



GRAVENHURST

Parish Council

PROTOCOL FOR MARKING THE DEATH OF A SENIOR NATIONAL FIGURE OR LOCAL HOLDER OF HIGH OFFICE

As adopted at a meeting of Gravenhurst Parish Council on 23rd July 2026

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

Organisation	Gravenhurst Parish Council
Title	GPC Protocol for Marking the Death of a Senior National Figure or Local Holder of High Office
Creator	Alessandra Marabese - Clerk
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DOCUMENT AMENDMENT HISTORY

Revision No.	Originator of change	Date of change	Change Description
V1.0	Clerk	21/02/21	Creation
V1.1	Clerk	30/03/23	Minor changes pending update in Autumn 23
V2.0	Clerk	23/07/26	Update to lists and information

INTRODUCTION

1.1. **Gravenhurst Parish Council** ('the Council') has adopted this Protocol ('the Protocol')

1.2. This protocol sets out the action to be taken in the event of the death of:

- HM The King
- HM The Queen
- The Prince of Wales
- The Princess of Wales
- Prince George of Wales
- Princess Charlotte of Wales
- Prince Louis of Wales
- The Duke of Sussex
- The Duchess of Sussex
- The Duke of Edinburgh
- The Duchess of Edinburgh
- The Princess Royal

- The Prime Minister
- The Member of Parliament for the Parish area
- A serving Member of Gravenhurst Parish Council

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROTOCOL ON HEARING OF THE DEATH (D DAY)

- 2.1. GPC's mourning Protocol will be implemented on the formal announcement, by Buckingham Palace or Downing Street, of the death of any one of those persons named under point 1.2 of this Protocol, or upon confirmation from a relative of the death of a serving member of the Council (D Day).
- 2.2. Implementation will be authorised by the Parish Council Chair or Parish Clerk (or in their absence, by their relevant substitute).
- 2.3. The normal business of the Council will be suspended for the day.
- 2.4. There is no reference to the flying of flags in this protocol as no flag poles exist in the village.

3. DATE REFERENCES

- 3.1. D Day – Day of the death.
- 3.2. Proclamation Day (D+1) = the day following the death of the Sovereign, when the new Sovereign is proclaimed
- 3.3. The funeral of the Sovereign will take place 10 days after the day of death. For other senior members of the Royal Family the number of days will be fewer.

4. BOOK OF CONDOLENCE

- 4.1. On the first working day following the announcement of the death of the Sovereign, The Queen Consort, The Prince of Wales or The Princess of Wales, a Book of Condolence will be opened at the Gravenhurst Village Hall, the Methodist Chapel or other suitable location within the village. The Book of Condolence will be open from 09.00hrs to 16.30hrs Monday to Friday or as agreed by Council. Subject to public demand, and the availability of supervision, the Book of Condolence may also be available outside of these hours by arrangement with the Parish Council Chair, Parish Clerk, Village Hall Trustees or Methodist Chapel wardens.
- 4.2. The location of the book will be displayed on the Parish Council's website and social media pages.
- 4.3. The Book of Condolence will be placed in a quiet place to afford those signing privacy and quiet reflection.
- 4.4. The table to be covered with a suitable black cloth. A photograph, copy of the printed announcement and small floral arrangement to be placed on the table with the Book of Condolence and pen.
- 4.5. Parish Clerk to ensure there is adequate paper available in the book. Pages that have been defaced or include offensive or other questionable comments should be quietly removed until such time as a decision can be taken on whether or not they should be permanently excluded.
- 4.6. Consideration will be given, by the Parish Council, at the time of each death on whether a Book of Condolence should be opened for other members of the Royal Family.
- 4.7. Books of Condolence will be closed at the end of the day following the day of the funeral. After which the book will be bound and kept in the Parish Council's archives.
- 4.8. The Parish Clerk will ensure that a stock of items including loose-leaf black folders, black table cloths and framed photographs of members of the Royal Family are held at the Council Offices.
- 4.9. The Parish Council Chair will issue a statement via the Council Offices, expressing the sadness of the Council and people of Gravenhurst at the news of the death of
 - 4.9.1. The statement will also appear on the home page of Gravenhurst Parish Council's website and the Social Media pages operated by the Council.
 - 4.9.2. The statement will give details of the Book of Condolence. In the case of the death of the Sovereign or a member of the Royal Family it will also mention any arrangements for an e-Book of Condolence on the Royal website.
- 4.10. On the death of any another significant person, the Clerk will discuss with the Chair whether a Book of Condolence should be opened on the Council's own website.
- 4.11. Guidance on the content of the statement is set out in Appendix 1.

5. EVENTS DURING THE PERIOD OF MOURNING

- 5.1. Review the programme of Civic engagements to be undertaken by the Parish Council's Chair and Vice-Chair to ensure it is appropriate in a time of national mourning and that it sits comfortably with the national mood.
- 5.2. Review the schedule of Council meetings to ensure it is appropriate to proceed in a time of national mourning

6. PROCLAMATION DAY

- 6.1. The Proclamation will be read as follows:
 - 6.1.1. By the Parish Council Chairman at 16.00hrs on the day following Proclamation Day in the Village Hall in Gravenhurst.
 - 6.1.2. All those listed in Appendix 2 to be invited to be present. Parish Council Chair to be dressed in dark lounge suit / jacket and trousers / Black tie or dark suit.
 - 6.1.3. Reading of the Proclamation to be publicised on the Council website and media pages operated by the Council.
 - 6.1.4. Notification of the reading of the Proclamation to be given by the Parish Clerk and to those identified in Appendix 2.
 - 6.1.5. Parish Clerk to ensure that the public are informed by way of a press release and item on the Council's website and Social Media pages.
 - 6.1.6. The wording of the Proclamation to be read out will be available from the Buckingham Palace website www.royal.gov.uk or the Privy Council website www.priv-council.org.uk

7. DRESS CODE

- 7.1. Black ties or mourning rosettes and dark clothing to be worn by Councillors, and Officers attending following the death of a senior figure.
- 7.2. A stock to be maintained in good order by the Parish Clerk ready for issue to Councillors.
- 7.3. At the time of the annual review of this protocol consideration will be given to the number of items in stock, their condition and the need for cleaning, repair or replacement. A list of suppliers for these items is set out in Appendix 3.

