

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 relates to the hiring of Council venues for events, conferences, meetings etc by an external user. It provides details of the Council's approach to ensuring it protects its staff, elected members and the community whilst following legislation it is responsible for upholding.

This policy reflects the Council's responsibilities under the Prevent Duty and should be used in conjunction with existing room hire policies.

2. Legal Context

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

The Prevent Duty, contained within Section 26 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, states that authorities, in the exercise of their functions, must have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism".

The Prevent Duty requires specified authorities to reduce "¹permissive environments" and states: "Local Authority settings should have measures in place to ensure their facilities are not exploited by radicalisers. This includes ensuring that any event spaces and publicly-owned venues are not being used to facilitate the spread of extremist narratives which can reasonably be linked to terrorism, such as narratives used to encourage people into participating in or supporting terrorism. Such measures will help to limit access to platforms that can be used to radicalise others".

Under the Prevent Duty, Local Authorities should have "a policy that clearly articulates the activities and behaviours of a group or person which may make them subject to restrictions on access to publicly-owned venues and resources".

In the implementation of this policy the Council must also consider:

- 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.

¹ A 'permissive environment' may be characterised as being tolerant of behaviour or practices strongly disapproved of by others, such as an environment where radicalising ideologies are permitted to flourish. Radicalisers create and take advantage of permissive environments to promote or condone violence and to spread harmful ideologies that undermine our values and society. [Glossary of terms - GOV.UK](#)

3. Objectives

In order to ensure its venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists or the dissemination of extremist views, the Council must put in place safeguards to protect its officers and users.

The objectives are:

- To provide an environment where freedom of expression and speech are protected, balanced with the need to ensure our community is free from harm. 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

4. Freedom of speech and expression

Freedom of speech and expression are basic human rights protected by law.

This policy is not intended to curtail freedom of speech. Its purpose is to ensure that no speaker hiring a Council venue promotes or encourages acts of terrorism or incites hate, harm or violence.

The Council does, however, have a duty to ensure the safety and welfare of staff, elected members and the community, therefore, the freedom to express views needs to be balanced with the need to secure from harm its staff, elected members and users.

It is the Council's intention to ensure all of the events, activities and initiatives which take place in its venues are run safely, within the law and without risk to the Council or wider community.

5. Venue Hire

The Council has a duty to ensure that when its venues are hired organisers, volunteers and any participants involved in the organisation of the event are protected from radical and extremist views.

The venue must not be used to disseminate extremist views. The Council must not allow its premises to be used by those whose views would draw people into terrorism.

Hirers of a Council venue will be made aware of this policy. The Council will not permit its accommodation to be let:

- for political or religion-based rallies or demonstrations likely to incite hatred or violence or any breach of the law i.e. be they forbidden by law or unauthorised by official or accepted rules which spread hatred and intolerance
- for functions attended by people whose presence may cause civil unrest or division within the community
- to an organisation or individual 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 a booking at any of its venues if it finds the event is in breach of the law. It also reserves the right to cancel any booking made under false pretence.

The Council is committed to creating a safe and inclusive community, where facilities and activities are available to diverse groups of people, knowing their rights and responsibilities and where local institutions act fairly.

To this purpose, no individual or groups will be denied the opportunity for access to local authority managed properties without justifiable reason, within the spirit of this policy.

6. External Speakers

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

The Council reserves the right to not permit an external individual 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 any legal obligation.

An external speaker must not:

- act in breach of the law
- incite hatred or violence
- encourage or promote 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.

7. Policy Review

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

Review Date: December 2025.

8. 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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