



# Protocol for Flags, Silences and other marks of respect.

February 2023

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## Introduction

Civic buildings are an important part of the local community, often acting as a focal point when local, regional or national events occur. This protocol provides information to residents of the district about how the Council will approach planned public displays of support.

Whilst specific public displays of condolence or respect cannot be predicted, they can however be planned for in general terms. This protocol will guide the council's response to any such event. However, any national directive or protocol, such as that implemented upon the death of the monarch, will take priority over this protocol.

## Flags

- 1.1. The Council currently has one flagpole, which is situated on The Symington Building in Market Harborough. The flagpole is accessed via the third floor of the Symington Building.
- 1.2. In 2008 the government announced that UK government buildings in England, Scotland and Wales had the option to fly the Union Flag at all times. In the absence of special procedures or other civic events, the Union Flag flies on Harborough District Council's flagpole every day.
- 1.3. There are however a number of designated days annually when the Union Flag should fly on UK government buildings. The list of days is maintained and published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and can be accessed on the [www.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.4. The Council will follow guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ("DLUHC") which sets out flag arrangements for national and local government buildings. This will inform when and how flags should be flown and for what duration.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/designated-days-for-union-flag-flying>

## Half-mast

- 1.5. Half-mast means the flag is flown two-thirds of the way up the flagpole.
- 1.6. Flags should be flown at half-mast on the following occasions from 08:00 hours until sunset unless otherwise specified:
  - From the announcement of the death until the funeral of the Sovereign, except on Proclamation Day when flags are flown at full-mast following the proclamation.
  - From the announcement of the death until the funeral of a member of the Royal family styled 'Royal Highness', subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case.
  - On the day of the announcement of the death, and on the day of the funeral of other members of the Royal Family, subject to special commands from the Sovereign, in each case.
  - The funerals of foreign rulers, subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case.
  - The funerals of Prime Minister and ex-Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, subject to special commands from the Sovereign in each case.
  - Any other occasions where the Sovereign has given a special command.
  - On the death of an individual bestowed with Freedom of the District, Past Mayor, serving Councillor (including a serving Mayor or Deputy Mayor), from the day of the death until sunset on the day of the funeral.
  - On the death of the serving Member of Parliament representing the district, on the day of the death until sunset on the day of the funeral.
  - On the death of armed forces personnel who were residents of the district or otherwise have a connection to it on the day of the death until sunset on the day of funeral.
  - On the death of a member of staff who dies in service, on the day of the funeral until sunset.
- 1.7. Local government bodies are permitted to fly the Union Flag at half-mast to mark local as well as national commemorations or losses. The council will consider this at the discretion of the officer responsible for civic matters (currently the Head of Corporate Services), in consultation with the Chief Executive and, where appropriate, the Leader of the Council and the Chair of the Council.
- 1.8. Instructions regarding flags at half-mast and returning them to full-mast for national events will be confirmed to the Chief Executive via email from government. The Chief Executive will inform Democratic Services (so they can change the flag status) and the Communications team (so they can update the

website and intranet if necessary) of the steps to be taken. A decision as to what, if anything, shall be posted on social media platforms will be taken by the Head of Corporate Services in consultation with the Chief Executive, the Head of Communications and the Leader of the Council.

- 1.9. The flag will usually be returned to full-mast at sunset or earlier if the caretaker is not available at sunset. Alternatively, it must be returned to full-mast first thing the following morning during a week day. This would not apply on a Saturday morning - the flag should be returned to full-mast on the Friday and not left at half-mast over the weekend through to Monday morning.

### **Special Flag-flying Days**

- 1.10. This section of the protocol confirms that specific flags can be flown on certain dates to observe special events. Any event not listed below or designated on the government website will need to be individually authorised in accordance with the request procedure set out at point 1.13:

#### **1 to 5 February**

##### **Rainbow Flag / Special LGBT flag**

The Rainbow Flag will be flown during this period to acknowledge and support LGBT+ History Month.

#### **17 May**

##### **Rainbow Flag / Special LGBT flag**

The Rainbow Flag will be flown on this day to mark the Council's acknowledgement of, and support for IDAHO - the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

#### **June**

##### **Rainbow Flag / Special LGBT flag**

The Rainbow flag may be flown for a week in June to acknowledge and support Pride Month.

