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4 December 2014

**Name of Cabinet Member:**

Cabinet Member (Policy and Leadership ) – Councillor Mrs Lucas OBE

**Director Approving Submission of the report:**

Chief Executive's

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

**Title:**

Response to petition calling for Palestinian flag to be flown at the Council House

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**Is this a key decision?**

*no*

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**Executive Summary:**

Recommended response to a petition with 17 signatures which says: "We demand that as a city of peace and reconciliation, given the high number of Palestinian civilian casualties in Gaza including a large number of children, the Palestinian flag is flown from the Council House to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinian population."

**Recommendations:**

For the Leader of the Council to:

- Reaffirm the Council's concern about the suffering of Palestinian people, as expressed in the open letter signed by leading councillors, the Lord Bishop of Coventry, the Right Rev Dr Christopher Cocksworth and the Chair of the Coventry Muslim Forum, Dr Abdullah Shehu and issued on 8 August 2014
- Continue to support the internationally respected work of Coventry Cathedral in seeking to end conflicts across the world, including Palestine and Israel
- Confirms that the Council should continue to follow national protocol and local guidance for the flying of flags outside the Council House, which means that the Palestinian flag will not be flown outside the Council House specifically as a mark of solidarity

**List of Appendices included:**

Open letter to editors of the Times, The Guardian, Sunday Times and Observer, 8 August 2014

**Other useful background Papers**

Guide to Flying Flags in the United Kingdom – joint advice from Flags Institute and  
Flags and Heraldry Committee, UK Parliament

[http://flaginstitute.org/pdfs/Flying\\_Flags\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom.pdf](http://flaginstitute.org/pdfs/Flying_Flags_in_the_United_Kingdom.pdf)

**Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?**

No

**Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or  
other body?**

No

**Will this report go to Council?**

No

**Report title:** Response to petition calling for Palestinian flag to be flown at the Council House

### **Context (or Background)**

- 1.1 The Council has long held strong views about the need for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East; an end to the suffering of the people of Gaza; and the resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. This summer, in response to conflict in Gaza, a letter to the national press on 8 August 2014 was sent by the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council; the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor and other senior councillors; the Lord Bishop of Coventry and the Chair of the Coventry Muslim Forum urging the United Nations and the British Government to play an urgent part in bringing about a ceasefire and seeking a permanent solution to the conflict.
- 1.2 Over the summer many councillors made the individual choice to join the regular protests about the conflict held outside the Council House.
- 1.3 Coventry is rightly proud of its worldwide reputation as a city of peace and reconciliation, born from the devastation of our Cathedral in the Second World War. Since then the highly skilled and expert staff at Coventry Cathedral have led the city's work in the field of peace and reconciliation and this leadership continues today under the guidance of Bishop Christopher, with the Council ensuring it supports the Cathedral's work on behalf of the city.
- 1.4 As a result of heightened tensions and an escalation of conflict in Gaza earlier this summer, a petition of 17 signatures has been submitted to the Council which states:

*Fly the Palestinian Flag from the Council House*

*"We demand that as a city of peace and reconciliation, given the high number of Palestinian civilian casualties in Gaza including a large number of children, the Palestinian flag is flown from the Council House to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinian population."*

- 1.5 The Council follows the protocols for flying flags outside the Council House laid down by the Flags Institute and the Flags and Heraldry Committee in their publication "Flying Flags in the United Kingdom". Specific guidance around the flying of flags outside the Council House is as follows:

*During the winter months no flags are flown on the front of Council House building, other than the Union Flag on the main Council House flag pole which is flown 24/7 – subject to the variations below.*

*From 29th April 2009 a full complement of flags were flown on the front of the Council House (see below) and this remains the case until after Remembrance Sunday in November.*

*The flags are:*

*UK national flags – England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales  
Country flags China, France, Soviet Union, USA, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Greece, Holland, Luxemburg, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, South Africa and Serbia which represent countries that were allies to Great Britain during WWII.*

*These flags are then rotated to reflect certain occasions eg funerals, international visitors, independence days as appropriate – please see below of occasions during 2009/2010:*

*April – International Workers' Memorial Day: civic flag at half mast on main flag pole for a couple of hours of the ceremony only*

*March- St Patrick's Day*

*March - St David's Day*

*April - St George's Day*

*May - Annual Meeting of City Council – civic flag flown on main flagpole*

*June 2009 – Visit of delegation from Volgograd*

*June 2009 - Visit of the Serbian Ambassador*

*June - Armed Forces Day*

*August - Indian Independence Day*

*November - St Andrew's Day*

1.6 It is recommended that this guidance continues to be followed, which ensures a consistent and clear approach to the flying of flags.

1.7 It is therefore recommended that the Leader of the Council:

- Reaffirms the Council's concern about the suffering of Palestinian people, as expressed in the open letter signed by leading councillors, the Lord Bishop of Coventry, the Right Rev Dr Christopher Cocksworth and the Chair of the Coventry Muslim Forum, Dr Abdullah Shehu and issued on 8 August 2014
- Continues to support the internationally respected work of Coventry Cathedral in seeking to end conflicts across the world, including Palestine and Israel
- Confirms that the Council should continue to follow national protocol and local guidance for the flying of flags outside the Council House, which means that the Palestinian flag will not be flown outside the Council House specifically as a mark of solidarity

## **2 Results of consultation undertaken**

n/a

## **3 Timetable for implementing this decision**

With immediate effect

## **4. Comments from Executive Director, Resources**

4.1 Financial implications

None

4.2 Legal implications

none

## **Other implications**

**6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?**

n/a

**6.2 How is risk being managed?**

n/a

**6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?**

None.

**6.4 Equalities / EIA**

None.

**6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment**

None.

**6.6 Implications for partner organisations?**

None.

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