



Flag Protocol

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1. Purpose Statement

This document identifies the full protocol when flying flags from Buckinghamshire Council buildings, highlighting occasions when flag protocol occurs and the exact process which must be followed. We endeavour to mirror the approach and priorities from central government, and nationally recognised flags, in terms of the flags flown at our offices.

Flags are a symbol of national unity, respect, and honour, therefore following protocol is crucial to maintaining the value that flag flying represents. This protocol is written as clear guidance for the responsible service areas to ensure that relevant flags are flown on the correct days, at the correct times and to ensure a consistent approach across various locations.

Compliance with this policy is essential to avoid any damage to Buckinghamshire Council's reputation but also to symbolise respect and national unity. The flag policy and its fulfilment demonstrate Buckinghamshire Council's commitment to commemorate and celebrate national and local events.

2. Scope

Buckinghamshire Council has access to the following flagpoles:

- The Gateway, Aylesbury – 3 active flagpoles (2 inactive flag poles)
- Walton Street Offices, Aylesbury – 2 active flagpoles
- King George V Office, Amersham – 1 active flagpole
- High Wycombe, Queen Victoria Road – 2 active flagpoles
- Old Crown Court, Market Sq, Aylesbury – 2 active flagpoles (2 inactive flagpoles on roof)

It should be noted that flags are not currently flown from the Capswood office in Denham (1 inactive pole) as the building is not currently occupied by the Council and is therefore not classed as a civic building.

At sites with three active flag poles the Union flag and Buckinghamshire County flag will always be flown, with the third pole only flying other recognised flags on the dates or situations stated in this protocol. If there is no event then this flagpole must remain empty.

At sites with two active flags poles, the expectation is that the Union flag and the Buckinghamshire County flag would always be flow at full mast unless any it is a specific dates or situation stated in this protocol.

At sites with only one active flagpole, the expectation is that only the Union flag will be flown, regardless of what other Council buildings are doing. These poles will follow half-mast protocol when required but the Union flag will not be replaced by any other flag at any point.

All flags flown should where available measure 180cm x 120cm (6ft x 4ft) and should be made with a headband, rope and toggle. Where possible, hand woven flags are preferred over digitally printed flags. Recommended supplied include Flagmakers.co.uk, [flying colours.org](http://flyingcolours.org) and flags.co.uk.

3. Flag Protocol

3.1. Designated Flags

3.1.1. The Union Flag

The national flag of the United Kingdom, the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories is the Union Flag, which may also be called the Union Jack. The first Union Flag was created in 1606 and combined the flags of England and Scotland. The present Union Flag dates from 1801 when St Patrick's Cross was added to represent Ireland. It then became possible to display the flag, incorrectly, upside down. There is no Flag Act in UK law, and the Union Flag is the national flag by long-established custom and practice rather than by statute.

In March 2021, all councils received a request that they fly the Union flag every day from all UK government buildings as a sign of national identity and unity. Where UK government buildings have multiple flagpoles, the Union flag must always be flown in the superior position:

- The highest flagpole
- The centre flagpole where there is an odd number of poles of the same height
- The left centre flagpole views from the front of the building, where there is an even number of poles of the same height

The exception is where there is a Royal visit, in which the Royal Standard will take precedence.

The Union flag should be displayed correctly as stated by the Flag Institute:



[Flying-Flags-in-the-United-Kingdom.pdf \(flaginstitute.org\)](http://flaginstitute.org/Flying-Flags-in-the-United-Kingdom.pdf)

3.1.2. The Buckinghamshire County Flag

This is the traditional and historic county flag of Buckinghamshire which features a chained swan on a bicolour of red and black, taken from the arms of Bucks. The swan emblem dates to Anglo-Saxon times, when Buckinghamshire was known for breeding swans for the King. The Bucks swan appears on the arms of some of the historic towns in Buckinghamshire, such as Aylesbury, Buckingham, Chesham, Marlow, and High Wycombe. The flag itself was registered with the Flag Institute on 20 May 2011.

