

Expressions of Sympathy Protocol	20 September 2016
Corporate Policy and Resources Committee	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Leader and Champion
Outcome	Provide civic leadership to our citizens
Lead Officer	Head of Democratic & Customer Services
Cost: (If applicable)	n/a

The purpose of this report is to put forward for consideration a draft protocol for expressions of sympathy to facilitate the running of the Council business in as an efficient and responsive manner as possible.

1 Background

Legacy Councils had in place protocols in relation to recognising bereavement of Elected Members and staff, existing and former. Councils also on various occasions have decided to open books of condolence following a tragedy/atrocity.

2. Key Issues

Every bereavement is a tragedy for the immediate family and friends who suffer the loss of a loved one and expressions of sympathy are always appreciated by the families. However it is not possible for Council to formally recognise all bereavements which occur within its district.

To facilitate the efficient operation of Council business at meetings and to meet the need for it to be supportive of the community, the attached draft protocol, setting out an approach to deal with expressions of sympathy in an appropriate manner and ensuring consistent approach, has been developed.

3 Recommendation:

That the Committee approve the attached Expressions of Sympathy Protocol.

Expressions of Sympathy Protocol

Introduction

The Council recognises that every bereavement is a tragedy for the family and friends who suffer the loss of a loved one and expressions of sympathy are always appreciated by families. However it is not possible, or appropriate, for the Council to formally recognise all the bereavements which occur within its district. It is therefore important that the Council as a corporate body is able to express its sympathy in an appropriate manner. This Protocol outlines the criteria to be applied to ensure consistency of approach.

1.0 Elected Members – Existing and Former

- 1.1 Upon notification of the death of an existing member, the Council, at the first available meeting, will propose that as a mark of respect a minute's silence is observed at the start of the meeting. A letter of condolence will be sent from The Mayor to the next of kin.

Expressions of condolences should be conveyed by the various group leaders on behalf of their parties to negate the requirement for every Councillor to speak.

- 1.2 Upon notification of the death of a member of the immediate family of an existing elected member (ie, spouse, partner, son, daughter, parent or sibling), the Council, at the first available meeting, will convey its condolences to the bereaved member and family circle and a letter of condolence is sent from The Mayor to the elected member.
- 1.3 Upon notification of the death of an existing or former non-elected member of a Council Committee, the Council, at the first available meeting of that committee (or most appropriate committee), will recommend that a letter of condolence is sent from the Committee Chairperson to the next of kin.

2.0 Honorary Freeman

- 2.1 Upon notification of the death of an existing member, the Council, at the first available meeting, will propose that as a mark of respect a minute's silence is observed at the start of the meeting. A letter of condolence will be sent from The Mayor to the next of kin.

Expressions of condolences should be conveyed by the various group leaders on behalf of their parties to negate the requirement for every Councillor to speak.

3.0 Members of Staff – Existing and Former

- 3.1 Upon notification of the death of an existing employee, the Council's Human Resources Department will send a letter of condolence to the next of kin on behalf of the Council, signed by the Chief Executive.
- 3.2 Upon notification of the death of a member of an existing employee's immediate family (ie, spouse, partner, son, daughter, parent or sibling), the Council's Human Resources Department will send a letter of condolence to the employee on behalf of the Council, signed by the Chief Executive.
- 3.3 Upon notification of the death of a former employee, the Council's Human Resources Department will send a letter of condolence to the next of kin on behalf of the Council, signed by the Chief Executive.

4.0 Books of Condolence

Books of Condolence have in recent years proved to have been quite often a rather ineffective way of conveying condolences to bereaved families or in the event of tragedies of an international nature.

The first citizen speaks on behalf of all the citizens of the borough in civic matters. As such a letter of condolence on behalf of the people of the borough sent from the Mayor should cover the vast majority of occasions, where previously a book of condolence would have been opened.

There will, of course, be exceptional circumstances which, it is recommended, should be dealt with as follows:-

1. At the next available meeting of Council following a tragedy/atrocity, the Council agree to open a book of Condolence to allow the people of the district to express their sympathy. Council should identify one or two venues only where Books of Condolence can be signed.
2. In the event that no meetings are scheduled, or the next meeting is too far in the future for the opening of a book of condolence to have any impact, the Mayor with the unanimous agreement of group leaders, be authorised to open a Book of Condolence.