

REPORT TO CABINET

13 NOVEMBER 2025

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources and Transport
Councillor Paul Rowling**

Council Motion – Flying the Union Flag

Summary

This report outlines proposals for implementing the Council's unanimously agreed motion to fly the Union Flag year-round on all Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council office premises. The motion reflects cross-party support for a consistent and respectful approach to recognising the national flag across the Borough.

It is recommended that Cabinet refer the matter to the Members Advisory Panel (MAP) to provide advice on the practical, financial, and governance arrangements required to update the Council's Flag Flying Policy. This includes defining which Council buildings are considered "public-facing," assessing the feasibility and cost of installing additional flagpoles, and ensuring compliance with planning and safety regulations.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

To ensure that the motion, agreed unanimously by Council, is implemented in a manner that is practical, affordable and legally robust, following cross-party engagement through the Members Advisory Panel.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Refer the matter to the Members Advisory Panel (MAP) to:
 - a) Advise on the effective implementation of the Council motion to fly the Union Flag year-round on all Council office premises;
 - b) Develop proposals for an updated Flag Flying Policy, including:
 - c) Clarification of which Council buildings are considered "public-facing";
 - d) Technical feasibility, planning, and safety considerations for additional flagpoles;
 - e) Financial implications of installation, maintenance, and replacement.

2. Request that MAP advise Cabinet on a framework for approving future sites or variations, ensuring decisions are informed by appropriate technical and financial assessments.
3. Request that MAP, supported by officers, report back to Cabinet with a revised and costed draft Flag Flying Policy for formal approval.
4. Note that the current Flag Flying Policy (Appendix A) has been updated to reflect the relocation of the Council's headquarters to Dunedin House and to include the current programme of memorial lighting.

Detail

1. At its meeting in September 2024, Council approved a motion requesting that the Union Flag be flown all year round on all Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council office premises. The motion was supported by all political groups. The Council motion set out:

"Council notes that:

Government Guidance on the flying of the Union Flag, put forward by Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and updated in March 2025 dictates that 'There are designated days when the Union Flag must be flown on UK government buildings by command of His Majesty The King. However, UK government buildings are encouraged to fly the Union Flag all year around.

This guidance is aimed at UK government buildings. However, we would encourage local authorities and other local organisations to follow suit where they wish to fly flags'.

Council believes that:

Following the guidance put forward by Government, our National Flag should fly from Council Premises.

Council resolves:

That Cabinet be requested to fly the Union Flag all year round on all Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council office premises."

2. The Council already has an adopted Flag Flying Policy covering Stockton Town Hall and the Council's headquarters. The policy provides for the Union Flag to be flown continuously at the headquarters and on designated days at the Town Hall, alongside other flags such as the Commonwealth, Armed Forces Week and Pride flags.
3. A copy of the Council's current flag flying policy is attached at Appendix A. This policy relates to the flying of flags on the Council's main headquarters building and Stockton Town Hall. The current policy provides for the Union Flag to be flown from the headquarters building at all times and for the Union Flag to be flown on the Town Hall with the exception of designated days for other flags as outlined below:

March (second Monday in March)	Commonwealth Day	Commonwealth Flag
23 April	St George's Day	St George's Flag
End of June (fly for one week) (these dates change each year)	Armed Forces Week	Armed Forces Week flag
June	Pride	Rainbow Flag
3 September	Merchant Navy Day	Red Ensign
15 September	Battle of Britain Day	Royal Air Force Flag

Public Facing Council Buildings

- The Council owns approximately 270 properties, of which only a proportion would be regarded as public-facing (for example, Dunedin House, libraries and customer contact centres). Further technical work is required to determine which sites are suitable for inclusion within any extended policy.
- The flagpole at Dunedin House was commissioned when the Council's headquarters moved there, to ensure that a flag could continue to be flown in accordance with the existing policy. The installation was therefore a continuation of established practice rather than a new initiative.
- A list of buildings that could be deemed as public facing is attached at Appendix B, including comments on the feasibility of installing a freestanding or building mounted flagpoles and other considerations. Members are asked to provide a view on whether any of these public facing Council buildings should be subject to further site investigations with a view to bringing them into the Council's flag flying policy.

Planning Considerations

- Under the advertisement regulations flying flags does not necessarily require advertisement consent provided that certain criteria are met. However, all flags must:
 - Be adequately maintained
 - Kept in a safe condition
 - Have the landowner's permission
 - Not obscure or hinder road, rail, waterway or aircraft signs

Technical Considerations

- Flagpoles can be floor, wall or roof mounted and the size of flag flown is determined by the size of the pole. The new flagpole at Dunedin House is floor mounted. As well as material, other considerations include weight, diameter, thickness and wind loading guarantees.
- The life span of the flag itself varies depending on the location of the flag pole and weather conditions and periodic replacement of flags also needs to be planned for. The structural wind loading for the flagpole will determine whether more than one flag can be flown at the same time as well as the size of the flag. The flagpole at Dunedin House does not allow for more than one flag to be flown at the same time.

10. Specialist companies offer site surveys and wind calculations.
11. As an indicator of cost, the most popular size of flagpole in the UK is 6m in height with a 2-yard flag. A glass fibre floor mounted 6m flagpole can retail from £432 to £861. A 2-yard Union Flag retails for around £75. Costs will however vary significantly depending on the specification. Installation costs would be additional.
12. A decision around the costs in relation to the installation of a flagpole at any new site cannot be confirmed without a site investigation and quotation from a specialist supplier. Site investigations would be required for all buildings to assess the structural integrity of the building if wall or roof mounted options are to be looked at and also the checking of underground utility apparatus for any freestanding options. How the flags are to be raised and lowered would also need to be considered along with any maintenance of the flagpoles. Wall mounted options may require ladder or cherry picker access.
13. Ground-based flagpoles in particular require suitable foundations and underground service checks, together with structural calculations to verify wind loading, safe access for raising and lowering, and arrangements for inspection and maintenance. Wall- or roof-mounted options may require additional specialist assessment and access equipment.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

14. None

Corporate Parenting Implications

15. None

Financial Implications

16. The flagpole at Dunedin House will cost approximately £25,000 to install, with replacement flags which require regular periodic renewal currently costing around £300 each. Structural and wind-loading assessments, health-and-safety compliance, and ongoing maintenance all carry cost implications. Although some indicative costs are available, a decision around the costs in relation to the installation of a flagpole at any new site cannot be confirmed without a site visit and quotation from a specialist supplier. Revenue and costs for raising/lowering and maintenance would need to be considered.
17. There is currently no budgetary provision for any additional flagpoles or flags. Site investigations and quotations would therefore be required before any commitments could be made.

Legal Implications

18. The installation and maintenance of flagpoles will require compliance with advertisement and safety regulations.

Risk Assessment

19. Specialist advice will be sought to ensure safe installation and ongoing maintenance.

Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward/ Councillors (refer to Concordat for Communication and Consultation with Members)

20. All wards

Background Papers

21. None

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