3.2. The Royal Standard

The Royal Standard should be flown from council buildings which are being visited by a member of The Royal Family. It should only be flown for the duration of their visit, being raised, and lowered on arrival and departure. The Civic and Lieutenancy Officer will make arrangements with the Household of the Member of the Royal Family visiting to make ensure that the standard arrives at least 48 hours prior to the visit. The Royal Standard takes precedence over all other flags.

To see seniority of flight, see Appendices A and B.

3.3. Other Flags Flown

Buckinghamshire Council will endeavour to mirror the approach and priorities from central government, and nationally recognised flags, in terms of the flags flown at our offices. The Council does not allow the use of flags for political purposes or for the purposes of commercial advertising.

Throughout the calendar year there are reoccurring occasions and special days which are notable within the flag protocol, see Appendix A. On these days, weeks or months, flags will be flown at sites with more than flagpole, representing an event, group, or other organisation of importance.

Amendments to Appendix A will be made in line with official guidance issued from relevant government departments outlining flag arrangements for national and local government buildings, as well as in line with Council priorities. The Council may, in certain circumstances, choose to deviate from or update this protocol in circumstances where it is important to convey support for events of national or local importance. Any proposed change will be discussed on a case-by-case basis and agreed/declined by the Leader of the Council.

The following of this protocol will also ensure we adhere to the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) regulations 2007 (as amended in 2012 and in 2021).

On occasion, Members may request to be present for the raising of the flags in recognition of particular events. Where this occurs, Members will be accompanied by the appropriate flag keeper of the office in which the flag raising takes place. Any queries or requests should be sent to the Policy Team. Appendix B demonstrates the flags that we expect to fly on given dates, but also includes additional flags which may be flown under particular circumstances.

3.4. Flags at Half Mast

When setting a flag at half-mast, it must be hoisted to the top of the pole with a pause once it reaches the top before then lowering it into half-mast position. It is recommended the flag is lowered to a third the way from the top of the flagpole as half-mast positioning, as this is a more recognisable placement of the flag. Flag poles at some sites are marked appropriately at the point where the top of the flag should touch when positioned as half-mast.

If the Union flag is at half-mast then all other flags should also be positioned this way, and any event flags removed. The exception to the rule of half-mast is that the Royal Standard should never be flown at half-mast due to it being a representation of the continuous nature of the Monarchy.

For training purposes, videos of how to fly a flag at both full and half-mast can be found on the [Flag Institute website](#).

Central government will inform Buckinghamshire council when a national event occurs and based on the event, The Policy team will then confirm what is required in regards to flying a flag at half-mast, including a directive of which flag/s should be flown and for what duration. Flags on all Buckinghamshire council buildings must be lowered to half-mast unless directed otherwise.

The table below states the likely actions to be taken regarding the flags at half-mast if a senior member of the royal family or significant political figures die. A more detailed table which stipulates the appropriate time of which to fly flags at half-mast for the death of significant figures not noted below and the process following majors incidents can be found in the [BCC major incidents and events protocol](#).

Deceased	Flag Flown	Duration
Sovereign	Union Flag	Refer to Operation London Bridge and the directions for flag process' within that protocol document (available from the Policy Team)
Senior Member of the Royal Family	Union Flag	Refer to Operation Bridge protocol for marking the death of a senior member of the Royal Family
Prime Minister or former Prime Minister	Union Flag	On the day of the funeral only unless otherwise informed by national approach
Serving Local Member of Parliament	Buckinghamshire County Flag	On the day of funeral only
Former MP	Buckinghamshire County Flag	On the day of the funeral only
Serving Leader of the Council	Buckinghamshire County Flag	From the day of death until sunset on the day of the funeral
Serving Chairman of the Council	Buckinghamshire County Flag	From the day of death until sunset on the day of the funeral

Honorary Alderman	Buckinghamshire County Flag	On the day of the funeral only
Serving Councillor	Buckinghamshire County Flag	On the day of the funeral only

Any additional considerations to lower flags to half-mast must be considered and signed off by a member of CMT.

