Flag Flying Policy

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1.1	03/06/2026	Gary Cupid	Updated to reflect deemed consent, express advertisement consent, Progress Pride Flag position, and 8-week determination period.	03/06/2027
1.2	26/10/2026	Gary Cupid	Proposed updates to national guidance, calendar, priorities, requests, funding arrangements and Planning confirmation	26/10/2027

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1.0 Introduction

This policy sets out Stevenage Borough Council's approach to flag flying at its properties.

It provides a consistent and transparent process for recognising national, civic and community occasions, considering public requests and managing flags safely.

Flag displays must be properly authorised and comply with applicable legislation, planning requirements, national guidance and health and safety arrangements.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to council-owned properties with flagpoles, including permanent and temporary installations.

Daneshill House currently has two external flagpoles:

- **Primary flagpole:** Reserved for the Union Flag, which is flown throughout the year, subject to official flag instructions and safe operating conditions.
- **Secondary flagpole:** Used for other approved flags in accordance with this policy.

The council's normal operating arrangement is one flag per pole. Any proposal to change this arrangement must be checked with Facilities Management and Planning before approval.

Where external flag flying is not selected or is impractical, alternative recognition may include internal displays, digital screens, staff communications or public communications.

3.0 Statutory context and Planning confirmation

This policy operates within:

- The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended.
- The government's *Flying flags: a plain English guide*.
- Current DCMS Union Flag flying guidance.
- Applicable official guidance for national mourning, Royal occasions and half-masting.

Council approval to fly a flag is separate from the advertisement consent position.

Facilities Management will obtain and retain written Planning advice confirming whether a proposed display:

- Does not require advertisement consent.
- Benefits from deemed consent, subject to conditions.
- Requires an application for express advertisement consent.

Planning's assessment should consider the flag design, pole arrangement, location, dimensions and any applicable restrictions. It should consider all relevant statutory routes,

including Schedule 3 Class 1B for displays by a local planning authority and the relevant Class 7 provisions.

The standard six-stripe Rainbow Pride Flag and NHS Flag have specific deemed-consent provisions subject to conditions. The same flag-specific provision must not automatically be applied to Progress Pride or intersex-inclusive Progress Pride designs.

A flag's absence from a general permitted list must not, by itself, be treated as proof that an application is required.

Existing written advice may be used for repeat displays where the relevant design, arrangements and conditions remain unchanged. Fresh advice must be obtained where the circumstances or legal position change.

Where express consent is required, external display must wait until consent has been granted.

4.0 Governance & Authority

The Leader of the Council, Mayor, Chief Executive or a designated member of the Senior Leadership Team may authorise additional flag displays in accordance with this policy.

Emergency decisions concerning national mourning or urgent civic matters may be made by the Chief Executive or SLT.

Facilities Management is responsible for:

- Receiving and coordinating requests.
- Checking availability, condition and suitability of flags.
- Obtaining Planning advice where needed.
- Coordinating the annual calendar and identifying conflicting dates.
- Arranging the safe raising, lowering and handling of flags.
- Recording decisions, conditions and operational arrangements.
- Informing applicants of decisions and subsequent changes.

Each approval must identify the flag, location, display period, decision-maker and any conditions.

SLT approval is required for amendments to this policy and new regular annual commitments. Individual requests may be authorised through the arrangements above.

5.0 Flag Flying Calendar

5.1 National guidance

The council will follow the current DCMS guidance and annual designated days for flying the Union Flag applicable to England.

The Union Flag will normally remain on the primary flagpole throughout the year. Designated Union Flag days therefore do not normally require a change to the secondary flagpole.

Applicable official arrangements for national mourning, Royal occasions and half-masting take precedence over the local calendar.

Facilities Management will check the national schedule annually and monitor subsequent updates.

5.2 Core annual flag-flying programme

The annual programme will include:

- **Throughout the year – Union Flag:** Flown on the primary flagpole, subject to official instructions and operational safety.
- **27 January – Holocaust Memorial Day:** Union Flag flown at half-mast.
- **Second Monday in March – Commonwealth Day:** Commonwealth flag.
- **23 April – St George's Day:** St George's flag.
- **June – Pride:** An approved Pride flag design, flown on the dates allocated in the annual calendar.
- **June – Armed Forces Week:** Armed Forces flag, with display dates confirmed annually.
- **3 September – Merchant Navy Day:** Red Ensign.
- **9 September – Emergency Services Day:** Emergency Services '999' flag.
- **11 November and Remembrance Sunday – Remembrance:** British Legion Poppy flag.

Armed Forces Day falls on the last Saturday in June. Armed Forces Week begins on the preceding Monday. Facilities Management will confirm the flag's raising and lowering dates each year.

