

VENUE HIRE AND EXTERNAL SPEAKER POLICY



**SOUTH KESTEVEN
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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1. Introduction

South Kesteven District Council (the Council) is committed to creating an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and where diversity is valued.

This policy details the Council's approach to ensuring that we protect our staff, elected members and our community whilst following legislation that we are responsible for upholding.

2. Legal Context

Local authorities operate in a complex legal environment so it is vital that all individuals involved in the hire of Council venues and external speaker process, including the speakers themselves, understand the legal framework and context that governs this area.

Examples of some of the relevant areas of law are given below.

- Prevent Duty contained within Section 26 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. The Prevent Duty states that authorities in the exercise of their functions must have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism"
- Private rights – people are entitled to protection from harassment, defamation and unlawful breach of their human rights, as well as from unfair treatment under equality law, health and safety law and data protection
- Criminal law – hate crimes, harassment and breach of the peace and terrorism all come under criminal law
- Public law – freedom of speech and some duties under the Equality Act are captured under public law.

3. Objectives

The Council is expected to ensure that publicly owned venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists and are not used to disseminate extremist views. The Council must not allow its venues to be used by those whose views would draw people into terrorism.

The objectives of this policy are:

- To provide an environment where freedom of expression and speech are protected whilst balanced with the need to ensure that our community is free from harm and that incitement to hatred is never acceptable
- To provide a supportive, inclusive and safe environment for staff, elected members and the community
- To provide clearly defined and effective procedures to ensure that the law is upheld
- To provide clear instructions for organising an event with external contribution or using one of the Council's venues.

4. Freedom of speech and expression

This section details the Council's expectations around freedom of speech and expression.

- Freedom of speech and expression are basic human rights that are protected by law
- The Council has a duty to ensure the safety and welfare of staff, elected members and the community.
- The freedom to express views needs to be balanced with the need to secure freedom from harm for staff, elected members and communities
- The Council wants to ensure that all of our events, activities and initiatives are safe, without risk to the Council or wider community, and are within the law.

5. Hiring an External Venue for Council Events

The Council has a duty to ensure that when hiring an external venue for events that Council organisers, volunteers and any participants involved in the organisation of the event are protected from radical and extremist views.

The external venue must not provide a platform for extremists and must not be used to disseminate extremist views. The external venue must not allow its premises to be used by those whose views would draw people into terrorism.

The Council reserves the right to cancel the booking at a Council venue if it finds that the venue is in breach of the law.

6. South Kesteven District Council Venue Hire

External clients hiring a Council venue will be made aware of this policy and that the Council will not permit its accommodation to be let:

- for political rallies or demonstrations which incite hatred or violence or any breach of criminal law and/or spread hatred and intolerance
- for purposes which are illegal i.e. be they forbidden by law or unauthorised by official or accepted rules
- for functions attended by people whose presence may cause civil unrest or division within the community
- to an organisation or individual which has been banned by law.

The Responsible Event Booking Guidance document should be completed for all bookings by an external hirer.

The Council reserves the right to cancel any booking where it considers:

- such events may be contrary to the interest of the general public or contrary to any law or act of Parliament
- bookings may also be subject to consideration from the police to ensure the safety of the community is assessed against the request for a venue booking
- users of the premises may do something that may cause or pose a risk of loss, damage or significant expense to the Council or harm the reputation of the Council.

South Kesteven District Council is committed to creating a community which is safe and inclusive, where facilities and activities are available to diverse groups of people having access to similar life opportunities, knowing their rights and responsibilities and where local institutions act fairly.

To this purpose, no individuals or groups will be denied the opportunity for access to local authority managed properties unless there is a justifiable reason to do so within the spirit of this policy.

7. External Speakers

The Council expects external speakers to act in accordance with the law and not to breach the lawful rights of others.

Set out below are some of the Council's expectations. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of unacceptable conduct by external speakers.

The Council reserves the right to not permit an external speaker to speak at or attend an event, to refuse to permit an event and/or to halt an event at any time if it reasonably considers there may be a breach of this policy or of any legal obligation.

During the course of the event at which he or she participates the speaker must not:

- act in breach of criminal law
- incite hatred or violence or any breach of criminal law
- encourage or promote any acts of terrorism or promote individuals, groups or organisations that support terrorism
- spread hatred and intolerance
- discriminate against or harass any person or group on the grounds of their sex, race, nationality, ethnicity, disability, religious or similar belief, sexual orientation or age
- defame any person or organisation
- raise or gather funds for any external organisation or cause without express permission of the Council.

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the lead officer for Prevent unless there is internal or legislative changes that necessitates an earlier review.

Review Date: October 2025.

9. Further information

- Prevent at South Kesteven District Council
Information on [Preventing Extremism](#) can be found on the South Kesteven District Council website and at Chapter 6 of the Council's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures 2024/2027
- Prevent at Lincolnshire Police
prevent@lincs.pnn.police.uk
Information on [Preventing Extremism](#) can be found on the Lincolnshire Police website

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