

Operation Bridges

Action in the event of the death of a senior member of the Royal Family

Trevor Leggo

CEO SALC

November 2020 reviewed May 2022

Guidance

- The over riding guidance to be observed by local councils is that no action should be taken by any councillor or member of staff until formal notification has been received from the Lord Lieutenant's office.
- This applies to each of the three counties and their respective Lieutenancies.

The Day of Death

- Flags to be lowered to half mast
- Books of condolence to be prepared but not opened
- If the Council has a photograph of the deceased on display it should be marked with a black ribbon across one corner
- After the funeral, if the deceased is HM the Queen, it should be replaced with a photograph of HM the King
- This will depend on the availability of a suitable photograph and need not be rushed

During the period of mourning

- From the day of death until the day after the funeral, careful thought should be given to the types of events and activities hosted by the council.
- Lunches, Dinners, Receptions etc. may not fit the mood of the nation and as a mark of respect may need to be cancelled or postponed.
- It will be a local decision whether or not to postpone a council or committee meeting during this period, it is suggested that meetings dealing with only the most urgent matters with an immovable deadline should be convened.

Letters of Condolence

- It is usual under these circumstances 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.
- In the case of the death of the Sovereign, letters should be sent to the new Sovereign's Private Secretary asking that condolences be passed to the new Sovereign.
- In each case only one letter from each council should be sent.

Silence

- The death of a senior figure may be marked by a National Two Minute Silence
- On the death of the Sovereign or other senior member of the Royal Family there will be a Two Minute Silence at 11.00am on the day of the funeral [day of death plus 10 for the Sovereign, day of death plus 8 for other senior Royals]
- The silence should be notified to residents via whatever social media is used by the Council
- It will of course be publicised via the Press, Radio and TV

Dress Code

- The Mayor or Chairman may consider wearing their badge of office on a black neck ribbon during the period of mourning and other councillors, a black armband

Photographs

- Official released photographs of all senior members of the Royal Family can be purchased from The Custodian of the Official Royal Image Library, Mike O'Keefe
- mike@royalimages.co.uk

Websites

- A statement should be issued expressing sadness of XXX PC at the news of the death of XXX
- It should explain about flags at half mast and information about access to the Book of Condolence and any events / meetings that are being rescheduled
- Any statement drafted by the Clerk should be approved by the Mayor or Chairman

On Day of Death plus one

- The Book of Condolence can be opened and will remain open until the day following the funeral.
- When closed, the books should be bound and sent to the appropriate County Records Office for storage
- Shaw and Sons may be a good source for a suitable book

Flowers and tributes

- You need to think carefully about where floral tributes are to be placed; the Council's notice should state that those left anywhere else will be removed to the chosen place
- Tributes should be removed the day after the book of condolence is closed. Sensitivity should be applied when removing tributes so that they are treated respectfully
- You will need a plan to consider where tributes are to be taken to when removed

Proclamation

- The Proclamation is likely to be announced at St James Palace at 11.00 [or 14.00 if it is a Sunday] on the day following the death
- Local protocol should identify which flags are to be flown at half mast and be clear about what is meant by 'half mast'. This will apply to the start of Proclamation Day but flags will be raised to the mast head from 11.00 until 13.00 on the following day, ie D+2
- On the formal announcement of death, all flags are to be lowered to half mast until 08.00 on the morning following the State Funeral, ie D+11

Proclamation contd.

- In each County the Proclamation will be read by the High Sheriff at an appropriate place at 12.30 [West Sussex will be the steps of County Hall, Surrey will be from Guildford Cathedral and East Sussex tbc]
- A Borough or District can read the proclamation after 13.30 in their own area
- A parish chairman or town mayor may do so but only after it has been read in their Borough or District.
- If a flag pole is in the vicinity, the flag may be raised to full height during the reading of the Proclamation but lowered to half mast immediately afterwards.

Contact details

- It is vital that the up to date contact details for the Clerk of your council are provided to the Lieutenancy Officer in each of the counties :
- West Sussex – Paul Legrave, County Hall Chichester,
paul.Legrave@westsussex.gov.uk
- Surrey – Caroline Breckell, caroline.Breckell@surreycc.gov.uk
- East Sussex – Victoria Golding,
eastsussexlieutenancy@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Questions ?