The council holds the standard six-stripe rainbow, Progress Pride and intersex-inclusive Progress Pride flags. The exact design and display dates must be identified in the annual calendar.

All displays are subject to the priority arrangements in section 6, operational suitability and confirmation of the applicable planning requirements.

5.3 Proposed additional annual observances

The following occasions are proposed additions to the annual programme. They will become annual commitments only following SLT approval:

- **5 July – NHS anniversary:** NHS flag. The council currently holds two.
- **23 July – Historic County Flags Day:** Hertfordshire flag. The council currently holds one.
- **24 October – United Nations Day:** United Nations flag. The council currently holds two.
- **Stevenage Day or another agreed civic occasion – date confirmed annually:** Stevenage Coat of Arms flag. The council currently holds one.

Holding a flag does not automatically authorise its display. Each addition remains subject to approval, the applicable planning requirements and allocation of suitable dates.

5.4 Annual calendar arrangements

Facilities Management will prepare the calendar showing:

- Confirmed dates and display periods.
- The exact flag design.

- The flagpole or location.
- Relevant approvals and consent conditions.
- Any alternative recognition agreed for overlapping occasions.

Having a flag in stock does not automatically approve its display.

6.0 Prioritisation & Half-Masting

The Union Flag will normally remain on the primary flagpole. Other approved flags will use the secondary flagpole.

Proposed order of priority — subject to SLT approval

Where approved observances overlap, the following order will apply:

1. **Applicable national mourning, Royal protocol and official instructions**, including arrangements for half-masting.
2. **Approved single-day observances.**
3. **Approved week-long observances.**
4. **Approved month-long campaigns**, using the remaining available dates.

Overlapping dates

- During June, the Armed Forces flag will be flown for the agreed Armed Forces Week period. Pride flag displays will be arranged around those dates.
- Where two observances have equal priority, the Leader, Mayor, Chief Executive or designated SLT member will decide which display takes precedence.
- Decisions will consider national guidance, local significance, existing commitments and operational feasibility.
- Facilities Management will record the decision and reasons, update the calendar and notify any affected applicant.
- An alternative date or another form of recognition may be offered where a display cannot proceed as requested.
- Changes to an approved booking must be authorised through the same decision-making arrangements.

Half-masting

- Facilities Management will implement approved half-masting arrangements in accordance with applicable official guidance.
- The start and end of the half-masting period will be confirmed and recorded.
- Any official requirement to return a flag temporarily to full-mast will take precedence during the specified period.
- Half-masting or other applicable national instructions may require an approved display to be changed or postponed.

Guidance and reference sources

Facilities Management will:

- Refer to the Flag Institute's Flying Flags in the United Kingdom guide for practical guidance on flag display, precedence and half-masting.

- Refer to the current DCMS Union Flag flying guidance when confirming national flag-flying dates.

- Follow applicable official instructions issued for national mourning, Royal occasions and other exceptional events.

- Check the current guidance before implementing special flag-flying arrangements.

7.0 Requests for Additional Flags

7.1 Submitting a request

Requests from individuals and organisations must be submitted through the council's online flag request form or in writing to:

facilities.helpdesk@stevenage.gov.uk

Requests should provide:

- The applicant's name and contact details.
- The organisation represented, where applicable.
- The name of the flag and an image or link showing its design.
- The proposed display date or dates and duration.
- The reason for the request and its community or civic relevance.
- Whether it relates to a recurring annual event.

7.2 Notice periods

Requests should normally be submitted at least **14 days before the proposed display** where no new express advertisement consent application is required.

Where Planning confirms that an application for express advertisement consent is required, requests must be submitted at least **10 weeks in advance**.

This allows for the normal eight-week determination period and internal and operational arrangements. An application may take longer where an extended determination period is agreed, so approval by the requested date cannot be guaranteed.

Urgent or late requests may be considered at SLT's discretion. This does not remove any requirement to obtain consent before external display.

7.3 Notice periods

Requests will be assessed against:

- Relevance to the local or national community.
- Alignment with council values and priorities.
- The applicable planning and advertisement consent position.
- Conflicts with existing observances or approved bookings.
- Availability, condition and suitability of the flag.
- Operational feasibility and health and safety requirements.
- Any costs and agreed funding arrangements.

Final approval rests with the Leader, Mayor, Chief Executive or designated SLT member.

Applicants will normally be notified of the council's decision within **five working days**, where possible. Where further information or checks are needed, Facilities Management will explain what remains outstanding.

Any conditions must be clearly communicated. An approval subject to Planning confirmation must not be presented as unconditional permission to proceed.

Approval of one display does not automatically create an annual commitment. Regular recognition must be included in the approved calendar or separately agreed.