The process of moving flags to half-mast must not occur until Buckinghamshire Council has been formally notified of a death or incident. Facilities teams will be notified by the Policy team of a co-ordinated approach for all Buckinghamshire Council sites.

3.5. Timings

Flags must be raised, unless specified otherwise for events detailed in Appendix A at 8:00 and lowered at sunset or 18:00, whichever is later. Where this is not possible, the flag should be lowered before 8:00 the next morning.

If it is a flag which flies for the duration of a month then it must be raised at 8:00 on the first day of that month and lowered at sunset or 18:00 on the last day of that month. Should the beginning of the month fall on a Saturday or Sunday, the flag should be raised on the preceding Friday evening by 18:00. Should the end of the month fall on a Saturday or a Sunday, it is acceptable to lower the flag before 08:00 on the following Monday morning.

Equally if it signifies a week then the flag must be raised 8:00 on Monday morning and lowered at sunset or 18:00 on Sunday evening, or before 8:00 on the Monday morning.

If a death occurs and processes such as Operation Bridge are initiated, then the flag must be lowered only once a formal announcement from the Palace has been made and the facilities team notified internally to enact the flag elements as required. Flags across all sites must be lowered/raised uniformly which will be co-ordinated by the Policy Team and the Facilities Manager.

Notifications for changes to flags in exceptional circumstance may come through at weekends and evenings.

3.6. Roles and responsibilities

Head of Policy and Comms/Policy team

In office hours (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm), the Policy team will generally co-ordinate flag activity with the facilities team.

The Head of Policy and Comms and the Policy team will receive notification through either email or formal announcement of any requirements to change the flags flying outside our designated buildings. DCE senior management will be responsible for contacting the duty director to obtain permissions to initiate parts the flag protocol if not already given, such as moving flags to fly at half mast.

Once permission is received, contact will be made with Facilities Management to inform them of events and if required, the flag protocol telephone tree (Appendix C – In hours) must be initiated. The Policy team will also contact comms who will manage any external or internal messages about the matter.

Out of hours, others may need to take a responsibility for notifications within the flag protocol telephone tree (see Appendix D – Out of hours).

Any non-standard flag activity must be agreed or approved by the Service Director for Partnerships, Policy and Comms, the Deputy Chief Executive, the Duty Corporate Director or an appropriate member of CMT.

Duty director

The Duty Director will receive notification (likely from the policy team) of a significant event and will be responsible for deciding whether the flag protocol should be initiated. Any queries regarding the Flag Protocol initiation should be raised with the duty director.

Facilities management

Facilities are responsible for ensuring that all flag adjustments occur uniformly and compliantly across all council sites and will need to send confirmation of planned changes to the flag status to the policy team and duty director.

The Facilities Team are also responsible for the storage, repair, replacement, and disposal of flags at each site, and must ensure they have the correct flags required for upcoming events. All flags should be in a good condition, without tears or blemish. This will be monitored through periodic maintenance undertaken by the responsible flag keeper at each office. Repairs can be completed through preferred suppliers.

If disposal of flags is required then this must be done in a dignified way, following guidance from the Flag Institute. Examples include Burning, tearing, or cutting into unrecognisable strips. Flag requirements can be found in Section 2 of this protocol.

Communications

The Communications team are responsible for formulating relevant messages externally, including those which specifically mention when the status of the flags have changed across the council buildings.

