

Ansford Parish Council – Emergency Plan for Threats, Aggression, or Violence at Caryford Hall

1. Purpose

This plan sets out the actions to take if councillors, the Clerk, or members of the public **feel threatened**, experience **aggressive behaviour**, or face **actual violence** during a council meeting at Caryford Hall. Its aim is to protect **personal safety**, maintain **public order**, and ensure the Council meets its **duty of care**.

2. Immediate Priorities

- **Personal safety** — remove individuals from danger and avoid escalation.
- **Preserve life** — call emergency services if there is any risk of harm.
- **Protect the meeting** — suspend or close proceedings if required.
- **Record the incident** — ensure accurate documentation for legal and governance purposes.

3. Roles & Responsibilities

- **Chair of the Council**
 - Leads decision-making during an incident.
 - Has authority to **suspend or close the meeting**.
 - Directs councillors and Clerk to safety.
- **Clerk**
 - Calls **999** when instructed or when necessary.
 - Records the incident and supports evacuation.
 - Secures council documents and equipment.
- **Councillors**
 - Follow Chair's instructions.
 - Avoid engaging with the aggressor.
 - Assist vulnerable attendees.
- **Caryford Hall Staff (if present)**
 - Support building evacuation.
 - Provide access to first aid equipment.

4. Recognising a Threat

Threats may include:

- **Aggressive behaviour** (shouting, intimidation, refusal to comply with the Chair).
- **Threatening language** (verbal abuse, implied or explicit threats).
- **Physical aggression** (throwing objects, pushing, blocking exits).
- **Weapons or suspected weapons**.

- **Stalking or harassment.**

If any councillor or the Clerk feels unsafe, the plan is activated immediately.

5. Step-by-Step Response Procedure

Step 1 — De-escalation (if safe)

- Chair issues a **clear warning** instructing the individual to stop the behaviour.
- Chair may request the person to **leave the meeting**.
- No councillor should physically intervene.

Step 2 — Call 999

Call **999** immediately if:

- The threat is serious or escalating.
- Violence has occurred or seems likely.
- A weapon is present or suspected.
- The individual refuses to leave and continues aggressive behaviour.

Step 3 — Suspend or Close the Meeting

The Chair states:

“This meeting is suspended/closed due to safety concerns.”

Proceed to evacuation if needed.

Step 4 — Evacuation

Use the nearest safe exit from the meeting room. Assembly point: **Caryford Hall car park, far side near the hedge line.**

Step 5 — Secure the Room

If safe:

- Clerk secures council papers, laptop, and recording equipment.
- Lock the meeting room if possible.

Step 6 — Await Police / Emergency Services

Provide:

- Description of the individual.
- Nature of the threat.
- Any injuries or damage.

6. Post-Incident Actions

- **Incident report** completed by the Clerk within 24 hours.
- **Chair's statement** added to the next council agenda.
- **Review of procedures** at the next Full Council meeting.
- **Support for councillors or staff** affected by the incident.
- **Consider banning the individual** from future meetings under the Council's Public Participation Policy.

7. Preventative Measures

- Seating layout ensuring councillors have **clear exit routes**.
- Clerk positioned near exit and with mobile phone accessible.
- Clear signage for emergency exits.
- Public participation rules displayed at the entrance.
- Option for **pre-meeting risk assessment** for contentious agenda items.

8. Legal & Governance Framework

This plan aligns with:

- Local Government Act 1972 (public meetings and order).
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (duty of care).
- Nolan Principles (respect, leadership).
- Council's Standing Orders and Code of Conduct.

9. Quick-Reference Emergency Card (for printing)

If you feel threatened:

1. Chair warns the individual.
2. Clerk calls **999**.
3. Chair suspends/closes meeting.
4. Evacuate to car park.
5. Do not engage with aggressor.
6. Record incident afterwards.