

Oxford City Council Protocol for Flag Flying and Bell Ringing

1. Civic flag flying and bell ringing responsibilities are delegated to the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy. This protocol guides the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy in the exercise of those responsibilities.

Flagpoles

2. The Council has access to the following three flagpoles or masts:
 - a) The large mast above the main entrance to the Town Hall in St. Aldate's, known as the "main flagpole".
 - b) The mast above the 1930s extension to the Town Hall at Carfax above the premises occupied by Black Sheep Coffee.
 - c) The mast on Carfax Tower.
3. The mast at (a) is on Council occupied premises and is used exclusively to fly the City flag.
4. The mast at (b) is on premises owned by the Council. While it is not occupied by the Council it is still regarded as a civic building due to its position as an extension to the Town Hall. This mast can be used to fly flags marking a variety of events and occasions.
5. The mast at (c) is on premises owned but not occupied by the Council and is not generally regarded as being a civic building. The Council will not fly flags from this mast other than the Union Flag to mark certain national occasions and the Cross of St. George on St. George's Day.

Flying of Flags

6. All flag flying commitments are subject to the weather, safe access to the flagpoles and the availability of suitably trained staff.
7. Flags should not be flown in a worn, damaged or soiled condition and will be inspected when they are taken down and before they are due to be flown, with sufficient time allowed for a replacement to be obtained if necessary.
8. The List of Annual Flag Flying Commitments sets out the days when the City will fly flags. In addition the Council will also fly flags on certain irregular occasions as set out below:

Delegations from twin towns

9. The flags of Oxford's twin towns will be flown from the mast above the 1930s extension when an official delegation from a twin town visits Oxford for the duration of the visit. The twin towns are:
 - Bonn
 - Leiden
 - Grenoble
 - Leon
 - Wroclaw
 - Padua (pending formal twinning agreement)
 - Ramallah (pending formal twinning agreement)

Monarch's official visits

10. The Union Flag will fly from the 1930s extension and from Carfax Tower whenever the Monarch pays an official visit to Oxford.

Royal births

11. The Union Flag will be flown from the masts above the 1930s extension and the Carfax Tower following the announcement of a royal birth in accordance with any guidance issued by the government.

Flying flags at half mast

12. Flags will usually be flown at half-mast on these occasions:

- When a serving or former Lord Mayor or councillor (including Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen) dies the City Flag will be flown at half-mast on the day of the funeral.
- When a person on whom the Council has conferred the Freedom of the City dies the City Flag will be flown at half-mast on the day of the funeral.
- On the day of a State Funeral the City Flag will be flown at half-mast and the Union Flag will be flown at half-mast from both the 1930s extension and the Carfax Tower.
- When the Monarch or a senior member of the royal family dies the City Flag will be flown at half-mast and the Union Flag will be flown at half-mast from both the 1930s extension and the Carfax Tower in accordance with the Oxford City Council Protocol for the Marking of the Death of the Sovereign or the Oxford City Council Protocol for Marking the Death of a Senior National Figure.
- On a day of national mourning the City Flag will be flown at half-mast and the Union Flag will be flown at half-mast from both the 1930s extension and the Carfax Tower.

Managing additional one-off requests

13. Consideration will be given to one-off additional requests by the Head of Law and Governance in line with the following procedures.

- The request must come from a serving City Councillor and be made at least 4 weeks before the event in writing to the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy.
- The request will only be considered if the relevant mast is available on the date(s) in question.
- The request should reflect the values of the Council, be sensitive to the views of communities and be made in the spirit of displaying allegiance, support or respect or to celebrate or mark a significant international, national or local occasion.
- Where planning consent is required by regulations, this must be obtained before the flag can be displayed (which can take 8-10 weeks).
- The Director of Law, Governance and Strategy will consult the Leader of the Council.
- The decision of the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy is final.

14. Decisions on annual or regular flag flying commitments must be considered by Cabinet.

Bell ringing

15. Bells are rung by Oxford Society of Change Ringers on behalf of Oxford City Council on the occasions set out in the List of Annual Bell Ringing Commitments.
16. Bell ringing requests may be made by the Oxford Society of Change Ringers to mark one-off events. These requests will be considered by the Head of Law and Governance who will consult the Leader of the Council. The decision of the Head of Law and Governance will be final.
17. Decisions on annual or regular bell ringing commitments must be considered by Cabinet.

Hierarchy of commitments

18. In the event that this protocol results in a clash of commitments on a particular date the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy will be guided by the order of precedence of flags in the United Kingdom (as set out in the British Flag Protocol¹) and the principles of the following hierarchy in determining which commitment will be honoured:
 1. State and royal occasions / visits
 2. National memorial or celebration days
 3. Twinning visits
 4. Other occasions the Council has chosen to recognise annually
 5. Other occasions the Council has chosen to recognise on a one-off basis

¹ [British Flag Protocol, The Flag Institute \(accessed 1 February 2019\)](#)

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