#### **Armed Forces Day Flag**

##### **10.30 on the Monday before Armed Forces Day**

Armed Forces Day is celebrated annually on a Saturday in late June. The Armed Forces Day Flag is flown for the entire week up to and including Armed Forces Day. The Council hosts an Armed Forces Day Flag Raising Ceremony on the Monday before Armed Forces Day, which is attended by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council and the Deputy Lieutenant for Leicestershire.

#### **23 July**

##### **Leicestershire County Flag**

The flag of Leicestershire is flown for the day in celebration of Historic County Flags Day.

### **3 September Red Ensign Flag**

The Red Ensign Flag is flown on this day to celebrate Merchant Navy Day. There is no flag raising ceremony, however a photograph may be taken of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council with the flag to promote the event and the Council's support of it.

### **9 September 999 Emergency Services Flag**

The Emergency Services flag is raised at 9am and flown for the day to mark Emergency Services Day. A two-minute silence is also observed with the raising of the flag, commencing on the chiming of the church clock at 9am. There is no flag raising ceremony but a photograph is taken of the Chairman and Vice-Chair with the flag to promote the event and the Council's support of it.

### **Death of a prominent non-royal figure Leicestershire County Flag**

The County Flag of Leicestershire may be flown at half-mast to mark the death of a prominent figure in Leicestershire, subject to approval by the Chief Executive.

- 1.11. For the avoidance of doubt, in the event of conflict between national, regional and local provisions, national provisions will take precedence, and regional provisions will take precedence over local provisions.

### **Flying of Other Flags Outside of Local/Government Instruction**

- 1.12. The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, may approve the flying of other flags on other dates in response to local current affairs if no government instruction is in operation.

### **Flag Flying Requests and Access**

- 1.13. Requests for specific flags to be flown in respect of local issues are determined by the Chief Executive following receipt of a request through the Intranet - 'Standard Tasks – Report a Facilities Issue'.
- 1.14. Requests received from a member of the public should be forwarded to the Head of Corporate Services for inputting.

- 1.15. Flags will be retained by the Facilities Department, and caretakers from that team are the only persons authorised to raise or lower a flag. The decision to purchase any flag will be made in consultation with the Chief Executive.
- 1.16. The Democratic Services team is responsible for checking that the appropriate flag for a designated flag flying period is available and in appropriate condition in advance of it being required.
- 1.17. For further information and reference to the flying of flags please see the links below:

['Flying flags: a plain English guide'](#)

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

[Flying Flags in the United Kingdom](#)

## **Lights**

- 2.1. In addition to displaying support for local, regional, national and international events by the flying of flags, many public buildings are now illuminated and have the ability to change the colour of the illumination. Accordingly, it is increasingly common for the government to direct that public buildings should, where possible, be lit in a certain colour or colours to mark particular events.
- 2.2. The Council will endeavour to comply with any request by government to illuminate public buildings and spaces where this is reasonably practicable.
- 2.3. Requests to light up public assets and spaces, other than directly from government, will be handled in accordance with the procedure set out at paragraph 1.13.

## **Silences**

- 3.1. The Council may also participate in periods of silence to demonstrate its respect for certain events. Government will notify the Council of national silences it is expected to observe.
- 3.2. The holding of a period of silence will be publicised on the Council's intranet and website by the Communication's Team, and by displaying notices in council premises. Its commencement and termination may be marked by the sounding of the fire alarm, which shall only be requested of the Facilities Team by the Democratic Services Team.
- 3.3. Silences may also be held at council meetings, at the discretion of the chairman of the meeting. Chairmen are encouraged to consult with the Head of Corporate Services in relation to such observances so that Democratic

Services can ensure that appropriate messages are displayed within the meeting venue and on any meeting stream platform.

- 3.4. The only annual silences relate to Remembrance day (11 November) and Remembrance Sunday (the Sunday closest to 11 November). This is a two minute silence.

## Books of Condolence

- 4.1. The council does not usually open Books of Condolence following atrocities and disasters.
- 4.2. Books of condolence will only be made available in accordance with an instruction from the Chief Executive to that effect following an event of national significance.
- 4.3. Arrangements for access to, and management of a book of condolence will be made by the Democratic Services Team.

## Approved Flag Images



**Rainbow Flag**



**Armed Forces Day Flag**



**Emergency Services Day Flag**





**Leicestershire County Flag**



**LGBT History Month Flag**