Cabinet
16 November 2026
5.00pm – 8.00pm

Present: Councillors Thornburrow (Chair), Moore (Vice-Chair), Bird, Gawthrope Wood, Nestor, Smart and Todd-Jones

Councillors in attendance:
Councillors Bennett, Bick, Davison, Grimwood, Nicmanis, Tong and Young

Councillors in attendance virtually:
Councillors Clough and Flaubert.

Officers Present:
Chief Executive: Robert Pollock
Chief Financial Officer: Jody Etherington
Communities Director: Sam Scharf
Director of Economy & Place: Lynne Miles
Assistant Director, Development: Ben Binns
Assistant Director, Public Realm and Environment: Alistair Wilson
Head of Governance & Democracy (Deputy Monitoring Officer): Dan Kalley
Recreational Development Manager: Ian Ross
Strategic Resettlement and Community Equity Lead: Keryn Jalli
Equity & Community Power Manager: Helen Crowther
Deputy Democratic Services Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe
Democratic Services Officer: Matt Hussey

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Amendment to the Council's Flag Protocol

Recommendations of the Cabinet, which met on 16 November 2026, are outlined below:

Cabinet resolved unanimously to approve the following recommendations on to Full Council.

Accordingly, Council is recommended to:

i. **amend the Council's Flag Protocol to include, "29th November - United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, UN flag on this day."**

Background

1. The annual dates agreed by Council to fly flags are set out in *Annex A*. The protocol incorporates the nationally prescribed list and flags that the Council has chosen to fly. On 15 out of the 24 occasions the Union flag is flow. On other occasions non-national flags are flown.

2. The Council's list of flag flying dates does not include the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Neither does it include Ukraine National day or anniversaries of the Russian invasion.

3. The Council condemns all forms of antisemitism and islamophobia, and all acts of violence; it supports peace in the Middle East, the necessity of protecting civilians in conflict zones, of guaranteeing humanitarian access to Gaza, and the importance of upholding international law in relation to the rights of Palestinian people.

4. There have been four requests to fly the Palestinian flag from Councillors and the public since Feb 2024 (*see chronology – Annex B*). Across England the Palestinian flag has been flown on approximately 16 occasions by 12 English councils, nearly all since November 2024.

5. The Council has previously chosen to make cross-party statements through the Mayor, and in a 'motion' rather than flying the Palestinian flag. These can be found on the Councils website.
   - Support for Gaza - Cambridge City Council
   - Motion on Palestine-Israel - Cambridge City Council

6. On 29th November 2024, the City Council flew the UN flag to mark the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

7. The UK government recognised Palestine as a 'sovereign and independent state' on Sunday 21 September 2025. From that date the Palestinian flag could be flow on public buildings without planning consent.

Recent discussion about flying the Palestinian flag

8. On 5th Oct 2026, the Civic Affairs & Audit committee recommended the Cabinet consider the matter on 16 Nov 2026, and that it should put a recommendation to Council on 26 November. Officers provided a risk assessment based on feedback from local faith and community organisations (see Cabinet paper attached separately).

9. The themes that emerged in relation to flying the Palestinian flag included:

   - deep compassion for those affected by the conflict, heartfelt concern for the loss of life in Palestine and Israel and hope for peace in the Middle East.
   - no single or shared community view, and a variety of views within the organisations or congregations consulted.
   - some viewed flying the Palestinian flag and illuminating the Guildhall as an act of solidarity with the Palestinian people.
   - some thought it would negatively affect community cohesion, increase fears of hate crime, and reduce feelings of safety amongst some residents.
   - some raised concerns about rising antisemitism and far-right activity.

Flag Flying: special circumstances

10. The Flag Protocol allows that '*additional flags may be flown in special circumstances, where they are consistent with the Council's vision, objectives and obligations, through agreement of the Leader and Chief Executive at the time'*.

11. The Council has flown the Ukraine flag on two occasions using that 'special circumstances' policy. The first occasion was in 2022, marking Ukrainian Independence Day. The second occasion was in 2023 marking one year since the Russian invasion.

12. Flying the Ukrainian national flag on those occasions was not considered to pose a risk to community cohesion. It was part of a programme to welcome Ukrainians to Cambridge and followed requests

by the Ukrainian government and encouragement by the UK government to fly the Ukrainian national flag.

13. The Council did not receive any complaints about flying the Ukrainian flag. Neither is the Council aware of any negative impacts on community cohesion or incidents of hate crime or anti-social behaviour associated with flying that flag.

