

Canvey Island Town Council

Aggressive/Challenging Behaviour Procedure

Confrontation and Aggression

- Staff and Councillors should always try to treat people with respect, regardless of their behaviour.
- Staff and Councillors should stay as calm as possible; it can keep tensions from escalating and may help defuse the situation.
- Rather than insisting that they are right and the member of public is wrong, the member of staff or Councillor should let the person know they see the situation differently. For example, the member of staff/councillor could say "I can see we don't see this the same way". They could also consider bringing in another person who can help.
- If a member of the public is verbally abusive, the member of staff/councillor should tell them they will be able to help them better if they lower their voice. Staff and Councillors do not have to tolerate abuse.
- Staff and Councillors must not promise or suggest outcomes which are not possible to get out of a difficult situation.
- Staff and Councillors should suspend or terminate any discussion where it appears that the situation might escalate to violence (see section *Suspending or Terminating a Discussion below*).

Suspending or Terminating a Discussion

Panic Buttons

The Town Council must ensure that staff and councillors are aware of the location of the office panic buttons and how to use them.

If a panic alarm is available, it should normally be activated when the staff member or councillors feels that the situation may escalate out of their control. However staff/councillors may elect to use the strategies other than the alarm (see below) to suspend or terminate a discussion dependent upon their assessment of the situation.

The member of staff or councillors may simply explain to the member of the public that the discussion is being suspended or terminated and leave the area. Where a member of staff or councillor feels that terminating the discussion might inflame the situation further they can opt to make up an excuse to leave the area such as:

- fetching another colleague who may be able to assist in the discussion;
- requiring the use of the bathroom
- politely excuse themselves giving no reason

The member of staff or councillor may then return to continue the discussion or bring a colleague or colleagues to assist to inform that the discussion has been terminated.

Money Demanded with Menaces/Robbery

Should any person demand money or other assets with menaces, staff or councillors should give serious consideration to handing over the articles demanded. If violence is explicitly threatened or a weapon is produced Town Council owned money must be handed over to

the robber immediately and without argument. Staff members or councillors should attempt to observe as much detail as possible during the incident in order to assist the police with their enquiries.

No member of staff or councillor should attempt to engage in physical or verbal confrontation with anyone.

Dealing with Physical Violence

The above guidance is indented to prevent a situation escalating to physical violence. Where a member of staff or councillor suspects that violence might ensue they should suspend or terminate the discussion immediately by the above noted means. However, should a member of staff or councillor be physically assaulted:

- The member of staff/councillor should attempt to get away from the attacker at the first available opportunity, preferably into another area where there are other people.
- The member of staff/councillor should attempt to push the panic button, if available and/or make as much noise as possible and shout for help.
- The member of staff/councillor is permitted by law to use reasonable force to defend them self. This should be a last resort.

Reporting of Incidents

Internal reporting of aggressive behaviour

Any incidents where the member of staff feels threatened or is assaulted in any way must be reported to the Clerk. Any Councillor who feels threatened or is assaulted in any way within the office premises must be reported to the Clerk. In addition, they should complete the Accident/Incident Form.

The Clerk must inform the Council of the incident.

Reporting to the Police

If a serious incident is in progress or has occurred, the police must be telephoned immediately. Such incidents may include:

- Assault
- Theft
- Criminal damage
- A perceived risk that a person presents an immediate danger to them self and/or others

All staff and Councillors are requested to cooperate fully with investigations by the police concerning incidents on Town Council premises.

Where an assault has taken place, the Town Council recommends that the police are asked to press charges. However, the final decision as to whether charges are pressed will rest with the injured party or the police.

Theft of and Criminal Damage to Town Council Property

If Town Council property has been damaged or stolen by criminal action or intent, the police should be informed immediately. The Clerk will then submit a written report to the Council detailing the incident and loss for insurance purposes.

NB – Further guidance for members regarding behaviour can be found in the Code of Conduct.