



BRIZE NORTON PARISH COUNCIL

Marking the Death of a Senior National Figure Protocol

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Adopted by Full Council	April 2020
Last Review	August 2022
This Review	August 2024
Next Review	August 2026

INTRODUCTION

This protocol offers guidance to the elected Members, staff and population within the Parish covered by Brize Norton 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 the Brize Norton parish.

PURPOSE

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).

The council will follow the government guidelines regarding the kind of funeral planned.

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

The National Proclamations will be read in London (St James Palace and the Royal Exchange), Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff, along with County Proclamations normally read by the High Sheriff. Robin Rogers, Strategy Manager at Oxfordshire County Council has responsibility for the primary

reading of the Proclamation (produced/circulated by Buckingham Palace/Central Govt) within the county of Oxfordshire.

Elements of this protocol may be used when responding to another incident which has led to a large number of deaths (i.e. a local disaster or terrorist attack).

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...’)

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.

FLAG FLYING (SEE 7 BELOW – PROCLAMATION DAY)

The following flag is to be flown at half-mast:

- Memorial Garden, Norton Way, Brize Norton

Guidance on flag flying and what is meant by ‘half-mast’ is shown in Appendix 1.

Carterton Town Council/ WODC has responsibility for lowering the flag.

On the formal announcement of death, all flags are to be lowered to half-mast until **08:00hrs** on the morning following the funeral.

In the case of the death of the Sovereign, the day following the death will be ‘**Proclamation Day**’ (the day when the new Sovereign is proclaimed). On Proclamation Day flags must fly at half-mast at the start of the day.

All flags will then be flown at the mast from 11:00hrs on D+1 (Proclamation Day) to coincide with the Reading of the Principle of the Proclamation and until 13:00hrs.

The following day (D+2, as the Proclamation firstly having been read in London on Proclamation Day) will then be read in Belfast, Edinburgh and Cardiff on the day following Proclamation Day.

BOOKS OF CONDOLENCE

The provision of ‘Books of Condolence’ will remain within the power of West Oxfordshire District Council and will also be placed in Witney, Carterton and Burford Town Councils.

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 on social media pages. An external link to the Buckingham Palace e-book of condolence (www.royal.gov.uk) will be made.

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).

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; in order to manage such activity safely, the Parish Council has identified the following sites:

- **Brize Norton War Memorial by St. Britius Church**
- **St. Mary's Church Witney**

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.

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?'**

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).

- (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
- (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 High Sheriff of Oxfordshire will cause the Proclamation to be read at County level at 12.30hrs, followed by a local one read by the West Oxfordshire Chairman at the West Oxfordshire Offices.

DRESS CODE

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

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 small black rosette (self-supplied) or a black armband.

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.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

Where a meeting of the Council takes place in a room that displays an image of a member of the Royal Family (usually the Sovereign), the picture does not need to be removed. It is appropriate to mark the death of the person depicted in some way. Appendix 2 shows how Brize Norton Parish Council will reflect the passing of the person pictured using a black ribbon.

The length of time the pictures should be draped in ribbons and when the picture(s) should be moved to a new position will be made by the Clerk following receipt of updates or by judging public mood/opinion but should not be a matter that needs to be rushed. It is noted that it may be many months after a death has occurred that it becomes appropriate for a picture to be removed.

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).

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.

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 Sovereigns deaths, in which case they should be sent to the new Sovereigns Private Secretary asking that condolences be passed on to the new Sovereign). In each case **one 'official'** letter of condolence will be sent on behalf of the Parish Council by the Parish Clerk.

PUBLIC HOLIDAY

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

APPENDIX 1

FLAGS AT HALF MAST

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 mast. Flags cannot be flown at half-mast on poles that are more than 45 degrees from the vertical or have fixed point fixings. A mourning cravat can be used instead in this case.

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

- 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.**
- 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.
- 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.
- The funerals of foreign rulers, subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case.
- The funerals of Prime Ministers and ex-Prime Ministers of the UK, subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case.
- 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.
- Any other occasions where the Sovereign has given a special command.

APPENDIX 2

PLACING OF RIBBONS

Where a local Authority displays an image of a member of the Royal Family (usually the Sovereign) it is appropriate to mark the death of the person depicted in some way. Brize Norton Parish Council will mark the death by:

Placing black ribbon across the top right-hand corner of the picture (as illustrated).



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