

# Death of a Senior Figure Policy Document

## 1. Introduction:

This protocol sets out the action to be taken in the event of the death of the following persons:

- a) HM The Queen
- b) HRH The Duke of Edinburgh
- c) HRH The Prince of Wales
- d) HRH The Duchess of Cornwall
- e) HRH The Duke of Cambridge
- f) HRH The Duchess of Cambridge
- g) HRH Prince George of Cambridge
- h) HRH Princess Charlotte of Cambridge
- i) HRH Prince Louis of Cambridge
- j) HRH The Duke of Sussex
- k) HRH The Duchess of Sussex
- l) HRH The Duke of York
- m) HRH The Princess Royal
- n) HRH The Earl of Wessex
- o) HRH The Countess of Wessex
- p) The Prime Minister
- q) The Member of Parliament for Bridgwater and West Somerset
- r) A serving member of Watchet Town Council

Plans will only be implemented following an official announcement. Upon notification, the Town Clerk will advise all members that the protocol is to be implemented.

## 2. Flag Flying:

Upon receiving notification of the death of a senior figure (as listed above), the Town Clerk will instruct that the flag outside the Town Council Office be lowered to half-mast.

For any other prominent figures or local holder of high office, the flag should fly at half-mast only on the day of death and the day of the funeral.

In the event of a local, national or international disaster, the Town Clerk, in conjunction with the Chair of the Council, will instruct that the flag outside the Town Council Office be lowered to half-mast if deemed appropriate.

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 United Kingdom, subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case

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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.

Full details for on the correct way to fly flags at half-mast is given on the website of the Flag Institute - [www.flaginstitute.org](http://www.flaginstitute.org). It is important that the guidance given by the Flag Institute is strictly adhered to.

### **3. The Death of the Sovereign and members of the Royal Family:**

#### *Book of Condolence and Marking a Silence:*

On the day following the announcement of the death of the Sovereign, The Duke of Edinburgh, The Prince of Wales or The Duchess of Cornwall, a Book of Condolence will be opened at the Council Office.

In the event of another member of the Royal Family or notable person, the Town Clerk in discussion with the Chair, will judge public feeling as to whether a book of condolence should be opened locally.

The Book of Condolence will be available during the Town Council Office opening hours (Monday-Thursday 10:00am- 12.30pm) and will remain until the close of the Council Office on the day following the funeral. When a Condolence book has been closed, it will be bound and retained with the Councils official archives.

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. The Chair of the Council will lead a public silence outside of the Town Council Office with Town Councillors. The Clerk will be responsible regarding arrangements for any media access.

The Chair of the Council will issue a statement via the Clerk expressing the sadness of the Council and community of Watchet at the news of the death.

The statement will also appear on the home page of the website. The statement will confirm that the flag is to be flown at half-mast and will give details of the Book of Condolence. The public observing of the silence will also be cited.

#### *Dress Code:*

During the official mourning period Councillors and the Clerk will be encouraged to dress soberly on official business – dark clothing and black ties should be worn when representing the Council. This is for a minimum for the first day after the announcement, Proclamation Day, for any official minutes silence and on the day of the funeral.

*Events and Activities:*

From the day of the death until the day after the funeral, careful thought should be given to the types of events and activities which should take place. The question should be asked 'why is it really necessary and appropriate for this event to go ahead' should be considered. Whilst it may not be appropriate for an event to go ahead it might be possible to hold the Town Council meeting with an appropriate period of silence at the start.

The Clerk, in conjunction with the Chair of the Council, will look at the event and/or activity to ensure it is appropriate in a time of national mourning and that it sits comfortably with the national mood.

*Website:*

For the deaths of the Queen, Prince Philip and Prince Charles the home page of the Parish Councils website will be overwritten with a black page carrying a portrait of the Senior Royal with a tab link to the normal home page of the website. The website will be restored to normal the day after the official period of mourning.

**4. The death of the Prime Minister or Member of Parliament for Bridgwater and West Somerset:**

The flag outside the Town Council Offices will fly at half-mast on the day of the announcement of the death. On subsequent days the usual local arrangements will resume until the day of the funeral when the flag will again fly at half-mast.

The Chair of the Council will issue a statement via the Clerk expressing the sadness of the Council and community of Watchet at the news of the death. The statement will also appear on the home page of the website. The statement will confirm that the flag is to be flown at half-mast.

As above the same will apply for dress code and events and activities.

**5. The death of a serving member of Watchet Town Council:**

The outside the Town Council Offices will fly at half-mast on the day of the announcement of the death and again on the day of the funeral when the flag will again fly at half-mast.

The Clerk will inform all members of the Council via email (or telephone) and a message posted on social media.

The Casual Vacancy will be advertised the day after the funeral.

A minutes silence will take place at the subsequent meeting of the Council or Committee.

**Policy approved at the Full Council meeting held on 13 January 2020**