

# PART A - Initial Impact Assessment

Proposal Name:	Flag Protocol
EIA ID:	2635
EIA Author:	James Henderson (CEX)

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Proposal Outline:	<p>Full Council passed a resolution at its meeting on 1 November which called for a review of the council's flag flying protocol. The main elements of the new flag protocol are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• That the union flag is flown at full mast at all times except when a commemorative flag is flown, or when the union flag is lowered to half-mast</li><li>• The circumstances in which the union flag should be lowered to half-mast. This has been updated to provide a more consistent approach following the deaths of serving and former elected politicians (councillors, MPs and Combined Authority Mayors) and other local dignitaries (such as honorary freemen of the city)</li><li>• The flying of other flags at certain times (including the flags of the patron saints of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and commemorative flags associated with particular awareness periods such as Pride or Armed Forces Day)</li><li>• The role of the Chief Executive in making decisions about flying another country's flag during a civic delegation from that country</li><li>• The ways in which ad hoc requests can be made to the Chief Executive to fly the union flag at half-mast or to fly the flag of another country or cause following a national or local disaster or major humanitarian or terrorist incident. The new protocol proposes that requests may only be made by a relevant Government department or by either a policy committee chair or by the leader of a political group on the council. When a request is made, the protocol includes an appendix setting out a decision making process for the Chief Executive to follow, which includes the completion of an Equality Impact Assessment and commissioning of additional consultation/evidence where required.</li></ul>
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Proposal Type:	Non-Budget
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Year Of Proposal:

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Lead Director for proposal: James Henderson (CEX)

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Service Area: Policy and Democratic Engagement

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EIA Start Date: 29/02/2024

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Lead Equality Objective: Leading the city in celebrating and promoting inclusion

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Equality Lead Officer: Adele Robinson

## Decision Type

Committees: Policy Committees

- Strategy & Resources

## Portfolio

Primary Portfolio: Strategic Support Services

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EIA is cross portfolio: No

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EIA is joint with another organisation: No

## Overview of Impact

Overview Summery: The revised protocol has been developed in response to concerns raised about the decision relating to flag-flying associated with the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the events of 7 October 2023. Community tensions were heightened as a result, including a

demonstration at the Town Hall which led to the roof of the building being scaled and the Israeli flag being removed and replaced with a Palestinian one. It is clear from this incident that the flying of flags has the potential to exacerbate community tensions and to harm relations between people who share different protected characteristics. The revised flag protocol aims to ensure a much clearer route to decision-making on an ad hoc flag-flying requests including a requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment to be undertaken before coming to a decision. It is intended that this enable the authority to make these decisions more easily in the future and to avoid/minimise the impacts that they may cause for people who share protected characteristics. More broadly, the flag protocol updates and modernises the council's approach to the annual cycle of commemorative flag-flying, and as such is considered to strongly demonstrate the council's ongoing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, celebrating different communities and the contribution that they have made to the life of the city over the course of a year.

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**Impacted characteristics:**

- Armed Forces
- Cohesion
- Gender Reassignment
- Race
- Religion/Belief
- Sexual Orientation
- Voluntary/Community & Faith Sectors

**Consultation and other engagement**

**Cumulative Impact**

**Does the proposal have a cumulative impact:**

No

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**Impact areas:**

## Initial Sign-Off

Full impact assessment required: Yes

Review Date: 28/02/2025

## PART B - Full Impact Assessment

### Armed Forces

Staff Impacted: Yes

Customers Impacted: Yes

**Description of Impact:** This proposal will have a positive impact on armed forces and veterans. The annual calendar includes a commitment to fly the Armed Forces flag each year and the specific arrangements for Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday. The inclusion of these elements in the calendar is likely to be viewed positively by the armed forces community in the city. It is acknowledged that flag flying can be tokenistic if not accompanied by other meaningful activity to support the community, and this proposal should be considered together with the council's wider awareness approach (including our wider civic approach to remembrance).

