



Belfast City Council

Report to	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Flying of the Union Flag at Half Mast from the City Hall
Date:	19th April, 2013
Reporting Officer:	Ciaran Quigley, Assistant Chief Executive and Town Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (Ext 6314)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware of the death on 8th April of Baroness Thatcher. The Chief Executive received a request as to whether the Union Flag would be flown at the City Hall on the day of the funeral and the Chief Executive contacted the Party Leaders on the Council on 9th April to explain that this would fall within the existing Council policy. The purpose of this report is to set out to the Committee the reason for this so that there should be no confusion on future occasions.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The Equality Impact Assessment which was produced in 2004 on the flying of the Union Flag noted that, apart from the specified days listed, the Union Flag could be flown at half mast on occasions, including for funerals of members of the Royal family and of office bearers such as former Prime Ministers, when special instructions were issued to that effect by the Lord Chamberlain's Department (that function now lies with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport). This practice had previously been noted in a report to the former Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 18th April, 2003.
2.2	The issue of occasions when special instructions were issued by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to fly the Union Flag at half mast was not specifically mentioned in the 2012 Flags EQIA, which focussed more on the issue of the flying of the flag as a regular practice. The Council decision in December 2012 in this regard was in the context of amending the then current policy and the amendment focussed on the issue of the flying of the Union Flag on designated days rather than 365 days a year. Consequently, it follows that the previously existing protocol in relation to the flying of the Union Flag at half mast on specific

	occasions remains in force.
2.3	Furthermore, and in any event, the Council's decision at its meeting of 3 December, was to fly the Union flag on 'designated days', subsequently clarified through the Joint Group of Party Leaders Forum and Historic Centenaries Working Group to mean the days on the list issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in Westminster. The DCMS issued an instruction on 8 April 2013 to include for the flying of the Union flag on the day of the funeral and it is accordingly appropriate for the Council to apply that instruction.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	None.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	None. The existing protocol is in line with the Council policy on the flying of the Union Flag.

5	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is requested to note the information and that the foregoing protocol in relation to the flying of the Union flag on special occasions will continue to be applied when special notifications are issued by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

6	Decision Tracking
Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager April, 2013	

7	Key to Abbreviations
EQIA – Equality Impact Assessment DCMS - Department for Culture, Media and Sport	