

Staff Network Chair and Core Group Response to Cabinet Meeting, Flag Flying Protocol, 12 June

The Staff Network chairs and core group have been made aware of the cabinet meeting on the council's flag flying protocol, called by the Leader for Thursday 12 June at 2pm. We would like to acknowledge the DWG's response to the cabinet report and echo its sentiments in unison.

As Staff Network chairs (DWG, LGBTQ+, BAME) and members of the core group (BAME), our voice comes from the workforce. One of our responsibilities in this role is to bring to our members' attention any changes in the council that may affect them. This reciprocal relationship with council officers and members allows us to provide a space for staff to feel supported and to be effective at work – and signals to Leicestershire residents that we have their interests at heart.

We feel that the lack of time between our understanding of this event, and the meeting taking place, has hampered our ability to communicate, and promote the voices of those in our staff networks and beyond. With over 400 members in our groups – not including those who are LGBTQ+, disabled, or come from a BAME background who are not members, or staff who advocate for our communities – it is a significant segment of the workforce whose views on this topic we believe should be heard.

3 days' notice and no consultation have deprived your staff of this opportunity. We would also like to second the DWG's view that the existing protocol allowed for a sense of trust to be cultivated through open communication between the different groups in this conversation. It is our conviction that, no matter the administration, our work is most effective when there is honesty and transparency about the decisions and actions undertaken in this organisation. When open communication begets trust, trust begets a better working environment for everyone involved.

In anticipation of this cabinet meeting, we would recommend the cabinet members reflect on the purpose of flying flags as a local authority: it is an example of the Public Sector Equality Duty, our legal requirement to 'foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who don't.'

We recommend that members consider the reactions that might occur in response to a change in the flag flying protocol and seek out the views of those who will be impacted, especially in a time of increasing instability. This includes, but is not limited to the following questions: what messages could a change in the level of public support send, whether the use of flags is reduced, kept the same, or increased? How would morale of your staff, and their sense of belonging, be affected? Most pertinently, how do members intend to honour the council's public duty, and effectively support their staff and service users in these communities – so that they feel valued and able to thrive as part of the workforce or as part of the county?

We welcome the opportunity for more discussion on the topic, by echoing the DWG's suggestion: for a formal consultation with staff networks before a decision is finalised.

The LGBTQ+ Staff Network Chairs

The Disabled Workers' Group Chairs

The BAME Network Chair and Core Group

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