



EVENT & SPEAKERS POLICY

Summary

The facilities of the Havering Islamic Cultural Centre (HICC) are used by a variety of people and organisations for public events, conferences, seminars, etc. The HICC trustees have a duty to protect its reputation and, by extension, the UK charity sector.

In addition to our own events and speakers, our facilities are hired or used by others who must agree to the conditions specified both in our hiring policy and in this policy, which includes conditions designed to prevent bringing the HICC into disrepute. It is essential that speakers and hirers are aware of our policies and commit to adhering to them. This must include speakers addressing people not only in person, but also by any other remote broadcast or recorded media.

This policy explains our rights, responsibilities and legal obligations, and how we will enforce the policy. It applies to all individuals, organisations and HICC projects using the facilities of the HICC.

It is a condition for use of the HICC facilities that any hirer or speaker must be bound by this policy.

This policy will be kept up to date and reviewed at least every two years.

Introduction

Why do we have an Event & Speakers Policy?

For a public institution such as the Havering Islamic Cultural Centre (HICC) it is vital to uphold our standards. If someone were to use our facilities to promote hatred or violence this would be against our core values. There has to be a balance between freedom of speech and freedom from abuse and vilification. The good works of the HICC could be seriously undermined if a speaker here were to bring us into disrepute. The HICC may refuse or cancel any booking where it deems it is in its own interest to do so.

Aims of this Policy

- To ensure the HICC is not used for purposes incompatible with its objects as a charity
- To ensure the facilities of the HICC are not used as a platform to cause offense, or to promote intolerance, hatred or violence
- To protect the reputation of the HICC both in the Muslim community and wider society
- To protect freedom of speech in accordance with the law
- To foster and promote community cohesion
- To provide a framework for determining the suitability of a proposed speaker

Rights, responsibilities and legal obligations

The Trustees of the HICC have a duty to uphold the rights of people using its facilities. They must also protect the HICC from harm, especially from abuse for extremist purposes:

“All charities must comply with UK law and so must not promote or support terrorism or extremism, or other illegal conduct, such as racial or religious hatred. Nor can a charity’s name, premises or money be used to promote extremist and other activities which are inappropriate under charity law.”

(Charity Commission, [Compliance Toolkit – Protecting Charities from Harm](#))

Rights

Article 19 of [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) states:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

The [Human Rights Act 1998](#), which allows the European Convention on Human Rights to be enforceable through the UK courts, gives protection for freedom of thought, conscience, expression and association, and protection from discrimination.

Freedom of speech is not without limits. There are occasions when it is necessary to curtail freedom of speech, e.g. if it is known that a speaker at an event may:

- commit a criminal offence
- incite others to commit a criminal act
- discriminate against a protected group

Legal Obligations

Charity Law

Trustees must:

- act reasonably and prudently in all matters relating to their charity
- always act in the charity's interests
- safeguard and protect the charity's assets, including its reputation

“Trustees should normally consider obtaining external professional advice on matters where there may be material risk to the charity, or where the trustees may be in breach of their duties and on complex legal matters. In higher risk situations, it will be difficult to see how they could show they have discharged their duties without doing so. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to seek formal regulatory advice from the Commission under section 110 Charities Act 2011 that they are acting within their charity law duties.”

“Trustees must comply with the rules on carrying out political activities. For example, trustees must not allow the charity to be used as a vehicle for the expression of the political views of any individual trustee or staff member (in this context this means personal or party political views).”

(Charity Commission, [Compliance Toolkit – Protecting Charities from Harm](#))

Terrorism

The Terrorism Act 2000 makes it a criminal offence to incite or encourage others to commit acts of terrorism or to glorify terrorism, whether directly or indirectly.

“It is sufficient if the speaker is reckless as to whether members of the public may be encouraged to commit, prepare or instigate acts of terrorism. Charities cannot provide a platform for or condone or support terrorist activities or ideologies. Trustees must be vigilant to ensure that a charity's premises, assets, staff, volunteers and other resources cannot be used for activities that may, or may appear to, support or condone terrorist activities.

“Charity trustees may commit a criminal offence if the charity is connected to or supports a proscribed organisation. Trustees must therefore put in place proper procedures for managing the risks of coming into contact with proscribed organisations, designated persons, groups or entities and take appropriate steps if the situation arises.

“Even indirect or informal links with a proscribed terrorist organisation pose unacceptable risks to the property of a charity and its proper and effective administration. This may be an association with someone who is a known supporter of a proscribed organisation, or allowing a member of a proscribed organisation to influence the behaviour or activities of the charity. Examples of indirect or informal links to proscribed organisations include allowing or using charity premises, events, website or literature to support a proscribed organisation. Trustees must ensure that the risks caused by associating with such persons or organisations are properly assessed and managed.”

(Charity Commission, [Compliance Toolkit – Protecting Charities from Harm](#))

Racial & Religious Hatred

The incitement of hatred or violence by a speaker, based on religious or racial grounds, as outlined in the Government's legislation '[Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006](#)', is unacceptable. One of our main goals as a community-based organisation and religious establishment is to promote social wellbeing and mutual harmony.