7.4 Supplying and funding flags

Facilities Management will first check the existing inventory.

Where a suitable flag is not held, arrangements for sourcing, payment, ownership and storage must be agreed before purchase or acceptance.

Any council expenditure must be authorised through the relevant budget and purchasing arrangements. Any proposed cost to an applicant must be explained and agreed in advance.

Applicants must not purchase or send a flag until the council has confirmed the required design, dimensions, material and fittings.

8.0 Compliance & Safety

Only trained Facilities staff may raise or lower flags.

Facilities Management must ensure that:

- Relevant working-at-height and manual-handling arrangements are followed.
- Weather and site conditions are checked before work.
- Flags are clean, intact, suitable for the flagpole and properly secured.
- Damaged or unsuitable flags are removed from use.
- Raising and lowering dates are recorded.

Flags should normally be raised by 08:00 on the agreed start date and lowered by 08:00 on the day following the agreed final display date, unless different arrangements have been authorised.

Flags intended for continuous display are excluded from routine daily lowering.

Flag condition will be checked monthly as part of routine building inspections. Facilities Management will maintain an inventory recording flag designs, quantities, condition and storage arrangements.

9.0 Equality & Inclusion

The council is committed to recognising diverse cultural, national, civic and social identities through appropriate and consistent arrangements.

Recognition may include:

- External flag flying.
- Internal displays.

- Digital screens or intranet content.
- Staff communications.
- Public communications.
- Other agreed civic or community activities.

Recognition of an occasion does not automatically require an external flag display.

Where external flying is unavailable or impractical, an appropriate alternative may be agreed. Internal displays visible from outside the building must also be considered against any relevant Planning requirements.

Decisions should be explained consistently, with consideration given to community relevance, competing observances and practical arrangements.

10.0 Transparency & Publication

The approved policy and annual flag flying calendar will be published on the council's website.

The webpage will explain:

- How to make a request.
- Notice periods and assessment criteria.
- How decisions are made.
- The flags currently held.
- How supply arrangements and any costs will be agreed.
- How to contact Facilities Management.

The published calendar must distinguish confirmed annual commitments from occasions that remain subject to individual approval.

Facilities Management will maintain a record of requests, decisions, reasons, conditions and subsequent changes.

Temporary or event-specific arrangements will be communicated internally and externally where appropriate. Public commitments must reflect the approval and consent position.

11.0 Review & Monitoring

Facilities Management will coordinate an annual review, or an earlier review where national guidance, legislation, Planning advice or operational requirements change.

Policy amendments and new regular annual commitments require SLT approval.

Routine annual date updates implementing already approved observances may be recorded in the calendar without rewriting the policy. Individual displays remain subject to the approval arrangements in this policy.

Community feedback may inform future calendar changes.

12.0 Glossary

Deemed consent: Consent granted automatically by the Advertisement Regulations where the relevant conditions and limitations are met.

Express advertisement consent: Formal consent obtained through an application where the proposed display is not otherwise permitted.

Council flag-flying approval: The council's authorisation to display a flag under this policy. This is separate from the advertisement consent position.

Half-mast: A flag flown below its normal position as a mark of mourning or respect, following current official guidance.

Internal recognition: Recognition through internal displays, digital content, communications or other agreed activities.

SLT: Senior Leadership Team.

Appendix A – Sporting Events

During major sporting occasions, flags may be flown in recognition of national or local participation:

- **FIFA World Cup / UEFA Euros** – England Flag, where permitted, or Union Flag.
- **Olympics / Paralympics** – Union Flag.
- **Commonwealth Games** – Commonwealth Flag or Union Flag.
- **Local Team in National Final** – Club colours may be displayed internally only, unless express advertisement consent is in place for external display.

Display dates, duration and any conflict with existing observances must be agreed before arrangements are confirmed.

Appendix B – Awareness & Community Flags

The existing policy identifies the following as possible observances. A decision is required on whether each should become a regular annual commitment and how it should be recognised.

- **International Women's Day (8 Mar)** - Women's Day Flag - Express Advertisement Consent Required
- **Transgender Day of Visibility (31 Mar)** - Transgender Flag - Express Advertisement Consent Required
- **White Ribbon Day (25 Nov)** - White Ribbon Flag - Express Advertisement Consent Required
- **International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 Dec)** - Disability Inclusion Flag - Express Advertisement Consent Required

Recognition may take the form of flag flying, communications, internal displays or another agreed activity.

Where flag flying is supported, Facilities Management must confirm availability, funding, the applicable consent position and practical arrangements.

Approval recognises the associated awareness event, civic significance or community relevance. It does not imply endorsement of a political or campaigning organisation.

Other occasions may be considered through the standard request process in section 7.