### Cohesion

Staff Impacted: Yes

Customers Impacted: Yes

**Description of Impact:** As described in the overall impact section, flag flying can have a significant impact (either positive or negative) on cohesion. The revised protocol, and in particular the decision-making guidance on ad hoc flag requests is explicit in identifying the risks to cohesion

and how these should be properly assessed through an EIA and Community Tension Impact Assessment (if required), and that assessment used as a key component in the decision-making process. As such, this proposal is considered to have a positive impact on community cohesion compared with the previous flag protocol.

## Gender Reassignment

<b>Staff Impacted:</b>	Yes
<b>Customers Impacted:</b>	Yes
<b>Description of Impact:</b>	<p>This proposal will have a positive impact on the gender reassignment protected characteristic. The annual calendar includes a commitment to fly the Pride flag each year during Pride Month which is likely to be viewed positively by the LGBTQ+ community in the city, and specifically the Progress Pride flag, with the chevron acknowledging trans people. It is acknowledged that flag flying can be tokenistic if not accompanied by other meaningful activity to support the community, and this proposal should be considered together with the council's wider awareness approach. However, flying the Pride flag represents a positive symbol of support for our LGBTQ+ workforce and the wider community.</p>

## Race

<b>Staff Impacted:</b>	Yes
<b>Customers Impacted:</b>	Yes
<b>Description of Impact:</b>	<p>This proposal will have a positive impact on race. The annual calendar includes a commitment to fly the Windrush flag each year, which is likely to be viewed positively by the African Caribbean community in the city, although it is acknowledged that for other groups of people where there is not an established flag, this may be seen as favouring one group over another - this will be mitigated through other awareness raising activity undertaken by the council (such as promoting South Asian Heritage Week). The revised protocol</p>

includes clearer guidance on making informed decisions when a request is received. Such requests are not always connected with race or national identity, but the most recent and most challenging examples have been. As such, the protocol is considered to have a positive impact on race and race equality by providing more opportunity for consultation with community groups and individuals when requests are received, by proactively taking into account the impacts on different race groups, and by ensuring that this forms a central part of the decision-making around whether or not to fly a particular flag

## Religion / Belief

**Staff Impacted:** Yes

**Customers Impacted:** Yes

**Description of Impact:** This proposal will have a positive impact on religion and belief. The revised protocol includes clearer guidance on making informed decisions when a request is received. Such requests are not always connected with religion or belief, but the most recent and most challenging examples have been. As such, the protocol is considered to have a positive impact on religion and belief by providing more opportunity for consultation with faith groups when requests are received, by proactively taking into account the impacts on different religion or belief groups, and by ensuring that this forms a central part of the decision-making around whether or not to fly a particular flag

## Sexual Orientation

**Staff Impacted:** Yes

**Customers Impacted:** Yes

**Description of Impact:** This proposal will have a positive impact on the sexual orientation protected characteristic. The annual calendar includes a commitment to fly the Pride flag each year during Pride Month which is likely to be viewed positively by the LGBTQ+ community in the city. It is acknowledged that flag flying can be

tokenistic if not accompanied by other meaningful activity to support the community, and this proposal should be considered together with the council's wider awareness approach. However, flying the Pride flag represents a positive symbol of support for our LGBTQ+ workforce and the wider community.

## Voluntary / Community & Faith Sectors

<b>Staff Impacted:</b>	Yes
<b>Customers Impacted:</b>	No
<b>Description of Impact:</b>	The Voluntary, Community and (particularly) Faith sector have been impacted by recent decisions on flag flying. The revised protocol provides a clear route for the sector to be consulted as part of the decision-making process on ad hoc flag flying requests.

## Action Plan & Supporting Evidence

<b>Outline of action plan:</b>	No additional actions beyond those set out in the proposal are required.
<b>Action plan evidence:</b>	
<b>Changes made as a result of action plan:</b>	

## Mitigation

<b>Significant risk after mitigation measures:</b>	Yes
<b>Outline of impact and risks:</b>	It is likely that there will always be risk associated with flag-flying. Flags are symbolic and binary in nature. Whatever decision is reached on whether or not to fly a flag, it is possible that some people or communities may be disappointed or angry. However, the risk of this is judged to be lower with the clear routes for community engagement, equality impact analysis and community tension impact analysis that is included as part of the key decision making protocol.

## Review Date

Review Date:

28/02/2025