



NORTHAM TOWN COUNCIL
PROTOCOL on the DEATH OF
SENIOR NATIONAL FIGURE

Adopted by Northam Town Council on **17th December 2025**

	Name	Signature
Mayor	Cllr Louis Bach	
Town Clerk	Guy Langton	

NORTHAM TOWN COUNCIL – PROTOCOL on the DEATH OF SENIOR NATIONAL FIGURE

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V0.1	n/a	Original policy	Town Clerk
V0.2	13 th October 2025	Reviewed and minor typographical amendments	Town Clerk
V0.3	12 th November 2025	Typographical amendments following consideration at Review Committee	Town Clerk

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The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) have both issued guidance on Operation London Bridge for local councils, directing local Councils to Local Government Act 1972, s.111 (the general power to make arrangements for ceremonial occasions).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This protocol applies in full or part, upon the death of the following persons:

- H.M. The King
- H.M. The Queen
- H.R.H. The Prince of Wales
- H.R.H. The Princess of Wales
- H.R.H. Prince George of Wales
- H.R.H Princess Charlotte of Wales
- H.R.H Prince Louis of Wales
- H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh
- H.R.H. The Duchess of Edinburgh
- H.R.H. The Duke of Sussex
- H.R.H The Duchess of Sussex
- H.R.H. The Princess Royal

Also:

- The Prime Minister
- The Member of Parliament for the Torridge and West Devon constituency
- The serving Mayor of the Town Council

1.2 This protocol is primarily designed to respond to the death of a national figure. To a lesser extent it also applies to the death of a local figure. It will be implemented once formal announcement has been made of the death of a senior member of the Royal Family or other national figure. Any reports that are not official should be verified before action is taken.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL

2.1 Upon the FORMAL announcement of the death of one of the persons listed above, the Town Council's protocol will be implemented with authorisation from the Mayor.

2.2 In the Mayor's absence, the authorisation may be given from (in order) the Deputy Mayor, the Town Clerk and the Chair of the Finance and Human Resources Committee.

3. FLYING THE FLAG

3.1 **Immediately** the union flag¹ must be flown at half-mast.¹ If the death falls on St Georges Day or the period of mourning includes St Georges Day, the flag of the patron saint should be replaced by the Union Flag at half-mast.

¹ Never fly the Royal Standard flag as this represents the Monarchy and it would therefore be inappropriate for it to fly at half-mast.

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3.2 Proclamation Day is the day following the death of the King, on this day the new Monarch will be proclaimed. At 1100hrs the flag will be raised to full mast, on the next day at 1300hrs the flag will be returned to half-mast.

3.3 The flags will continue to be flown at half-mast until 0800hrs on the day following the funeral. The flag can then be either flown at full mast or if not usually flown, taken down.

3.4 Other than the King on the list on page 1, the flag will only be flown at half-mast on the day of the death and on the day of the funeral.

4. BOOK OF CONDOLENCE

4.1 On the day following the announcement of the death of:

- H.M. The King
- H.M. The Queen
- H.R.H. The Prince of Wales
- H.R.H. The Princess of Wales
- H.R.H. Prince George of Wales
- H.R.H Princess Charlotte of Wales
- H.R.H Prince Louis of Wales
- H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh
- H.R.H. The Duchess of Edinburgh
- H.R.H. The Duke of Sussex
- H.R.H The Duchess of Sussex
- H.R.H. The Princess Royal

a physical book will be opened in the Town Hall with the person to be commemorated named on page 1 this will be available Monday-Friday until the funeral.

4.2 On the day following the announcement of the death of the one of the above-mentioned persons, the Community Engagement Officer will arrange for an online book of condolence to be opened, linked to on the Council's website and social media pages with the person to be commemorated named on page 1. This will be available 24-hours a day until the funeral.

4.3 A table covered with a white table cloth and a chair will be positioned in the Town Hall along with a suitable floral display and the book of Condolence which will be a black loose leaf folder supplied with black edged paper supplied by the Civic Officers as will a framed photo draped with a black ribbon with the member of the relevant person will be held in the Town Hall which will be available to download from www.royal.gov.uk.