Responsibilities

The Havering Islamic Cultural Centre as a charity has the following objects:

- a. Advance the Islamic faith for the benefit of the public by maintaining and managing a community centre and mosque in Romford.
- b. Advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the general public, and in particular the Muslim community.
- c. Promote such other charitable purposes as may from time to time be determined.

The responsibility of the HICC is to ensure its facilities are used to further these objects, not hinder them. For this reason its hiring policy includes the following:

The HICC reserves the right to refuse any booking that:

- *may present a threat to public disorder*
- *may promote or incite hatred or violence against others*
- *may risk alienating the HICC's beneficiaries or supporters*
- *may bring the HICC into disrepute*
- *may cause offence to other users or disrupt other activities of the HICC*
- *may breach the HICC Equality & Diversity Policy*
- *may breach the HICC Event & Speakers Policy*

Other factors the HICC may consider

Even if a proposed event or speaker may not contravene any laws or Charity Commission guidelines, it may undermine the HICC's own ethos and mission.

For example, the HICC may not wish to host an event linked to a business where there was a danger that the reputation of the HICC was being used purely to enhance a business interest.

There are other factors that may raise issues for the HICC; two of the most common issues are outlined below.

Religious Issues

The HICC seeks to preserve authentic Islamic teachings. Such teachings encompass a wide range of views and opinions on certain aspects of Islam. There are also views and opinions which are not part of the mainstream understanding of Islam.

The HICC can accommodate differences of opinion within Islamic thought, and through interfaith work differences between religions. But in cases where an event or speaker might promote views which could be wrongly associated with the HICC, then the HICC reserves the right not to allow these to proceed.

Political Issues

The HICC does not allow the promotion of any political party or candidate, nor do we allow our facilities to be used to canvas people. We do, however, encourage people to take part in democratic processes, such as voting in elections.

For example, we may allow:

- A serving MP or councillor to participate in an event as part of their normal duties
- Pre-election hustings where all candidates are allowed equal opportunity to answer questions from and of relevance to the local community
- A national TV channel to use our facilities for a broadcast programme such as Radio 4's *Any Questions*

However, we would not allow:

- An individual candidate in an election to use any event to solicit support for him/herself or the party they represent
- A celebration event organised by a party for their candidate after winning an election
- A multi-party event where one or more candidates had been unreasonably excluded

These are just examples; the HICC will exercise its discretion on a case-by-case basis.

How we intend to enforce this policy

All HICC stakeholders must be made aware of this policy and will be informed of its contents either through the Events Team, senior management, staff meetings or via internal communication procedures, and through appropriate training.

Prospective hirers of the HICC's facilities must be given a copy of this policy.

Once a request for the use of our facilities has been received, we will undertake reasonable background checks using information, where appropriate, from:

- recognised UK agencies
- reliable media and internet sources
- partner agencies and organisations

Information gathered about any potential hirer or speaker will be assessed in the light of the guidance in **Legal Obligations** and **Other factors the HICC may consider**.

Based on the information the HICC may decide one of the following:

- Allow the event to proceed unchanged
- Require a change the subject matter, named speakers, publicity material, or any other aspect of the event deemed necessary by the HICC
- Refuse to allow the event to take place in the HICC premises

In all cases, a record must be kept of the due diligence checks. Where there is reference to website or social media content that could potentially be removed or modified, then a PDF of that content must be kept with the record. Records must be stored on the main server in the folder for due diligence checks, with all key details being recorded, including who has made

any checks, what those checks were, and who was involved in making the final decision. Where checks have been made on a previous occasion, they must be updated.

It is recognised that in some cases, a decision either way may cause damage to the HICC's reputation, due to conflicting expectations of different stakeholders or external parties; for example, banning a controversial speaker may upset some people, whilst allowing the speaker may upset others. Whatever decision is taken in the best interests of the HICC, the reasons for that decision and must be recorded.

Even if an event has been allowed, there may be circumstances in which the HICC later decides to cancel the event (see **Event refusal or cancellation**).

Event refusal or cancellation

The HICC always reserves the right to refuse or cancel any event where it deems it is in its own interests to do so.

The circumstances in which this might happen include (but are not restricted to):

- A hirer publicising an event before it has received formal HICC approval.
- A hirer making any change to its event content, speakers or publicity materials which in the view of the HICC may have prevented the granting of the booking.
- New information coming to light about the organisers or the speakers which, had it been known at the time of the booking, may have led the HICC not to allow the booking.
- Advice from the Police or other recognised authority that the event should not be allowed to go ahead, or a particular speaker should not be allowed to speak.

Cancellation on the day of the event

There may be circumstances where the HICC has to cancel an event on the day of the event itself, even if the event has already started. The circumstances in which this might happen include (but are not restricted to):

- A hirer or speaker diverging from what was agreed in the booking;
- A threat to public order, from whatever source, where it is deemed that allowing the event to continue may cause harm;
- Intervention by the Police;
- Any other unforeseen circumstances, such as serious power failures, failure of water supply, or any other factors, where