



STANDARDS AND CONSTITUTIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

4 OCTOBER 2016

REPORT TITLE **Protocol for Flag Flying at Wirral Town Halls**

REPORT OF **Committee and Civic Services Manager**

REPORT SUMMARY

Purpose of the Protocol

Consideration has been given to the protocol that could be adopted in relation to the flying of flags at Wallasey and Birkenhead Town Halls. The aim is to standardise procedures and to consult Members on the content of the flag flying protocol.

The alternative is not to have a protocol in respect of flying flags. This would continue the uncertainty in respect of which flags can be flown and when. The adoption of the protocol will make it clear which alternative flags can be flown additional to the Union flag, and on which buildings.

Once adopted, the day to day management of the flying of flags at Wallasey and Birkenhead Town Halls will be exclusively overseen by Committee and Civic Services in accordance with the content of the protocol policy as appended.

The Mayor and Leader will jointly consider and determine any request to fly a flag on the Town Halls where it is not set out in the Policy.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Protocol for Flag Flying at Wirral Town Halls be endorsed.

Protocol for Flag Flying

Once adopted, the day to day management of the flying of flags at Wallasey and Birkenhead Town Halls will be exclusively overseen by Committee and Civic Services in accordance with the content of this protocol.

The Union Flag is to be flown at full mast at both Town Halls all year (together with other flags in accordance with the protocol, for example the Royal British Legion flag for Remembrance in November). At sites where 1 flag pole exists, the Union flag will be flown; 2 poles - the Union flag and Wirral flag; and 3 poles - the Union flag, Wirral flag and St George's flag shall be flown.

The Union Flag will be flown at full mast at both Town Halls on the following occasions (flag flying days):

February 6	Her Majesty's Accession
March *	Commonwealth Day (second Monday in March)
April 21	Queen's Birthday
April 23	St George's Day (together with the Cross of St George)
May *	Election of Mayor
June *	Queen's Official Birthday (Saturday in June)
June 2	Coronation Day
June 10	Duke of Edinburgh's Birthday
October 21	Trafalgar Day
October 24	United Nations Day (part of U.N. week)
November *	Remembrance Day (second Sunday in November)
November 11	Armistice Day
November 14	Prince of Wales's Birthday
November 20	Her Majesty's Wedding Day

Note:

* = date fixed annually

Flags should be flown at half-mast [i.e. 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] at the Town Halls on the following occasions:

- From the announcement of the death until the funeral of the Sovereign, except on Proclamation Day, when they are fully hoisted from 11am to sunset.
- The funerals of members of the Royal Family, subject to special commands from Her Majesty in each case.
- The funerals of foreign Rulers, subject to special commands from Her Majesty in each case.
- The funerals of Prime Ministers and former Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, subject to special commands from Her Majesty in each case.
- Any other occasion where Her Majesty has given special command.

If a flag flying day coincides with days for flying flags at half-mast, flags should be flown right up:

- although a member of the Royal Family, or a near relative of the Royal Family, may be lying dead, unless special commands are received from Her Majesty to the contrary, and
- although it may be the day of the funeral of a Foreign Ruler.

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.

On days that are not subject to the existing flag regulations, the local authority flag, together with the Union Flag may be flown.

Where a building has two or more flag poles and both flags (Union and Wirral) are to be flown, the Union Flag will take precedence i.e. the most superior position.

The Local Authority (Wirral) Flag should be flown:

- On the day of a meeting of the Council.
- Civic Sunday.
- Whenever the Mayor holds an official reception and on other occasions according to local custom.

The Local Authority flag should be flown at half-mast at the two main town halls from the day of death until after the funeral of:

- A Member of the Council.
- A Mayor of the Borough.
- An Honorary Freeman of the Borough.

The Local Authority flag should be flown at half-mast on the day of death and on the day of the funeral of:

- A Member of Parliament for the Borough.
- A Chief Official.
- A former member of the Council.
- A former member of a constituent authority of the Council.
- A member of staff who died during the course of carrying out the duties of his/her employment.

If a Union Flag Day (see dates above) occurs on a day when the local authority's flag is flying at half-mast, the Union flag will be flown at half-mast in its place.

Other Flags

- Commonwealth Day, second Monday in March, the Commonwealth Flag can be flown
- Europe Day, 9 May, the European Union Flag can be flown.
- The Armed Forces Flag can be flown for one week every year in support of the nation's armed forces. The date each year to coincide with armed forces week 20 to 27 June.
- The Rainbow Flag can be flown every year in support of the Pride Movement and to demonstrate the Council's commitment to equality and the inclusion of all its citizens. The date is agreed each year to coincide with other national and/or local events.
- Remembrance in November; Royal British Legion Remembrance Flag should be flown from the Launch of the Poppy Appeal until after Armistice Day (Remembrance Day).
- Formal visits by other authorities or royal visitors – the Union and the local authority flag can be flown together with the flag of the visiting authority and/or the royal visitor (if appropriate).

The Mayor and Leader will jointly consider and determine any request to fly a flag on the Town Halls where it is not set out in the Policy (e.g. International sporting events).

Questions and Approval

No flag flying activity by, or on behalf of the Council, is to be undertaken without the approval of the Mayor. The Mayor and Leader will be consulted on all matters relating to the Flag Protocol and any questions should be submitted in writing to the Mayor's office.

Review

This Protocol will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

Note: The Lord Chamberlain's Department issues a list of Flag Days on which UK Government buildings should fly the national flag. Whilst Council buildings are not "Government buildings" in the strict sense, it is sensible for local authorities to follow the guidance from the Lord Chamberlain's Department. The guidance does not prevent the Union flag (or national flag) being flown on any other day that the Council feels appropriate or desirable.

British Flag Protocol Website:

<http://www.flaginstitute.org/wp/british-flags/flying-flags-in-the-united-kingdom/british-flag-protocol/#index21>