

Cabinet

21 October 2025

Flag Flying Protocol – Council Buildings

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Vince Maple, Leader of the Council

Report from: Bhupinder Gill, Assistant Director, Legal and Governance

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Summary

This report sets out the Flag Flying Protocol for consideration and approval.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Cabinet is asked to approve the Flag Flying Protocol, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- 1.2. The Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council:
 - 1.2.1. To determine which flags shall be flown on Council buildings.
 - 1.2.2. To fly the Union Flag at half-mast to mark local commemorations or losses.
 - 1.2.3. To remove flags in the event of poor weather and/or forecast poor weather.
- 1.3. The Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to amend the Flag Flying Protocol in the event that the Council hands back Upnor Castle to English Heritage, as referenced in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

2. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 2.1. Approval of the Policy will formalise the established practices relating to flag flying on Council buildings.

3. Budget and policy framework

- 3.1. Approval of the Flag Flying Protocol is a matter for the Cabinet, given it is an executive function. The Protocol is consistent with the provisions of the One Medway Council Plan, in particular, the following value: “Respectful: Valuing Medway's diversity, heritage and each other.”

4. Background

- 4.1. Medway Council currently flies flags from the following buildings it owns or manages: Gun Wharf, Rochester Castle and Upnor Castle. The management of Upnor Castle is currently under review as part of the Council's property review of operational properties, which was reported to Cabinet in March 2025.
- 4.2. Medway Council's established practice has been for officers to liaise informally with the Leader of the Council regarding the flying of flags, other than the Union Flag. The Council always has regard for guidance and advice from the relevant government department, currently the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), as well as advice from the College of Arms.
- 4.3. In summary, the Union Flag is flown at Gun Wharf, Rochester Castle and Upnor Castle. At Gun Wharf, there is a second flagpole which will ordinarily fly the Medway Council flag but on a number of occasions throughout the year other flags including celebratory or commemorative flags will be flown, some of which will involve a small ceremony, led by the Mayor of Medway. Where such a ceremony is held, Councillors and guests will be invited to attend. Further details are set out in the Protocol (Appendix 1).
- 4.4. The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) set out the planning requirements/consents required for flag flying. In general, planning (advertisement) consent is not required for flying the Union Flag and a number of other flags. However, there are some occasions where planning consent is required, for example, where a particular flag is not covered by the regulations. Advertisement consent (with conditions) was obtained in June 2025 for a period of 5 years to display celebratory or commemorative flags flown at Gun Wharf by Medway Council for periods of between 1 day to 1 calendar year (MC/25/1108).

5. Options

- 5.1. Option 1 – continue with the current informal processes relating to flag flying.
- 5.2. Option 2 – approve a Flag Flying Protocol which will codify and formalise the processes relating to flag flying. This is the recommended option.

6. Advice and analysis

- 6.1. As set out in Option 2, it is recommended that the Flag Flying Protocol is approved. This will formalise the established practice around flag flying,

provide clarity around responsibility for determining which flags shall be flown, in accordance with the following principles:

6.1.1. To mark key awareness days, months and cultural celebrations.

6.1.2. To foster civic pride.

6.1.3. To respond to national and global events.

6.1.4. To promote inclusion, visibility, and belonging for all communities.

6.1.5. To demonstrate organisational commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

6.1.6. To foster a culture of respect and understanding.

6.2. A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been produced, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report. In summary, the DIA has indicated the benefits for the community of flying flags and reflects the importance that the Council places on this matter.

7. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Reputational	Lack of clarity around responsibility for flag flying owing to the lack of a formal Protocol	Produce and seek Cabinet approval for a Flag Flying Protocol	CIV

For risk rating, please refer to the following table :

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

8. Consultation

8.1. Informal consultation has been undertaken with the Chairperson of the Council's Equalities Board, where it has been recognised that the Council flies a number of flags throughout the year, which supports the fostering of good relationships within the community.

9. Climate change implications

9.1. [The Council declared a climate change emergency in April 2019](#) - item 1038D refers, and has set a target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050.

9.2. There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report.

10. Financial implications

10.1. Maintenance of flagpoles at Gun Wharf is a matter for which Medway Norse has operational responsibility for and this is undertaken within existing revenue budgets. The Council has sourced a number of flags over the years and the cost of any replacement flags or new flags will be met from within existing revenue budgets. In particular, it is essential that the Union Flag is replaced as soon as it is in anything other than good condition. There may be occasions where the celebratory or commemorative flags can be borrowed at no cost to the Council. For Rochester and Upnor Castles, maintenance and replacement of the Union Flags is managed within existing revenue budgets in the Regeneration, Culture and Environment directorate.

11. Legal implications

11.1 These are set out in the report.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Flag Flying Protocol

Appendix 2 – Diversity Impact Assessment

Background papers

[The Town and Country Planning \(Control of Advertisements\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)

[Flying Flags: A Plain English Guide](#)

[Union Flag flying guidance for UK government buildings](#)

[College of Arms Union Flag Guidance](#)