

Representations received by the Cabinet for its meeting on 12 June**Disabled Workers Group Written Response to Cabinet Report - Flag Flying Protocol.**

The Disabled Workers Group (DWG) chairs have been made aware of an additional meeting of the Cabinet which has been requested by the Leader on Thursday 12 June at 2.00pm to discuss the Protocol on Flag Flying. The DWG note that this is a single item agenda and that the Cabinet is recommended to consider whether it wishes to make any changes to the current protocol.

However, having reviewed the report contained within the agenda document pack, the DWG highlight that this contains the County Council's current protocol for flying flags at County Hall and does not include and suggested or recommended amendments. The DWG are highlighting that this does appear to align with County Council's core values of openness and transparency.

The DWG would stress that the existing protocol is the result of an agreement where significant interaction with the DWG was made prior to the final decision on the protocol. These meetings ensured that whilst the DWG did not necessarily agree with the policy and procedures, we were reassured of the support from the council for its disabled staff and service users. This open dialogue and willingness to engage with its staff networks facilitated a sense of honesty and trust, again aligning with the core values of the council and setting a positive precedent for relations between the council and its staff.

It is therefore disappointing that changes to the policy may occur without consultation with the staff networks, without prior knowledge or understanding of these changes before the meeting takes place. Though the flags provide a visible symbol to the public of the council's commitment, the converse is also important: the visible stripping of this symbol could send a message of decreasing support from the council to our staff members and to the public. This is important at a time of increasing uncertainty, during which we are looking for explicit, visible reassurance of the continued commitment of the council, its members and its staff to make disabled people of Leicestershire – and the council's workers – feel safe, supported, educated and uplifted.

Therefore, the DWG would request that should amendments be proposed to the policy during the Cabinet on the Thursday, 12 June 2025 at 2.00 pm, a formal consultation is conducted with the staff networks prior to any decisions being made.

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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