APPENDIX A: Calendar of Recognised dates

Date	Event	Flag	Site/location	Notes
Second Monday in March	Commonwealth Day	Commonwealth Day Flag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gateway • Walton Street Offices • High Wycombe • Old Crown Court 	<p>In place of the Buckinghamshire County flag on the 2nd flagpole at Walton Street, High Wycombe and the Old Crown Court.</p> <p>At the Gateway it should be flown of the third flagpole.</p>
Second Monday in March	Commonwealth Day	Union Flag	All	Full height
9 April	His Majesty's Wedding Day	Union Flag	All	Full height
23 April	St George's Day	National Flag of England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gateway • Walton Street Offices • High Wycombe • Old Crown Court 	<p>In place of the Buckinghamshire County flag on the 2nd flagpole at Walton Street, High Wycombe and the Old Crown Court.</p> <p>At the Gateway it should be flown on the third flagpole.</p>
6 May	Coronation Day	Union Flag	All	Full height
17 June	Official Birthday of His Majesty the King	Union Flag	All	Full height







Late June	Armed Forces Week	Armed Forces Day Flag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gateway • Walton Street Offices • High Wycombe Old Crown Court 	<p>AFD occurs on the last Saturday of June and the flag is flown from the previous Monday until the following Monday morning.</p> <p>The flag should be flown in place of the Buckinghamshire County flag at Walton Street, High Wycombe and the Old Crown Court.</p> <p>At the Gateway it should be flown on the third flagpole.</p>
June	LGBT+ Pride Month	Pride Flag – six colours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gateway 	<p>In place of the Buckinghamshire County flag - recommended to fly for the week following Armed Forces Week but reference should be taken each year based on the College of Arms recommendations.</p> <p>Should be flown on the third flagpole at the Gateway.</p>
21 June	Birthday of the Prince of Wales	Union Flag	All	Full height
17 July	Birthday of Her Majesty the Queen	Union Flag	All	Full height
8 September	His Majesty's accession	Union Flag	All	Full height
3 September	Merchant Navy Day	The Red Ensign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gateway • Walton Street Offices • High Wycombe 	The flag should be flown in place of the Buckinghamshire County flag at Walton Street, High Wycombe and the Old Crown Court.







			Old Crown Court	At the Gateway it should be flown on the third flagpole.
9 September	Emergency Services Day	999 Flag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gateway • Walton Street Offices • High Wycombe • Old Crown Court 	<p>The flag should be flown in place of the Buckinghamshire County flag at Walton Street, High Wycombe and the Old Crown Court.</p> <p>At the Gateway it should be flown on the third flagpole.</p>
11 th November and the closest Sunday to 11 th November	Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday	Royal British Legion Flag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gateway • Walton Street Offices • High Wycombe • Old Crown Court 	<p>The flag should be flown in place of the Buckinghamshire County flag at Walton Street, High Wycombe and the Old Crown Court.</p> <p>At the Gateway it should be flown on the third flagpole.</p> <p>It will be flown continually between Remembrance Day to Remembrance Sunday, whichever falls first. Where the 11th Nov falls on a weekend, the flag should be flown from the Friday before until the Monday following.</p>
14 November	Birthday of His Majesty the King	Union Flag	All	Full height
25 th November until 10 th December	White Ribbon Flag – Domestic Abuse Campaign	White Ribbon Flag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gateway • Walton Street Offices • High Wycombe • Old Crown Court 	The flag should be flown in place of the Buckinghamshire County flag at Walton Street, High Wycombe and the Old Crown Court.

				<p>At the Gateway it should be flown on the third flagpole.</p> <p>To be flown for a period of 16 days and taken down in the evening of the 10th December.</p>
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APPENDIX B: Pictures of Buckinghamshire Council recognised and additional flags

Recognised Flags

	Union Flag
	Buckinghamshire County Flag
	Royal Standard Flag
	Commonwealth Flag
	St George's Flag
	Emergency Services Day Flag

	<p>Armed Forces Day Flag</p>
	<p>Red Ensign Flag</p>
	<p>Pride Flag (6 Stripe)</p>
<p>Old logo</p>  <p>New logo</p> 	<p>Royal British Legion – Pause to Remember Flag</p>
	<p>White Ribbon Flag</p>

