



The Provincial Grand Lodge of Hampshire and Isle of Wight

R.W.Bro. Michael J. Wilks
Provincial Grand Master

19th March 2020

Brethren,

The Provincial Cabinet met yesterday to consider the implications of the Coronavirus pandemic and the decision by the Grand Master to suspend Masonic activity for 4 months. The Cabinet's prime focus is to introduce measures across the Province to care for all our brethren and those on whom we rely for the good order of Freemasonry.

The Cabinet have enlisted the assistance of senior Provincial Officers with appropriate expertise – the ProvGAlmoner, ProvGMentor, ProvGSuptWks, ProvGReg, and will work with these brethren to produce detailed guidance for all Lodges. This guidance will be finalised and rolled out to all Lodges, through the Area structure. Area Chairmen, Area Vice Chairmen, and Visiting Officers will have an important role to play.

Some Lodges have embarked on the process by establishing WhatsApp Groups, and arranging for specific brethren to keep in touch with others within the Lodge. The Cabinet applaud these actions and will take them into account in finalising the Guidance which will cover all - the vulnerable, the longstanding members, new members, those awaiting initiation or having shown an interest in Freemasonry. The Guidance will be finalised and introduced shortly. The ProvGSec will also issue a regular Newsletter to keep all up to speed.

As to those involved in and working in our Masonic Centres, the ProvGSuptWks and his team will provide guidance and support which may be available from Government initiatives to assist with the impact of coronavirus on businesses and which should be first port of call in the event of problems.

Brethren will have many questions arising out of what is an unprecedented situation, and answers will be provided in due course. The Province will introduce a Q&A page on the Provincial website and ensure that this is available to all across the Province. Any Questions should be submitted to the ProvGSec by email and he will collate them and provide Answers at the appropriate time. Many of these questions do not require urgent attention - it is far more important that our focus at this stage is caring for our Brethren and Guidance for our Lodges. That said, brethren will require some clarification about Grand Ranks and Provincial Ranks.

Those brethren who were due to be invested at the Grand Investiture in April will assume their Grand Rank from 29th April. Grand Lodge will decide in due course whether a formal Investiture Ceremony will take place at some stage, but that will not impact on the appointments, which take effect from 29th April. The same applies to those brethren who were due to be honoured at our AGM on the 1st July. The appointments will take effect from that date. A decision will be made in due course as to whether a formal ceremony should be arranged.

I will retire on the 21st May as previously notified. The Deputy Provincial Grand Master will then become Deputy in Charge of the Province pending his formal Installation by Grand Lodge which will be arranged as early as possible after the end of the suspension.

In accordance with Government guidelines, the ProvGSec and office staff will be working from home and the Office will be closed from Monday 23rd March until further notice. All telephone calls and emails will be dealt with in the normal way – the ProvGSec assures me you will notice no difference!

I expect the Guidance, first Newsletter and Q & As to be issued next week.

Brethren, let us all remember that our primary focus should be the health, well-being and safety of all our members and our families.

My very best wishes

Yours sincerely and fraternally,