

## **Motion for Time Limited Debate**

### **Supporting the Merchant Navy and Flying the Red Ensign**

#### **Submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group**

**Proposed by:** Mr Antony Hook

**Seconded by:** Mr Tim Prater

#### **Motion:**

This Council resolves to:

1. Recognise and support Merchant Navy Day on 3<sup>rd</sup> September each year.
2. Call for the Red Ensign to be flown alongside the Union Flag at Sessions House, Maidstone, and any other appropriate KCC civic buildings on 3<sup>rd</sup> September annually, as has been done in some previous years.
3. Recommend that the Chairman of the Council host a formal flag-raising ceremony to mark the occasion, inviting local maritime charities, companies working in this sector, trade unions representing Kent seafarers and other appropriate organisations.
4. Ask the relevant Cabinet Member to ensure KCC's education and skills teams actively highlight maritime careers and the broader maritime sector to young people as part of our local economic growth strategy.

#### **Background Information Provided by the Liberal Democrat Group:**

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> September is officially recognised as Merchant Navy Day, chosen to mark the anniversary of the sinking of the SS *Athenia*, the first British merchant casualty of the Second World War.
- The United Kingdom is a maritime country that relies on seafarers to transport over 90% of our imports, including half of the food we eat, our fuel, and vital supplies.
- Kent has a proud and extensive maritime heritage, with ports at Dover, Folkestone, Sheerness, Ramsgate and many others having a historical or ongoing cornerstone role in the Kent and UK economy.
- There are an estimated 24,550 UK working seafarers with a significant number living in Kent as well as many Kent residents working in a wide range of jobs connected to ports and maritime transport.
- Kent hosts, among other related training facilities, the National Maritime Training Centre at Gravesend.
- The modern Merchant Navy faces unprecedented contemporary challenges, including severe geopolitical security threats to international shipping lanes, and global economic difficulties.
- The Seafarers Charity leads a national campaign calling on local authorities and public bodies to fly the Red Ensign—the official flag of the British Merchant Navy—ashore on September 3<sup>rd</sup>.

- Several hundred councils in the UK recognise Merchant Navy Day including, in Kent, Dover District Council, Faversham Town Council, and Sevenoaks District Council.

**This Council believes that:**

- The sacrifices made by Merchant Navy crews during both World Wars and other conflicts since 1945 must never be forgotten.
- Modern merchant seafarers are the unsung heroes of our economy, often facing dangerous, uncomfortable conditions, extended periods away from their families, and increasing global security risks to keep our imports, exports and wider supply chains functioning.
- Recent years have highlighted the urgent need to protect seafarers' rights. It is vital that operators utilising Kent's ports adhere to high standards of fair pay, safe working conditions, and job security for their crews.
- Given Kent's geographical position as the Gateway to the UK and its deep economic ties to the sea, Kent County Council has a distinct civic duty to visibly recognise and champion the contribution of the Merchant Navy.