



Title	Council Position Statement of the Displaying of Flags Around the Town
Meeting	Community Committee
Date of meeting	15 September 2025
Action Required	Recommendation to Council
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1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's views on whether the Council should issue a formal statement in relation to the displaying of flags around the town and if so to consider the draft statement attached to this report.

2. Background

2.1 The last few weeks have seen several Union Flags and St George's Cross flags attached to lampposts around the town and painted on road markings such as zebra crossings and mini roundabouts.

2.2 Many people have welcomed the displaying of the flags as celebrating national pride. However, others have expressed concern about them citing links to far right groups promoting this nationally and giving examples of threatening, abusive and racist behaviour towards them both in person and on social media if they have questioned why the flags are being flown.

2.3 From a legal perspective Somerset Council has advised that it is an offence under the Highways Act 1980 to deface road markings it will only take action to remove flags from streetlights or painted on road markings if there is a safety issue. If there isn't they will remain in place and removed as part of its ongoing maintenance programme.

2.4 As advised by Sgt Jon O'Connor at the September Council meeting, the displaying of a flag of itself is not a criminal offence neither can the police assume the motivation for flying a flag. However, he said the police would investigate if there were behaviours that could be deemed to be threatening, abusive or racist.

2.5 There are clearly strong views on both sides of the argument. Some members of the community are asking for the Council to set its position on this matter and the purpose of this paper is to seek the Committee's views on that.

2.6 Should the Committee consider recommending to Full Council that it does set out its position, a draft statement is attached for consideration

3. Links to Council Vision and Place Plan

Vision

- An inclusive, safe and secure town where everybody is supportive of each other and offers particular care for the more vulnerable members of our community
- Proud and protective of our heritage, green spaces, and biodiversity

Wellington Place Plan

- Inclusive and Connected Communities
- Pride in Place: Culture, Heritage & Belonging

4. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for this consideration.

5. Risks

The risks associated with this consideration are primarily reputational. To not set out a position will risk undermining the Council's stated vision as set out in section 3 above.

6. Considerations

To consider:

- (i) Whether the Committee recommends to Full Council that it issue a position statement in relation the recent flying of flags around the town and
- (ii) if so to consider recommending the attached draft statement or an amended version.

Appendix

The past couple of weeks have seen union flags and flags of St George being put up on streetlights, painted on road markings in the town and placed in one of the ponds at The Basins.

The council understands some members of the community wanting to show a feeling of national pride by displaying flags.

Indeed, the council itself promotes national pride through events such as the VE and VJ Day anniversaries this year and the annual Remembrance Sunday parade and service.

The council also understands that some individuals perceive the way that the flags are being displayed as intimidating or exclusionary especially given reports that on occasions the displaying of the flags has been accompanied by incidents of threatening and abusive behaviour, including racist abuse, both in person and on social media, and acknowledges these concerns.

The council supports individuals wanting to express their national pride by flying flags from their homes, businesses or other personal property but not from streetlights or on road markings. Defacing road markings in any form is an offence under the Highways Act 1980.

It also condemns any threatening or racist behaviour associated with the flying of flags in Wellington.

It reaffirms its commitment, set out in its 'Vision for the Town' in 2022, for the town to be "an inclusive, safe and secure town where everybody is supportive of each other and offers particular care for the more vulnerable members of our community."

The council is currently developing a Community Development Plan and, as part of that work, will consider how to approach/address any issues arising out of this matter.