4.4 The Book of Condolence will be open from 09:00 hrs till 13:00 hrs, Monday-Friday, and will remain open until the day following the funeral.

4.5 Council staff must ensure there is adequate paper available in the book and that pages have not been defaced or include offensive or other questionable comments, any such comments should be quietly removed until such time as a decision can be taken at senior level on whether or not they should be permanently excluded.

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5. STATEMENT OF CONDOLENCE

5.1 The Mayor (if not available, the Deputy Mayor) will issue a statement expressing the sadness of the whole community and the Town Council. The Mayor will confirm that flags should be flown at half-mast and will give locations of the books of condolence. The Mayor should also mention the location of the national book of condolence (e.g. Royal website). The statement will also be placed on the council website and social media sites.

6. EVENTS PLANNED DURING THE PERIOD OF MOURNING

6.1 From the day of the death until the day after the funeral, careful thought will be given to the types of events and activities which the Town Council hosts and Councillors attend.

6.2 It is not appropriate to attend lunches, dinners or receptions and, as a mark of respect, such events may need to be cancelled or postponed. However it is deemed appropriate for any full council or committee meetings to continue to be held then a minute silence will take place at the start of the meeting.

6.3 Where school or community visits are planned it might be helpful for the Mayor to spend time with parishioners to talk about the unfolding events. This must be done with great sensitivity and the Mayor should not be pressed into attending such events where they do not feel comfortable taking on such role. It is impossible to create hard and fast rules around cancelling long-planned events which fall in the period between a death and the funeral.

6.4 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 risk of public criticism if the decision to go ahead is seen to go against the grain’.

6.5 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 are in mourning. When the time comes, the question to ask is not “do we cancel?” but “is it necessary and appropriate for this event to go ahead?”

7. PROCLAMATION DAY

7.1 The Proclamation will be read at 1400hrs by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Town Clerk. The announcement of the time and place the proclamation will be read will be placed on the Town Council website and social media sites. There will need to be seats provided in case anyone needs one. There will not be sufficient time for an official road closure to be granted.

Detail

7.2 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’s Palace at 11.00 hrs (or 14.00 hrs on a Sunday).

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7.3 The Proclamation is then “cascaded”. On day 2, following the County-level Proclamation, the Town Council will make the Proclamation across the parish. The Mayor (or Deputy/representative) will make the Readings at some point after 13.30hrs (flags having been lowered to half-mast at 13.00hrs).

7.4 Upon official notification of the passing of the Sovereign, the Town Clerk/will collate the necessary documentation and circulate to individuals and the Proclamation will be read.

7.5 No official invites will be issued, and all Proclamation events will be open to all residents, and elected Members are encouraged to attend the Proclamation reading nearest to their respective Ward.

7.6 The wording of the Proclamation to be read out will be easily available; the Town Clerk will gain access via the Buckingham Palace website (www.royal.gov.uk) or the Privy Council website (www.privy-council.org.uk). The Devon Association of Local Councils, the Lord-Lieutenant’s office and the High Sheriff’s office may also make copies of the Proclamation available.

8. DRESS CODE

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

8.2 Should a Full Council meeting fall 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 either wear a small black rosette, a black arm band or a black tie issued by the Town clerk and to be returned.

8.3 On the day of the death until and including the day of the funeral and on days between when public mourning is observed thought should be given to the way which the Chain of Office is worn, best practise advises that the jewel should be fully or partially covered in a black bag.

9. MARKING A SILENCE

9.1 Following the death of a Sovereign there will be a Two Minute Silence at 11.00 hrs on the day of the funeral.

10. LETTER OF CONDOLENCE

10.1 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).

10.2 In each case one ‘official’ letter of condolence will be sent on behalf of the Town Council by the Town Clerk and dispatched the day after the funeral. Once adopted, this protocol will be shared with organisations, businesses and individuals within the community and the wider population at the time of necessity.

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11. PROTOCOL REVIEW

11. This protocol shall be reviewed every three years or following its enactment.

ⁱ Half-mast: the flag is to be 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 degrees from the vertical or have fixed point fixings.

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.