8. MARKING A SILENCE

- 8.1. 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.
- 8.2. Consideration will be given at the time of each death on whether a Silence will be kept for other members of the Royal Family.
- 8.3. In Gravenhurst, when Silence is to be kept, the Parish Council Chair will lead a Public Silence in the Village Hall Car Park or the Recreation Ground.

- 8.4. All those listed in Appendix 2 to be invited to be present. All to wear the Chain of Office dark lounge suit / jacket and trousers / black tie or dark suit.
- 8.5. The Public Observing of the Silence to be publicised.
- 8.6. Notification of the Silence to be given by the Parish Clerk and to those identified in Appendix 2.
- 8.7. Parish Clerk to ensure that the public are informed by way of a press release and item on the Council's website, social media and notice board.

9. LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE

- 9.1. The day after the State Funeral, a letter of condolence will be sent from the Parish Council to the new Sovereign's Private Secretary (in the case of the death of the Sovereign) or the Private Secretary of the deceased (for other senior members of the Royal Family).
- 9.2. Parish Clerk to prepare letter to be signed by the Parish Council Chair.
- 9.3. Reference to the existence and location of the Book of Condolence should be made in the Letter of Condolence

APPENDIX 1 – PARISH COUNCIL STATEMENT

Statement to be issued by the Parish Council Chair on the announcement of the death of a senior national figure or other prominent figure.

The statement should begin with a suitable expression of the sadness of the Authority on hearing the announcement. It might go on to state that flags will be flown at half-mast. If it is an occasion when Books of Condolence will be opened, then reference could be made to that.

When a decision has been taken on the Parish Council Chair's programme of events and engagements, and the Council's schedule of meetings, it might be stated that events are being cancelled as a mark of respect or that they will begin with a period of silence.

If in doubt, do not rush out a statement which commits the Parish Council to action before that action has been discussed and has the necessary agreement.

DRAFT statement:

It is with great sadness that I write on behalf of Gravenhurst Parish Council and the residents of Gravenhurst to offer our deepest sympathy and condolences to XX and the Royal Family, on the loss of XX. The entire nation, Commonwealth and world have already come together in sharing grief and sadness at this great loss, but I am certain that XX loss will be felt most by XX Majesty, XX children, XX grandchildren, and CC great grandchildren.

XX has personified and represented the finest qualities of our country. Brought up in the tradition of humility and service, XX strode upon the world stage, bringing joy, comfort and inspiration to millions of people and lead with empathy, grace, devoted service and steadfast duty. XX influence extended across the globe and XX was known, loved, respected and admired everywhere. This loss will be felt not only here but throughout the Commonwealth and the World. XX embodied the spirit of these nations and together with our Commonwealth family we mourn.

Our nation will cherish the wonderful memories we have shared with and of XX and as we enter a new XX Era, our country will remain united and in support of XX during this extremely difficult time.

As our new Sovereign steps forward to accept the heavy burden borne by XX, please assure XX of the continuing loyalty, affection and best wishes of XX people here in Gravenhurst, Bedfordshire.

Or

As we learn of the sad news XX has passed away the thoughts of the parishioners of Gravenhurst, Bedfordshire are with XX as XX grieves for XX, and the Royal Family as they grieve for their XX.

XX has given the most remarkable, devoted service to XX, to his family and to the country and to the whole of the Commonwealth. He demonstrated an extraordinary dedication and commitment to duty throughout his life as both XX and XX and XX for XX years and did so with an unwavering strength and admirable determination.

This is a period of public grief when people who do not know each other come together to mourn a national figure who has been consistent throughout our lives and for whom we have collective affection despite not knowing him personally.

Please pass the condolences of the Parish Council and the parishioners of Gravenhurst, Bedfordshire, to XX and the Royal Family.

APPENDIX 2 – PARISH COUNCIL STATEMENT - INVITEES

Those who might be invited to be present at the Reading of the Proclamation on the accession of a new Sovereign and at the Public Observance of a Two Minute Silence:

- The Parish Council Chair / Vice-Chair
- Members of the Parish Council
- Council Officers
- Past Parish Council Chairs.
- CBC Ward Councillors
- Bedfordshire Police
- Local Schools
- Local Churches
- Leaders of Community Groups
- Youth Activity Groups

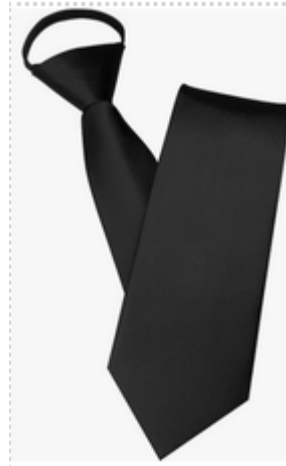
APPENDIX 3 – NOT PART OF PROTOCOL – FOR INFORMATION ONLY

List of possible supplies required

Black mourning rosettes:



Black ties:



Black tablecloth:



Framed photographs can be purchased from:

Mike O'Keefe (mike@royalimages.co.uk) Custodian of the Official Royal Image Library of H.M. The King and H.M The Queen.