

REPORT TITLE: Civic Protocols and engagement

To:

Civic Affairs and Audit Committee (23 February 2026)

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Director Approval: Robert Pollock confirms that the report author has sought the advice of all appropriate colleagues and given due regard to that advice; that the equalities impacts and other implications of the recommended decisions have been assessed and accurately presented in the report; and that they are content for the report to be put to the Committee.

1. Recommendations

1.1 It is recommended that the Civic Affairs and Audit Committee:

1. Comment on the Civic functions of Cambridge City Council and provide feedback to support their current development.
2. Note the current flag flying protocol and provide any comment to officers.
3. Note that further reports on the Council's Civic functions, particularly in light of Local Government Reorganisation, will be presented to the committee at an appropriate time.
4. Recommend to Full Council that the City's Coat of Arms can be used by No.104 (City of Cambridge) Squadron Royal Air Force Air Cadets .
5. Support the honouring of the Mayoress or Consort moving forward for their work in supporting the Mayor during their year in office.

2. Purpose and reason for the report

2.1 The Civic Affairs and Audit Committee have within their terms of reference oversight of Civic functions at Cambridge City Council.

The Civic Office maintains support and assists the Mayor in carrying out their civic duties once elected for the Municipal Year. It is part of the Executive Office that support the Leader, Mayor and Chief Executive discharge their official duties.

This report draws the Committee's attention to the Civic Handbook (Appendix 1), which is updated annually, including to reflect best practice and guidance issued by the National Association of Civic Officers (NACO). Officers are currently consolidating information relating to mayoral events and civic activity into a central electronic database to ensure that procedures, records, and institutional knowledge are preserved for future councils and residents.

Also attached to the report is the flag flying protocol which was presented to the Civic Affairs Committee in late 2024, which has been in force since then. (Appendix 2).

There is ongoing work around the role of the Civic Office and Mayor in light of Local Government Reorganisation. It is proposed that a further report is presented to the committee as details become clearer on the future of a new unitary authority for the area.

2.2 This is also an opportunity for the committee to review how the Mayoress or Consort is recognised. There is currently no formal recognition in place.

3. Background and key issues

3.1 The importance of the Civic Office and the Mayor is one which is held in high regard by members of the Council, especially in light of the standing Cambridge has across the world.

3.2 There is a wealth of information gathered over the years which helps officers carry on the traditions of the Mayor. It is important at this time to review that information and ensure

that it is held digitally for future generations, and available to inform the civic functions of a new unitary authority for the area.

3.3 Officers at this stage are reviewing information and compiling it in a usable order before making provision to retain it in a safe manner, which will be predominantly in electronic form.

3.4 **Local Government Reorganisation**

As part of proposals submitted to central Government the City Council has briefly outlined some of the key implications of reorganisation including proposals to continue the civic role and function of the Mayoralty. Further information can be found on pages 97 – 107 of the proposal - [Local Government Reorganisation Proposal](#)

3.5 The City Council's LGR proposal, 'Option B', includes a recommendation to retain the mayoralty and for city status to be transferred to a Greater Cambridge council. The mayoralty, insignia and civic regalia would be transferred through specific clauses in the Structural Change Order (SCO) creating the new council (see page 101).

3.6 In terms of conferring city status on the new unitary this would be through the issuance of fresh Letters Patent, through the Monarch under the Royal Prerogative with advice from ministers. There are precedents for this approach in both Brighton and Wolverhampton in 2001.

3.7 In terms of honouring those members who have served long terms on the City Council the proposal would be for this to continue as part of a new unitary authority, so that members who distinguished themselves on the City Council do not go unnoticed.

3.8 **Flag Flying protocol**

The protocol was agreed in late 2024 as the Council's policy on flags that are flown from the Guildhall and assets managed by the Council. This follows guidance from central government and is in line with other local authorities.

3.9 **No.104 (City of Cambridge) Squadron Royal Air Force Air Cadets**

The 104 Squadron has a long history with the City Council.

In 1939, Sir Arthur Marshall in close partnership with the Mayor of the City of Cambridge, founded 104 Squadron Air Training Corps (ATC) the Mayor of Cambridge for the good of the young people of the town (it was still a town at the time, City status not being bestowed until 1951 by his Majesty King George IV).

Since that time the squadron has grown in strength and stature with a formidable reputation within the RAF and wider armed forces, as well as across the City.

The Squadron provides positive experiences that would otherwise be hard to find for young people anywhere else. It has supported countless young people into careers both in and out of the armed services by instilling confidence, discipline, teambuilding with a determination to succeed.

The 104, provide a Cadet to the Mayor of Cambridge at each full Council AGM and thereafter to accompany the Mayor on civic occasions as deemed appropriate. They also make available a seat on the Civilian Committee to the Mayor or their delegate which provides an institutional link which has existed since the formation of the Squadron and it is envisaged this is to be continued in the future.

To sustain and embed this relationship, building on the Freedom of the City bestowed upon the 104 in May 1999, the following proposals are recommended:

- Formal permission for the 104 to continue using the Cambridge City Coat of Arms on their cap badge – the coat of arms was bestowed by Elizabeth 1st in a charter signed by her Majesty in 1575.

- For the City Council to formally recognise 104 Squadron in its Civic handbook

It is recommended that the use of the Coat of Arms is a decision taken by Full Council at the AGM in May 2026.

3.10 **Recognition of Mayoress or Consort**

The Mayoress or Mayor's Consort plays a pivotal role in supporting the work of the Mayor during their term of office. The committee is asked to consider if there is an appropriate way to recognise their role. A number of authorities present the Mayor's Consort/Mayoress with a gift at the Annual meeting, which can range from flowers to a small gift.

Should the committee agree that this is an appropriate step officers will investigate options then consult the Mayor and Chief Executive before setting some basic guidance and a modest cost limit in the Civic Handbook.

4. **Corporate plan and Council Vision**

4.1 The history and foundations of Cambridge City Council are brought to life in part through the Council Vision and Corporate Plan. However, what these cannot adequately articulate is the historic important of the role the Mayor of Cambridge has fulfilled to further the democratic and civic life of the city for all residents for a period stretching back over 800 years.

[Our vision - Cambridge City Council](#)

[Corporate plan 2022-27: our priorities for Cambridge - Cambridge City Council](#)

5. **Consultation, engagement and communication**

5.1 The Civic Affairs and Audit Committee play a vital role in bringing forward any work that is being undertaken to upload and enhance the role of the Civic office.

Officers have consulted NACO on key aspects of Civic life. Previous Mayors have also provided support and practical experience of ensuring civic events are well-run and received by residents.

6. Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact

6.1 Further reports can be presented to the Committee as officers compile documentation on Civic events and this committee are best placed to review and provide assistance to officers moving forward.

7. Implications

7.1 Relevant risks

No risks resulting from the report. It is important to note that the Council will need to work with members and neighbouring authorities before the new Unitary is in operation. This is to ensure that the Civic function is maintained and relevant for the communities it serves, whilst ensuring the history and heritage is kept.

Financial Implications

7.2 None.

Legal Implications

7.3 None.

Equalities and socio-economic Implications

7.4 None.

Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications

7.5 None.

Procurement Implications

7.6 None.

Community Safety Implications

7.7 None.

8. Background documents

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

8.1 [National Association of Civic Officers – Handbook guidance](#)

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix A – Civic Handbook Cambridge City Council
Appendix B – Flag Flying Protocol

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Dan Kalley, Democratic Services Manager, tel: 01223 457011, email: dan.kalley@cambridge.gov.uk