

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 5th November 2007

Subject: Flag Flying Protocol

Report of: Assistant Chief Executive

Contact officer: Adrian Hardy int 2130

Purpose / summary: To consult members on the content of the flag flying protocol, which has been circulated to all members for their views. Any views received will be reported at Committee.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: Not to bring this to committee; it has been brought so that members may make their views known.

Recommendation / decision: To receive the views of committee and make any appropriate changes to the protocol

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	None
Staffing:	None
Policy:	Equality and Diversity
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	No. The need for the protocol has emerged as a result of a request to fly an appropriate flag to promote Race Hate Week in 2008.
Wards affected:	Boroughwide

Property – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?

No

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

No

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

Yes

Has the Director of Legal and Property Services confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?

Yes / No *

Has the Director of Finance and IT confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?

Yes / No *

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?

Yes / No *

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	x
Discussion leading to a decision	
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

	x
Discussion	
Decision	
Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
	5 th November 2007		

Background:

As a result of the request by the Race Hate Co-ordinator, consideration has been given to the protocol that should be adopted in relation to the flying of flags from Council premises.

Proposals:

The proposals are set out in the attached document.

Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:

The alternative would be to have no protocol in respect of flying of flags. This would continue the uncertainty in respect of which flags could be flown and when. The adoption of the protocol will enable the Chief Executive to determine which are the appropriate occasions on which alternative flags to the Union Flag can be flown and on which flagpoles.

Conclusions:

All Members have an opportunity to comment on the content of this protocol prior to its adoption.

Diversity Impact Assessment form

Section: Chief Executives

Policy/Service Area: Democratic services

Person Completing Form: Adrian Hardy

Date: 25/10/2007

Do any of the below groups suffer specific disadvantage (please indicate)

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Race		X	Disability		X
Ethnicity		X	Gender		X
Age		X	Religion		X
Class		X	Sexual Orientation		X

Is there evidence of disadvantage or associated problems?

No evidence in relation to the flying of flags in general, but a need to consider on which occasions alternative flags might be flown in order to reinforce the council's commitment to a range of policy initiatives – many of which will relate around the equality and diversity agenda.

How was the information collected and/or who have you consulted with?

Consulted with Councillors, Democratic Services staff and consulted DCMS website in respect of government protocols

Action Plan – *What specific actions are planned to tackle any disadvantage identified?*

Creation of a policy that acknowledges that alternative flags might be flown and the process for getting this approved.

Is the policy in line with current equality legislation and relevant codes of practice?

Yes

Timescale	Immediate
Responsibility	Assistant Chief Executive
Comments	

Are the actions specified included in any other documents/plans?

Departmental Service Plan	No
Section/Team Plan	No
Other (Specify)	No

Date for further review	January 2009
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Wigan Council

Flag Flying Protocol

This protocol is set out to give clarity over the occasions on which the Union Flag is flown on public buildings in the borough.

For many years the flag was only flown on the official 16 days per year (as set out in government guidance) as well as on the occasion of the death of a local dignitary.

This position was altered in 2005 because of the costs involved in sending staff specifically to raise and lower flags. It is more cost-effective to leave the flag flying and replace it annually, than to send staff out on specific occasions. As a result the common practice across the borough is for the Union Flag to be flown at full-mast throughout the year, being lowered to half-mast when the occasion demands.

The government is seeking ways to increase the use of the Union Flag as a symbol of national identity and therefore the practice that we have adopted in Wigan in recent years fits in with this aspiration.

Which premises does this protocol apply to?

This protocol applies to all public buildings in Wigan on which there is at least one flagpole, (listed in Annex A). There are a number of other flagpoles across the borough associated with war memorials in towns and villages; those subject to council control and to which this protocol will apply are listed in Annex B.

What is the protocol?

The protocol is that the Union Flag will be flown continuously from the flagpoles listed in Annex A. The condition of the flag will be monitored to ensure that any which are subject to wind-damage are replaced. Once a year, prior to Remembrance Day, all the flags will be replaced. Annex B lists those flagpoles which are not under the control of the council and to which this protocol does not apply.

Can other national flags be flown?

Some days during the year may justify flying an additional national flag: -

- 23 April St George's Day – St George's Cross
- 9 May Europe Day – EU flag

This has not been the practice in the borough, but should it be desired to do so the second flag must be flown below the Union Flag on a single flagpole. Should it be so desired, the additional flag would only be flown at Wigan and Leigh Town Halls

Can other flags be flown?

There have also been requests to fly specific flags for events or festivals, e.g. Royal British Legion Flag, Race Hate Week. Once the protocol is adopted the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, would agree to such a request where:

- a) the event or festival is one which the council has endorsed by adoption of a supporting policy
- b) the organisers of the event/festival supply the flags concerned and pay the costs of raising and lowering the flags
- c) the flag will be in place of the Union Flag, since it would be inappropriate to fly such flags under the Union Flag
- d) In the case of the Royal British Legion the flag is flown in place of the Union Flag in the 2 weeks leading up to Remembrance Day
- e) Should an event requiring the flying of the Union Flag occur during this period, that event shall take precedence.

When should the flag be at half-mast?

- From the announcement of the death until after the funeral of the Sovereign, except on Proclamation Day when they are hoisted right up.
- The funerals of members of the Royal Family, subject to special commands from Her Majesty in each case.
- The funerals of Prime Ministers and Ex-Prime Ministers of Great Britain.
- Other occasions by special command of Her Majesty.
- On the death of the Mayor or Mayoress from the announcement of the death until after the funeral*.
- From the announcement of the death until after the funeral of *:-
 1. An Alderman
 2. A Councillor
 3. An Ex-Mayor
 4. A Freeman
 5. A Chief Official

* The council approved a motion on 7 September 2005 as follows: -

“Flying the Union flag on the Sovereign's birthday – that this council will on the Sovereign's birthday, adopt the precedent that the Union Flag will always be flown at full-mast on all public buildings in Wigan Metropolitan Borough.”

NB – the Union Flag should be flown at full-mast on Remembrance Sunday and Remembrance Day.

Annex A

Buildings on which there are usable flagpoles

- Ashton Town Hall,
- Atherton Town Hall,
- Hindley Town Hall,
- Ince Town Hall,
- Leigh Town Hall, (n.b. this protocol relates to the main flagpole on the roof, not the four flagpoles across the front of the building)
- Tyldesley Town Hall,
- Wigan Town Hall, (n.b. at Wigan only the one on the roof, not above the front door).

Other flagpoles – serviced by council

- Aspull cenotaph

Annex B

Other flagpoles – not serviced by the council

- Standish Cenotaph – maintained by Standish Community Forum. The contact person is Graham Wilcock Tel. 01257-402411.
- Atherton Cenotaph – maintained by the British Legion, Royal Navy Association and Scouts – four flags flying continuously