

Briefing Note

Motion on Notice – Flying the Union Flag

Motion proposed by Councillor John Reynolds

Seconded by: Councillors Merv Evans, Darren Clifford and Roger Cleet

Our nation's flag is a symbol of liberty, unity and freedom that creates a shared sense of civic pride, and unites us as one people on these islands. People expect to see the Union flag flying high on civic buildings as a sign of our local and national pride, and our shared identity.

The Union flag should be flown every day, on every Lancaster City Council building.

We note that the mayor has approved the flying of the Union flag on council buildings on a permanent basis, in line with the suggestion from MHCLG.

This motion calls on Lancaster City Council to :

- (1) Enshrine the recommendations from MHCLG as council policy, so that future mayors cannot remove the recommendation to fly the Union Flag on council buildings on all days (except where a flag is flown to celebrate a specific day or event)
- (2) Ensure that Flags are replaced on a regular basis to ensure the highest standards
- (3) Complete a condition survey of flags and flag poles for the consideration of the portfolio holder for property services, and then complete one every year from now on.
- (4) Seek funding pots for the replacement of flag poles and for helping to fund new flag poles and flags
- (5) Seek the feedback of the community and elected members about areas of public open space where they would like to see a flag pole
- (6) Write to partners, local businesses and parish and town councils asking them to adopt the elements of this motion appropriate to them.

Officer briefing note:

The motion requests that the Union flag should be flown every day on every Lancaster City Council building. The City Council owns a great many buildings in the district and many are tenanted. The proposer of the motion may need to be more specific about which buildings they feel are appropriate. Earlier in the motion there is a mention of 'Civic Buildings' and these would be the most appropriate, since it is usual for flags to be flown on municipal buildings. There are currently three flag poles at Lancaster Town Hall and one at Morecambe Town Hall.

Regarding (1)

As noted in the motion, the Mayor has approved the flying of the Union flag at Morecambe and Lancaster Town Halls, in line with recent MHCLG guidance. The Mayor traditionally takes decisions on the flying of flags, as part of their civic role. The Council Business Committee's terms of reference include 'to agree civic and ceremonial matters in consultation with the Mayor', so there can be wider member involvement on policy issues. Council could, if it wishes, make a policy on this particular issue which Democratic and Property services would then follow.

At present, there is only one flagpole at Morecambe Town Hall, so on the sad occasion of a death of a Councillor or Alderman, it will now be necessary to take down the Union Flag and replace with the City Flag at half-mast until sundown on the day of the funeral, as is customary. Also, there are occasions when other flags are flown during the year (Rainbow flag for Pride;

Commonwealth flag for Commonwealth day, Armed Forces flag for Armed Forces week, etc) when these flags will replace the Union Flag at Morecambe Town Hall, as pointed out in the motion. There are three flag poles at Lancaster Town Hall and so it will be possible to keep the Union flag flying on the highest, middle flag pole, alongside any other flags, in a lower position.

Regarding (2), (3) and (4)

Two new Union flags were ordered when the decision was made to fly them every day. Property Services do regularly check the condition of flags. Purchase of new flags is through the Mayor's civic budget at present and the budget holder is the Head of Democratic Services. The funds in that budget are enough to cover new flags as and when required, however there is currently no budget for new flag poles. If Council is minded to greatly increase the number of flag poles by adding them to non-municipal council buildings and in areas of public open space, as this motion suggests, then it would need to budget for those. Property Services could report on the condition of flag poles and the flag poles themselves to the relevant portfolio holder each year, if this motion is passed.

Regarding (5)

A social media and publicity campaign could be run to elicit views, however public expectations would need to be managed to match whatever budget is set aside, and decisions about erecting new flag poles could be subject to planning permission or other permissions regarding the Council's listed buildings. Council may wish to elaborate on the process for decision making when suggestions are received; or may wish to leave this to the Council Business Committee in consultation with the Mayor.

Regarding (6), writing to partners, local businesses and parish and town councils asking them to adopt the elements of this motion appropriate to them.

It is not clear which part(s) of the motion would apply to partners or business since this is essentially a motion about flag flying on civic buildings. Any such letter to parish or town councils in the district should make very clear that the Council is not offering to pay for flag poles or their installation, or supplies of flags.

Comments from the s151 Officer

The s151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add.