

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL

OFFICER REPORT- FULL COUNCIL: VICTORY HALL MARTYN'S LAW IMPLICATIONS

1. Purpose of Report

To provide Members with a concise overview of Martyn's Law (Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025), incorporating the position of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), and to set out a practical and proportionate approach for Chigwell Parish Council, with particular focus on Victory Hall capacity management.

2. Background

Martyn's Law introduces a new security framework for publicly accessible premises and events.

The Home Office has issued statutory guidance, and the Security Industry Authority (SIA) is consulting on how compliance will be regulated.

The SLCC supports the aims of improved public safety but has emphasised that:

- Parish councils are non-commercial organisations
- Resources are limited
- Any compliance measures must be proportionate and practical

3. Key SLCC Position

The SLCC highlights the following principles:

- A risk-based and proportionate approach is essential
- Councils should avoid premature or excessive compliance measures
- There is a need for clear, practical guidance (templates, procedures, and examples)
- Financial and staffing impacts must be carefully considered
- Measures should not discourage community use of facilities

Core Principle:

Parish councils should adopt a measured, evidence-based approach, aligned with local risk and available resources.

4. Key Issue: Victory Hall Capacity

The most immediate and practical consideration is the management of Victory Hall capacity.

Primary Advice

- Maintain strict adherence to the Fire Risk Assessment (FRA)
- Keep events below 200 persons wherever possible

Suggested Configured Capacity

- Maximum seated capacity: 150
 - Based on 15 rows of 10 chairs
 - Allows:
 - 6 feet clearance (front and rear)
 - 4.5 feet clearance on each side
- Officers have explored the feasibility of a third fire exit; however:
 - This is not required under current arrangements
 - It is not feasible without significant layout compromise
- Any reconfiguration involving pantry space or Council storage may:
 - Impact side rooms currently used by CROADs as dressing rooms
 - Require consideration as part of the future Community Hub design

5. Capacity Types to be Managed

Use Type	Maximum Capacity
Seated	150
Standing	180
Mixed Use	160
Stage Performance	180 (150 seated plus 30 backstage)

Note: The stage area and emergency egress from stage are not DDA compliant, which should be considered in event planning. In addition, alterations will be required to rear gate of community hub to enable exit outwards in an emergency.

6. Accessibility (DDA) Circulation Standards

The configured seating layout has been designed to ensure adequate space at both the front and rear for safe egress in the event of an emergency, as well as to support accessibility and circulation requirements.

This arrangement provides:

- Very good front and rear circulation space
- Compliant side circulation on both sides
- Suitable passing space for wheelchair users
- Achievable wheelchair turning space

These standards apply to the level floor area within Victory Hall.

In addition, a new compliant emergency exit pathway is scheduled for installation between 23 June and 3 July, further enhancing accessibility and safety within the venue.

7. Key Strategic Consideration

If attendance exceeds 200 persons, the premises falls within:

Martyn's Law – Tier 1

This introduces additional requirements, including:

- Formal procedures (evacuation, lockdown, communication)
- Staff presence during events
- Training requirements
- Increased cost and administrative burden

8. Tier 1 Threshold

- Tier 1 applies to 200–799 persons
- Exceeding 200 attendees is likely to bring the Council within formal statutory duties

9. Implications of Exceeding Capacity

a) Procedures

- Documented plans for:
 - Evacuation
 - Lockdown / invacuation
 - Emergency communication

b) Staffing and Training

- Trained staff present during events
- Basic counter-terrorism awareness training
- Clear on-site responsibility

c) Financial Impact

- Increased staffing costs
- Training costs
- Additional administrative requirements

The SLCC advises these burdens must be proportionate, particularly for smaller councils.

10. Stakeholder Engagement

All hirers, including CROADs and regular users, must understand:

- Capacity limits are mandatory safety requirements
- They are based on legal compliance and fire safety
- Exceeding limits may:

- Trigger Tier 1 requirements
- Increase costs and operational burden

Note: Hire agreements and booking conditions should reflect this clearly.

11. Recommended Practical Approach

In line with SLCC guidance:

1. Prioritise capacity control
 - Maintain events below 200 persons
2. Use the Fire Risk Assessment as the primary control
 - Provides a robust and defensible position
3. Strengthen hire conditions and communication
 - Ensure compliance by all users
4. Maintain a watching brief
 - Monitor Home Office and SIA guidance
 - Review sector advice (SLCC, NALC)
5. Avoid premature expenditure
 - Defer major compliance costs until guidance is finalised
6. Undertake a future pricing review
 - Following installation of kitchen facilities
 - To assess:
 - Energy costs
 - Staffing requirements (cleaning and changeovers)
 - Overall hire charges

12. Conclusion

Martyn's Law represents a significant shift in public safety responsibilities. However, consistent with SLCC guidance, a proportionate and practical approach is essential.

For Chigwell Parish Council, the key action is:

Maintain strict control of Victory Hall capacity and remain below the 200-person Tier 1 threshold wherever possible.

This approach:

- Minimises regulatory burden
- Avoids unnecessary cost
- Ensures compliance with existing safety standards
- Allows time for national guidance to be clarified

13. Recommendations

That Full Council:

1. Notes the contents of this report and the SLCC position
2. Agrees that Victory Hall capacity limits remain strictly enforced, with a presumption to remain below 200 persons
3. Requests officers to:
 - Review and update hire conditions and communications
 - Maintain a watching brief on Martyn's Law guidance
 - Report back as further clarity becomes available
 - Undertake a review of hire charges following kitchen installation, considering staffing, cleaning, and energy costs

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