

Protocol for Flying the Borough Flag at Half Mast

Final Decision-Maker	Democracy and General Purposes Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ryan O'Connell, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

To bring forward the requested matter of whether to adopt a local protocol for flying the Borough flag at half mast.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Borough Council continue to use the existing protocol, as set out in 'Civic Ceremonial'

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	4 September 2019

Protocol for Flying the Borough Flag at Half Mast

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	Heritage is Respected	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Risk Management	The issue is low risk, but the recommendation is made in order to manage the risk of opening up the protocol too far and suffering from unintended consequences.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Legal	There are no legal implications	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Privacy and Data Protection	There are no privacy and data protection implications.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Public Health	There are no implications for public health.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Crime and Disorder	There are no implications for Crime and Disorder	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Procurement	There are no procurement implications	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Cllr Naghi raised a Member item request that was considered at Democracy and General Purposes Committee on 3 July 2019. The Committee requested an officer report on the item.
 - 1.2 The Council flies its flags from the Town Hall and has civic protocols to follow for both the Union Flag and the Borough Flag. The Council also has other flags it flies on different occasions. The Union Flag is flown at half mast on set occasions, for example in accordance with specific plans on the death of a senior national figure, or as directed by the Lord Chamberlain's department; when this occurs the Borough Flag would also be flown at half mast. Other than that requirement the Borough Flag is flown at half mast in accordance with a nationally accepted protocol, as set out in Civic Ceremonial as follows:
 - The local authority's flag should be flown at half-mast on the death of the Mayor... from the day of death until sunset on the day of the funeral.
 - It may also be flown at half-mast on the death of a serving member of the Council, the Honorary Recorder or an ex-Mayor..., on the day of the funeral until sunset.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee could opt to create its own local protocol for the Borough Flag. The scope of that protocol could be broad, to include officers and former members of the Council, or it could be more limited, for example covering members who have served a specific period of time as a Councillor.
 - 3.2 The Committee could decide to stay with the existing protocol which is set out in section 2 above.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is 3.2, to retain the existing protocol and not produce a local protocol.
- 4.2 The current arrangement recognises the importance of the office of Mayor, as the First Citizen of the Borough with the flag flown at half mast for the full period from death to funeral, whilst also recognising the status of serving members as part of the Council, and the specific civic status of ex-Mayors and the Honorary Recorder.
- 4.3 The advantage of this protocol is that it is clear and provides a line as to who will have the flag flown at half-mast without entering into debates or ambiguity as to who should or should not be included, and helps to

manage issues that arise around when somebody has died and how much attention the family want drawn to it.

- 4.4 Ensuring the flag is flown appropriately can be complicated as the death of an individual is a difficult and emotional time, and it is not always the wish of the family to have the news spread widely. This can lead to periods of time where the Council is unsure if a particular person is deceased and it would be hard to identify when the flag should be flown at half mast, or even if it is desired by the family. This is particularly important as the public see the flag flying at half mast and inquire as to who it is for with the Mayoral office.
- 4.5 Furthermore, broadening the scope of flying the flag at half mast to include, for example, former councillors who served for, or officers who worked at the Council for a particular length, opens up additional complications. One question could relate to how the individual left the Council and whether the Council should wish to honour that person with a flag at half mast. For example a long serving officer who left the Council because of a disciplinary issue might not be someone that the Council would objectively want to afford the honour.
- 4.6 The Council has other ways of honouring individuals who have made a significant contribution to the Borough, for example through appointing Honorary Aldermen and this is considered by a resolution of Full Council to ensure it is an honour the Council wishes to bestow. Such actions to confirm the Council is happy, or check the background to an individual's service, are not possible in the case of somebody dying.

5. RISK

- 5.1 There are no additional risks arising from the preferred option as it represents no change. The reasons for recommending this approach are in part to manage the risks around writing a new protocol and broadening its scope. These are referenced in section 4 above.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 None

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 None required.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None