

## **CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

### **Proposed Extended Community Use of Parish Hall – Full Council Review**

#### **1. Purpose of the Assessment**

To evaluate whether extending or increasing regular community use of Victory Hall by a specific group may have an impact on protected characteristics, community cohesion, or access to Parish facilities.

The assessment ensures that decisions are fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, and compliant with the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

#### **2. Description of the Proposal**

A community group has informally indicated an interest in extending its existing use of the Victory Hall beyond previous agreed arrangements. This could involve long-term, frequent, or time-intensive use of the facility.

The Council must consider:

- Impacts on other community groups
- Public perception of fairness
- Whether the hall remains a genuinely multi-use community space
- Sensitivity around religious, cultural, or community use in the current environment

This EIA supports Full Council in assessing whether the proposal aligns with the Council's Community Use Policy (2025), fairness obligations, and the wider public interest

#### **3. Who May Be Affected**

##### **Directly**

- The applicant community group
- Other community organisations seeking hall access
- Parish residents using the hall for events, activities, and public purposes

##### **Indirectly**

- Residents living near the hall
- Community groups who may be discouraged by perceived exclusivity
- Stakeholders with cultural or religious sensitivities

#### 4. Impact Assessment by Protected Characteristic

Protected Characteristic	Potential Positive Impact	Potential Negative Impact / Risk	Mitigation Measures
<b>Age</b>	Provides structured community use accessible to all ages depending on group activity.	Excessive long-term bookings may limit access for youth groups, seniors' programmes, or intergenerational activities.	Maintain non-exclusive access. Reserve core availability for mixed-age programmes.
<b>Disability</b>	Facility already accessible; continued use supports inclusion.	Heavy regular use may limit booking opportunities for disability support groups or therapy sessions.	Booking prioritisation ensuring representation of diverse users.
<b>Gender / Gender Reassignment</b>	Neutral – no direct impact.	No identified risk.	Maintain standard hall conditions of use.
<b>Race / Ethnicity</b>	Supports cultural participation where relevant; can enhance community cohesion.	Risk of public perception that one cultural or ethnic group is receiving greater access than others.	Clear communication, transparent booking process, reaffirm commitment to equal access.
<b>Religion or Belief</b>	Enables lawful, respectful religious or cultural community activities.	High-frequency or long-term booking could be perceived as the hall operating primarily as a place of worship, reducing neutrality and discouraging other faith/non-faith groups.	Reinforce multi-use nature of hall; limit session frequency; avoid exclusivity; publish clear guidance.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Neutral – no direct effect.	No identified risk.	Uphold inclusive hire policies and monitoring.
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>	Neutral.	No identified risk.	Ensure continued availability of space for family-oriented programmes.
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b>	Neutral.	No identified risk.	No additional mitigation required.

## 5. Wider Community Cohesion and Perception

### Positive Considerations

- Increased hall occupation supports cost-neutrality.
- Provides structured community benefit.
- Consistent with Council policy promoting community use.

### Risks

- Public perception of preferential treatment if one group receives large, long-term access.
- Misinterpretation of hall as a single-purpose religious facility rather than a multi-use community asset.
- Potential heightened sensitivities due to current local and national climate regarding cultural and religious space usage.
- Risk of reducing availability for other community groups, undermining inclusion.

### Mitigation

- Adopt clear limits on long-term or high-frequency use.
- Maintain guaranteed availability for other groups.
- Publish transparent booking rationale.
- Reiterate equal access commitments in all public statements.
- Use written agreements explicitly stating that the hall remains a multi-purpose facility.

## 6. Socio-Economic Considerations (Non-statutory but recommended)

- Low-cost or free community access should remain available to residents on limited incomes.
- Long-term bookings must not reduce opportunities for grassroots, volunteer, or youth initiatives.

**Mitigation:** maintain balanced booking schedule and prioritise community-wide benefit.

## 7. Summary of Key Risks and Mitigations

- **Risk:** Perception of exclusivity.  
**Mitigation:** Limit booking frequency; maintain fair access structure.
- **Risk:** Reduced availability for other community groups.  
**Mitigation:** Reserve core availability; monitor booking distribution.
- **Risk:** Cultural or religious sensitivity within community.  
**Mitigation:** Neutral communication, transparent decision-making, reaffirm equality policy.
- **Risk:** Hall perceived as a dedicated religious facility.  
**Mitigation:** Clear written terms and proportionate use limits.

## **8. Recommendation**

Based on the assessment, the recommendation is:

That Full Council approves continued short-term or limited extended use only, subject to:

1. Non-exclusive booking conditions
2. Clear limits on frequency and times of use
3. Retention of availability for wider community groups
4. A transparent booking and decision-making rationale published as appropriate
5. A written agreement confirming the hall remains a multi-use community facility
6. Periodic review of usage patterns to ensure equitable access

If the Council wishes to consider significant long-term or high-frequency use, a public consultation and expanded EIA is recommended before making any decision.

## **9. Final EIA Outcome**

No unlawful discrimination identified, provided that the mitigations above are applied. With safeguards, the proposal can proceed without negatively impacting protected groups or restricting community access.

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