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REVISED DATE	XXXXXXX
REVIEW DATE	XXXXXXX
REFERENCE	XXXXXXX
CM10 REFERENCE NUMBER	XXXXXXX
ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS	Time-Out Policy XXXXXXX Dealing with Aggressive Customers Policy (CX team)
REVIEW PERIOD	
This policy shall be reviewed and updated up to five (5) years or more often as necessary to ensure relevance.	

1. INTRODUCTION

This procedure outlines the steps to be taken when managing customers who display aggressive, threatening, or violent behaviour towards Council staff, contractors, Councillors or other members of the public. Its primary objective is to ensure a consistent, safe, and fair approach to handling such incidents while protecting the wellbeing of staff and maintaining service integrity across all Council operations.

Such acts might occur in several ways and could include:

- Direct interaction with a Council Officer at any time
- Via telephone or video conference
- Via email, letter or other written correspondence
- Via social media as direct post or comment.

2. OPERATIONAL AND COMPLIANCE RISKS

Failure to adhere to this procedure may result in significant operational disruptions and compliance breaches.

These risks include, but are not limited to:

- a) **Regulatory Non-Compliance:** Failure to comply with laws, such as work health and safety requirements.
- b) **Operational Disruption:** Interruptions or delays to Council services.
- c) **Reputational Damage:** Loss of community trust or public confidence.
- d) **Financial Loss:** Costs caused by legal issues, disputes, or service impacts.
- e) **Safety and Security Risks:** Potential harm to staff, customers, or Council property due to procedural lapses.
- f) **Risk of Corruption:** In some cases, threatening behaviour may be considered corruption.

3. PROCEDURE

Step	Responsible
Step 1: Early Intervention A Verbal Warning should calmly and clearly be provided to intervene at the first sign of aggressive or inappropriate behaviour, using the steps below. Identify the Issue: Clearly explain that the behaviour or language is unacceptable. (e.g. "I'm sorry, but shouting and swearing at me is not acceptable.") Provide an Opportunity to Comply: Ask the customer to stop the behaviour so service can continue (e.g. "I want to help you, but I need you to speak to me respectfully. If the aggressive language continues, I will have to ask you to leave.") Remote Contexts: Phone: If aggression occurs during a call, warn the customer once. If the behaviour persists, end the call and record the incident. Email/Letter: For aggressive or threatening correspondence, managers with the approval of a Director may issue a written warning. Further abusive communications may be ignored if approved by the Director. Serious threats must be referred to police. If the correspondence is directed at a Councillor support can be provided through Council's Manager Governance and Risk, and Director Legal & Civic. Rationale: <i>This step gives the customer a chance to self-correct and continue the interaction respectfully. If the warning is ignored or the behaviour worsens, staff should proceed to the next step.</i>	Staff Member / Contractor / Councillor
Step 2: Time-Out – Immediate Removal or Suspension If inappropriate behaviour continues or escalates suddenly to a severe level: In-Person (Council Premises): - The customer should be instructed to leave for a cooling-off period. (e.g. "You may return tomorrow, but today we cannot assist you further.") - Staff or supervisors may engage a ranger to assist with removal.	Staff, contractor, Councillor (to engage with relevant Manager / Director where required)

Step	Responsible
- A standard Time-Out is for the rest of the day, or 24 hours in more serious cases. - Customer access (e.g. library card or computer login) may be temporarily suspended. - If the person refuses to leave or is violent, those experiencing the issue should move to a safe location and contact the Police (either by calling 000 or accessing the red duress button available in the CX centre and Library where this applies). - Do not physically engage. Remote (Phone): End the call after one warning if abuse continues. (e.g. “I’m ending this call now. You’re welcome to call back when you’re calm.”) - Repeated calls may lead to a temporary call/email block or writing-only restriction. Written Communication (including social media): - One written warning may be sent. If abusive content continues, further communication can be ignored or filtered. Any threats must be reported to Police. In-Person (Outside of Council Premises): - Staff, Contractors, Councillors should remove themselves from any scenario where they are feeling threatened in a public place, and should encourage anyone else within the vicinity to remove themselves also - If the person follows or is violent, staff should move to a safe location and contact the Police (000). - Do not physically engage and return to the workplace to discuss with their relevant supervisor and manager. Note: In severe cases (e.g. violence, threats), a Council Director may immediately apply a Time-Out to an individual without warning. Written notice will follow.	
Step 3: Escalation – Further Action and Exclusion Duration – Manager to assess with Director: Minor/One-Time Incidents: Reminder issued; customer allowed to return next day. Incident recorded. Serious or Repeat Incidents: Time-out may extend to days or weeks. Time-Outs escalate with each repeat (e.g. 1 day → 1 week → 1 month). Extreme Cases (Violence/Threats): Time-Out may last 12 months or be indefinite. Limited-service access (e.g. writing	Manager/Director

Procedure

Time-Out

Step	Responsible
only) may be arranged. Alternative access to essential services should be considered. <i>All decisions must be documented, filed and proportionate to the risk posed.</i>	
Step 4: A formal written notice must be issued to the customer. The notice should include the following: • Description of Behaviour ○ Specify the date(s) and nature of the conduct. ○ Note if police involvement has occurred and/or if a Protected Violence Order (PVO) is in place. ○ Where a PVO is active or pending, two notices may be required, as PVOs typically take time to be implemented. • Reference to Relevant Policy ○ Cite the policy under which the Time-Out is being applied. • Details of the Time-Out ○ Clearly state the duration and scope of the Time-Out, including any service restrictions. • Rationale for the Time-Out ○ Outline the reasons, with reference to the safety and wellbeing of staff and patrons. • Appeal Information ○ Provide details of the appeal process, including the contact person and review timeframe. • Internal Notifications ○ Relevant internal teams will be informed. ○ The customer's record may be flagged to reflect the Time-Out.	Manager to draft and to be signed and sent forth by a Director
Step 5: Documentation and Reporting • Staff / contractors must complete an Incident Report noting time, place, behaviour, witnesses, and actions taken. Councillors must complete an email which outlines the incident details and send it to the General Manager. • All Time-Outs will be logged into a central register. Records will be reviewed every six months by the Executive Leadership Team. • The report must be sent to the IT team with an instruction to retrieve any CCTV (should it apply). Such CCTV is to be filed by IT and kept should it be required and sought for lawfully via police.	Staff Member, where relevant IT and the Manager Digital, Information and Customer
Step 6:	

Procedure

Time-Out

Step	Responsible
Resumption of Services - After the Time-Out, customers return on a probationary basis. A senior staff member may meet them to confirm understanding. - If no issues arise, service resumes. If behaviour repeats, further Time-Outs or permanent Time-Outs may be considered.	Staff and relevant Senior Staff Member
Step 7: Review and Appeal Process Internal Review: For longer Time-Outs, an uninvolved manager and uninvolved member of the Senior Leadership team (both from differing business areas) will conduct an independent review within one week of an incident. Customer Appeal: The customer may appeal in writing to the General Manager. Appeals will be reviewed and responded to within 10 working days. Long-Term Time-Out Review: Annual reviews will assess whether continued restriction is justified. Customers will be notified of outcomes.	General Manager