



2025

EVENTS AND SPEAKERS POLICY

1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) regularly welcomes visiting speakers. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that this tradition can continue safely and within the law in a way, which promotes peace in society and community harmony.

2. AIMS OF THIS POLICY

- To ensure COMS is not used for purposes incompatible with its objects as a charity.
- To ensure the facilities of COMS are not used as a platform to cause offense or to promote intolerance, hatred or violence.
- To protect the reputation of COMS 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.

3. DEFINITIONS

External Speaker: Any individual or representative from an outside organization invited to speak at an event not formally affiliated with Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS).

Event: Any seminar, talk, conference, workshop, or gathering organized or co-hosted by the organization.

4. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trustees of Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS) have a duty to uphold the rights of people using its facilities. They must also protect COMS 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.”

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/protecting-charities-from-harm-compliance-toolkit>

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

5. PROCESS FOR CONFIRMING A SPEAKER

- a) The majority of visiting speaker requests will be straightforward and can be handled by the management of the Central Oxford Mosque Society (COMS). However, some may be higher risk or complex and require referral to the trustees for further consideration.

- b) A speaker should only be confirmed where the management of the COMS or, if the event is higher risk, the board of trustees is satisfied that the proposed event and topic will advance the religion of the charity (or any other of its charitable purposes) in a way which is positive and protects people.
- c) To help assess this, the event organiser should:
 - undertake research into the proposed speaker –
 - An internet search should be undertaken to identify risks and an informal reference should be obtained wherever practicable.
 - Ask the speaker to provide clear information about the content of their speech.
- d) conduct further enquiries if:
 - insufficient information is available to answer the questions set out below; or
 - Information, which affects the risk, is found in the research process.

6. QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

The event organiser should consider the following questions:

(Possible answers: YES / NO / UNCLEAR)

- A. Has the speaker previously been involved in illegal activity, or expressed views, which are unlawful? These include:
 - Promoting unlawful violence
 - Inciting hatred on the grounds of disability, race, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation
 - encouraging or glorifying terrorism or promoting terrorist aims or ideologies
- B. Has the speaker previously been prevented from speaking at the charity's premises or elsewhere?
- C. Is the presence of the speaker, or the content of the speech/talk likely to be controversial even if it is not unlawful in a way which might result in:
 - Negative media interest in the charity
 - Significant and/or widespread complaints or concerns among supporters of the charity or the wider public
 - Any issues with public order, including as a result of any individuals or groups who are attending because of the speaker/topic?
- D. Is the speaker a politician/political candidate, or likely to express political views

Provided the answer to each part of questions A, B, C, and D is 'NO' - and the Management agrees with the assessment, the risk is likely to be low and the speaker can be booked.

If any answer is unclear, the Management should assess whether further information can be obtained which would provide greater clarity.

If after this the answer to any of the questions A - D is still UNCLEAR OR YES, and the management committee still wish to invite them, the proposed speaker should be referred to the trustees for consideration as higher-risk.

7. ACTION FOR TRUSTEES WHERE A SPEAKER IS HIGHER RISK

The fact that a speaker or speaker event is higher risk does not in itself mean that the trustees should not allow that person to speak. Keeping that in mind, the trustees need to ensure that doing so is both lawful, and in the best interests of the charity. The trustees should record their decision-making process in writing for all higher risk speakers.

NB If the answer to question D above is YES, the trustees must have regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on campaigning and political activity for charities (CC9) as part of the decision-making process for higher risk speakers set out below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-and-political-activity-by-charities-cc9>

The trustees must be satisfied that:

- i. Hosting the speaker will be a positive way to further the charity's objectives and will not further a political, or other non-charitable purpose.
- ii. There is very low risk of physical harm, criminal damage, or other public disorder.
- iii. If there is a risk of public disorder the trustees must proceed with extreme caution, including discussing the event with the Police in advance and agreeing with them that the event can go ahead. They should contact the Police via an existing Police contact or local neighborhood officer. If none is available, they should call 101 and request support.
- iv. They must take all suitable steps to mitigate risks. These may include:
 - Requesting a full copy of any proposed speech
 - Requiring the speaker to confirm in writing that they will speak only on the content set out in the speech provided and making clear that the event will be stopped if the speaker speaks about other specific topics

- Ensuring a trustee or other senior representative (or more than one) from the place of worship is on site during the speech and can stop the event
- After discussion with the Police), arranging additional security for the event
- Requiring ticketing for the event
- Video and/or audio recording of the speech

Notes

- This policy applies to speakers addressing people not only in person, but also by any other remote broadcast or recorded media.
- This policy applies to all individuals, organisation and Charity projects using the Charity's premises.