

Protocol for opening of Books of Condolence

October 2022

VERSION	AUTHOR	STATUS
Version 1.0	Corporate Services	Approved at CSC December 2016
Version 2.0	Corporate Comms & Admin	Approved at CSC October 2022

1. Protocol for Opening Books of Condolence

Books of Condolence are recognised as a way for people to express their sympathies and to show their awareness of an incident or disaster and consolation for its victims.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the protocol is to provide clarity and guidance on the process to be followed in relation to considering and implementing a request to open Books of Condolence.

3. Scope

The protocol is to assist the Mayor of the day in making a request and members of staff involved in the authorisation and implementation of the process.

4. Criteria for considering opening Books of Condolence

The Mayor of the day will consider opening a book of condolence under the following circumstances:

- In the event of the death of a Member of the Royal Family
- A tragedy occurs which has a significant impact in Lisburn & Castlereagh
- A national/international tragedy occurs which impacts locally in Lisburn & Castlereagh and/or across Northern Ireland
- In the event of the death of a national/international public figure which impacts locally in Lisburn & Castlereagh and/or across Northern Ireland
- In the event of the death of a prominent Northern Ireland public figure who was born in, lived in or had significant impact on the Lisburn & Castlereagh area
- Other tragic circumstances at the discretion of the Mayor of the day

5. Protocol

5.1 Request to Open a Book of Condolence

In accordance with the criteria above, the Mayor of the day can request the opening of Books of Condolence. This should be discussed with the Head of Corporate Communications and Administration in the first instance with the matter being referred to the Director and / or Chief Executive if appropriate for further advice.

In the case of an individual, the Mayor's Office may wish to make contact with the bereaved family to gain their consent for opening a book of condolence and discuss arrangements for receipt of same.

Once agreed, the Head of Corporate Communications and Administration will ensure that appropriate wording is printed on the book and agree the appropriate communications. The Mayor will be the first signatory in any book of condolence opened and the book should not be made available to the public until the Mayor has signed.

5.2 Access to Books of Condolence

All Books of Condolence will be virtual and will be accessed via the Council's corporate website. Corporate Communications will make arrangements for anyone who requires support in adding their comments.

In exceptional circumstances, the Mayor may open a physical book/s of condolence in Lagan Valley Island and/or another appropriate location.

In such cases, a small table, with a tablecloth and chair will be required. A small posy of flowers should be ordered and placed on the table.

A 'responsible person' will be assigned to review virtual and physical books on a daily basis to ensure appropriate content. Any comments considered to be inappropriate or offensive will be removed/will not be published as they are not in keeping with the objective of the book, i.e. to express sympathy and support.

5.3 Closure of Books

Books of Condolence will normally be held open for a period of 4-6 weeks and a final review of comments will be undertaken prior to delivery of books to appropriate recipients.

5.4 Arrangements for delivery of books to appropriate recipients

Appropriately branded copies of Books of Condolence will be forwarded to the bereaved family or affected community as appropriate in a format that they request (electronic or printed).

The Head of Corporate Communications and Administration will make enquiries to ascertain the address for sending books of condolence in respect of incidents/disasters affecting a large group of people. In instances where this cannot be provided, they will be held in council archives in accordance with retention and disposal arrangements.

In some instances, and where it is feasible to do so, the Mayor may wish to meet to deliver the books in person.

Note: With the introduction of this policy from November 2022, a physical book of condolence will be opened at LVI alongside the virtual book for a period of 12 months to allow for ongoing evaluation.