14. Other than the Ukrainian flag, the Council has not flown another country's flag.

Annex A – Annual Flag Flying dates

Flag Flying (Union Flag unless specified, and takes precedence / the superior position where more than one flag indicated for a given period**)**

9 January	Birthday of the Princess of Wales
20 January	Birthday of the Countess of Wessex
1 February	LGBTQ+ History Month - Progress Pride Flag - For month of February except on days when Union flag is to be flown
10 March	Birthday of Earl of Wessex
March	Commonwealth Day (2nd Monday)
31 March	International Trans Day of Visibility - Progress Pride Flag
9 April	His Majesty's wedding day
23 April	St George's Day – Flag of St George
6 May	Coronation Day
9 May	Europe Day - Where the European flag is flown on this day, the Union Flag should fly alongside the European flag and, on UK government buildings that only have one flagpole, the Union Flag should be in the superior position.
June	Gypsy, Roman and Traveller History Month (Romani flag) For month of June except on days when Union flag / Armed Forces flag is to be flown
June	Pride month – Progress Pride flag to be flown for month of June except on days when Union flag / Armed Forces flag is to be flown
17 June	Official Birthday of His Majesty the King
21 June	Birthday of the Prince of Wales
23-30 June	Armed Forces Week – Armed Forces Flag
17 July	Birthday of the Queen Consort
15 August	Birthday of the Princess Royal
8 September	His Majesty's Accession
21 October	Trafalgar Day
24 October	United Nations Day- UN flag on this day
November	Remembrance Day (2nd Sunday) - Flags should be flown at full mast all day.
14 November	Birthday of His Majesty the King
20 November	International Trans Day of Remembrance – Progress Pride flag
10 December	UN Human Rights Day- Flag for Human Rights

Annex B - Chronology

Date	Forum	What was asked	Outcome
7 Feb 2024	Civic Affairs Committee	Update of the Guildhall flag protocol, first adopted in 2019.	**Protocol updated.** Flags outside the list of occasions only flown in exceptional circumstances, agreed by the Leader and Chief Executive. No reference to Ukraine, Israel or Palestine.
15 Feb 2024	Council, public question	Cambridge Stop the War Coalition asked for the Palestinian flag to be flown, citing a change.org petition with 203 signatures from Cambridge.	**Declined.** The Leader (Cllr Davey) said the council represents all people in the city. That Council did not fly the Israeli flag when requested. Meeting adjourned after chanting and disruption.
10 Oct 2024	Council, public question	Repeat request to fly the Palestinian flag, pointing to the Pride and Roma flags flown in June 2024.	**Declined.** Reasons given: community cohesion duty and consistency with not flying the Israeli flag. The Leader said the Ukrainian flag carried no cohesion risk.
28 Nov 2024	Council, motion	Cllr Glasberg (seconded by Cllr Tong) moved to fly the Palestine flag for the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.	**Amended to the UN flag.** Amendment by Cllr Bick, seconded by Cllr Davey, carried 25 to 1 with 5 abstentions. Amended motion carried 29 to 0 with 1 abstention.
23 Feb 2026	Civic Affairs and Audit Committee	Civic protocols report, including the current flag protocol.	**Protocol noted unanimously.** No discussion of the Palestinian flag. No direct suggestions to change the flag protocol were put. A proposal to amend the flag policy subject to a motion being agreed at Council on 26th Feb was not agreed.
26 Feb 2026	Council, motion	Part 4 of Cllr Tong's City of Sanctuary motion: add the Palestinian flag to the protocol and light the Guildhall in its colours on 29 November.	**Referred to committee.** Cllr Bick & Cllr Tong referred the motion to Civic Affairs and Audit Committee, agreed 31 votes to 4 with 1 abstention, without a decision on the merits. A Labour amendment (Cllr Holloway, Cllr Wade) had been circulated making no change to the existing flag policy.
5 Oct 2026	Civic Affairs and Audit Committee	Report asking the committee to note officer feedback on the referred motion and comment.	**Outcome:** Officers highlighted the statutory community cohesion duty and need for a risk assessment. Committee recommend Cabinet consider Palestinian flag flying policy on 16 Nov and makes a recommendation to Council on 26 Nov.
14-17 Nov 2026	-	~908 individual emails received by Chief Executive (as of 17:30h, 17 Nov) opposing flying the Palestinian flag on 29 Nov. Likely from residents but unable to confirm addresses. Similar language used suggests organised campaign. Over 97% recommended flying the UN flag instead.	