sovereign and some have a "ghost" of that page prepared already.

Typically, the "ghost" page includes an image of the deceased with dates of birth and death. It then carries a few words to record that it was with the greatest sadness that the Council learnt of the death of X.

Beneath that is a link to the Council's usual website and that is followed by a series of further links through which people can find details of the ways in which the Council is marking the death as detailed above.

Upon the death of any other persons named on page 1 of this protocol the Officers will consider the appropriateness of other information on the front page of the website.

### **5. Official Correspondence**

The Chairman (as the figurehead of the Parish Council) will agree a form of words for a message, expressing sorrow at the news of the death. This will be the official form of words to be used on the Parish Councils website homepage and also on the Facebook page. An external link to the Buckingham Palace e-book of condolence ([www.royal.gov.uk](http://www.royal.gov.uk)) will be made if appropriate.

This link will be removed at the end of the day following the day of the funeral (i.e. if the funeral falls on a Thursday the link will be removed at 5.00pm on the Friday).

### **6. 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 the centre of events.

Residents may choose to express their sadness by laying flowers.

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The Council will announce the designated area for this and details of when the Chairman will be laying flowers on behalf of the Council.

It will be requested that no plastic/cellophane is used. The flowers will be collected after the funeral and composted, in order to manage such activity safely, the Parish Council has identified the following site within the Parish: the paved area between the flower beds on the entrance to Dryfield.

All flowers will be removed the week after the funeral has taken place (or once the flowers have died). Weather conditions will have an effect on the above, but decisions will be made giving forethought and sensitivity to the needs of the community. Church Services may also provide a setting for people to come together to express sadness. Councillor and staff attendance at such services is encouraged to add to the sense of community coming together in a unified expression of grief.

### **7. Cancellation of Existing Planned Events**

It is impossible to create hard and fast rules around cancelling long planned events which fall in the period between a death and a funeral. It is best practice to remove the importance of 'cost and inconvenience' when cancelling events, remaining mindfully guided by the public mood. Public opinion can be volatile and change quickly in such emotional circumstances and there is a risk of public criticism if the decision to go ahead is seen to 'go against the grain'.

It is hard to envisage any civic event that should carry on in the period between a death and the funeral as it would risk negative publicity at a time when the rest of the country and the Commonwealth is in mourning.

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

### **8. Proclamation Day**

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

- (i) The Proclamation will be made at St. James Palace at 11.00hrs (or 14:00hrs on a Sunday)

The Proclamation is then cascaded.

- (ii) 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:

- (iii) 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

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- (iv) Once those Proclamations have been read it is appropriate for the Proclamation to be read at County, City, Borough and Parish level if they so choose.
- (v) The County Proclamation will be read at County Hall by the High Sheriff. The Lord Lieutenant will present at that ceremony. The Local Proclamation is **not** to take place before the County Proclamation

### **9. Dress Code**

Whilst flags are at half-mast it is appropriate for black ties/scarves to be worn by the Chairman, Councillors and staff during official engagements.

On occasions where a full Council meeting falls during the period of mourning or on the death of the Sovereign and when the Proclamation is read it is appropriate for all Councillors and members of staff to wear a black armband, stored in the Parish Council Office.

### **10. Timings**

For Royal funerals planning largely assumes that when a death occurs it will be on an ordinary day of the week and the funeral will follow a given number of days later. That is because when you start to ask, 'what if?' it soon becomes almost impossible to anticipate every conceivable set of circumstances. Easter, Christmas and Remembrance Sunday all throw up possible problems.

When reports of a death are received, it will be possible to take a view of whether it is a 'straightforward' time of the year, which gives a clear run, or whether other elements like Easter or Christmas are likely to complicate matters.

A Royal funeral will not take place on a Sunday. Should Remembrance Sunday fall between D and the day of the funeral it is likely that the National commemorations would go ahead in some form, but again the lead on local ceremonies should be taken from indications on television, and in the media of plans for the Cenotaph.

### **11. Council Meetings**

Where a meeting of the Council takes place in a room where a picture of The Queen usually hangs the picture does not need to be removed but reflect the passing of the person pictured using a black ribbon. It is noted that it may be many months after a death has occurred that it becomes appropriate for a picture to be removed.

### **12. 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 a Two Minute Silence at 11.00am on the day of the funeral (D+10).

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For other senior members of the Royal Family the number of days will be fewer. It may be that Silence will be kept for other members of the Royal Family; advised for the day of the funeral as part of the funeral service.

### **13. Letter of Condolence**

Formal letter of Condolence to be prepared and signed by the Chairman of the Council and forwarded by the Parish Clerk. To be sent to the New Sovereign's Private Secretary asking that condolences of the Council and people of Exminster be passed to the new Sovereign and his/her family.

In the case of the death of a member of the Royal Family, a letter 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.

### **14. Public Holiday**

The day of the State Funeral will be a Public Holiday, unless D10 falls on a Saturday.

Once adopted, this protocol will be shared with organisations, businesses and individuals within the community and the wider population at the time of necessity.