

To: Cabinet
Date: 9 April 2025
Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer)
Title of Report: Flag Flying and Bell Ringing Arrangements

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To agree the lists of annual flag flying and bell ringing commitments and to note the Oxford City Council Protocol for Flag Flying and Bell Ringing
Key decision:	No – Issue details - Update to the Annual Flag Flying Arrangements Oxford City Council
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Agree the List of Annual Flag Flying Commitments attached at Appendices 1A and 1B to this report;
2.	Note the List of Annual Bell Ringing Commitments attached at Appendix 2 to this report; and
3.	Note the Oxford City Council Protocol for Flag Flying and Bell Ringing set out in Appendix 3 to this report.

Information Exempt From Publication	
N/A	N/A

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1A	Annual Flag Flying Commitments	No
Appendix 1B	Images of Flags Flown by Oxford City Council	No

Appendix 2	Annual Bell Ringing Commitments	No
Appendix 3	Oxford City Council Protocol for Flag Flying and Bell Ringing	No

Introduction and background

1. On 13 March 2019, the City Executive Board (*now Cabinet*) adopted the Oxford City Council Protocol for Flag Flying and Bell Ringing and agreed the lists of flag flying and bell ringing commitments for the Council each year. The Protocol provides that decisions on annual or regular flag flying commitments must be considered by Cabinet. Decisions relating to one-off additional flag flying requests are delegated to the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy in accordance with the Protocol. The Protocol provides that one-off bell ringing requests will be considered by the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) in consultation with the Leader of the Council.
2. Following two additional flag flying requests, the list of annual flag flying commitments has been reviewed and updated. It is proposed that the Windrush flag be flown by the Council annually on 22 June to mark Windrush Day, and the Black History Month flag be flown throughout October to mark Black History Month. The revised recommended lists of annual flag flying commitments are set out at Appendices 1A and 1B to the report.
3. The annual bell ringing commitments have not changed and the list is attached at Appendix 2 to the report for noting.

Governance Framework

4. The Council's arrangements for bell ringing and flying flags are governed by the Oxford City Council Protocol for Flag Flying and Bell Ringing. This has been amended slightly to reflect the changes to job titles as part of the recent Corporate Management Restructure and is attached at Appendix 3.

Financial implications

5. Planning permission is required for non-national flags to be flown, there is a financial implication to cover planning application costs, that is covered by the applicant. The cost of the planning application and the two new flags will be covered by existing budgets.

Legal issues

6. There are no specific legal issues arising directly from this report. The responsibility for flag flying to mark events and occasions is an executive function and so lies with Cabinet under the Local Government Act 2000 as it is not specifically reserved to Full Council. The flying of flags is not the subject of statute across Great Britain and advice is issued by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the flying of national flags from government buildings. The advice relates to

government buildings only, but many local authorities, such as Oxford City Council, also follow the advice on a voluntary basis (either in full or in part).

7. Under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, there is a requirement for the Council to obtain planning consent in order to display certain flags. Both of the additional requests set out in the report are subject to receiving planning consent.

Level of risk

8. Flag flying on civic buildings is a sensitive issue that can attract controversy and the attention of the press and public. The recommendations in this report do not seek to alter any annual flag flying or bell ringing commitments previously agreed by Cabinet, only the addition of the Windrush Flag in June and the Black History Month flag throughout October.
9. This report was drafted in tandem with the necessary planning application being submitted to the Planning Authority. If planning consent is not granted, the additional annual requests cannot be accommodated until this is resolved.
10. However, if this Cabinet report is approved, only the Planning Authority consent would be required to proceed.

Equalities impact

11. Flags are emotive symbols that have the potential to cause controversy or create tensions between communities or interest groups whose views and interpretations may differ. The Council has a responsibility to carefully consider the potential impacts of flying flags on communities, equalities and protected characteristics.
12. The Protocol allows for the Council to fly flags on events or occasions that promote equality and diversity. The recommendations in this report do not propose changes that will adversely impact on equalities or serve to disadvantage any groups.

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Background Papers:	
1	British Flag Protocol from the Flag Institute –

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