

## COMPLAINTS Policy Document

### **Aims**

Watchet Town Council has adopted a procedure to provide a transparent process for dealing with complaints made about the administration of the council or its procedures either directly to the council or referred on by another body.

Every effort should first be made by the Town Clerk or Chairman to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant by less formal measures, or explanations provided before resorting to the formal complaints procedure.

If this approach is unsuccessful, the issue will be brought to the attention of the Full Council at the next available town council meeting, where a Complaints Committee will be appointed to deal specifically with this complaint and others that may arise.

The Code of Practice below will be employed to ensure that any complaint is properly and fully considered.

### **Complaints against an Individual**

It should be noted that the procedure is not appropriate for a complaint made against an individual.

Complaints about a member of the Town Council staff will be dealt with as an employment matter. The matter will be dealt with internally and the appropriate action taken as required.

Complaints regarding town councillors are now subject to the jurisdiction of the Standards Advisory Committee. In the first instance complaints should be addressed to the Monitoring Officer, West Somerset Council, West Somerset House, Killick Way, Williton TA4 4QA

### **Code of practice for dealing with complaints about the administration of the council or its procedures.**

#### ***Before the Meeting:***

1. The person making the complaint (complainant) will be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the Town Clerk.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Town Clerk, they will be advised to put it to the Chairman of the Council.
3. The Clerk/ or Chairman shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be brought to the attention of the Council at the next available meeting, and the Complaints Committee will be appointed for the purpose of hearing and addressing complaint.
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting, with a representative if they so wish. The complainant shall forward the name of the representative to the Council prior to the meeting.
5. **7 clear working days** prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they wish to

refer to at the meeting. The Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely on at the meeting.

***At the Meeting:***

6. The Complaints Committee shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press. However, any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the meeting.
7. Chairman to introduce everyone.
8. Chairman to explain procedure.
9. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for the complaint.
10. Members of the Complaints Committee to ask any question of the complainant.
11. If relevant, the Clerk to explain the Council's position.
12. Members of the Complaints Committee will have the opportunity to ask any question of the Clerk for clarification if necessary.
13. The Clerk and the complainant will be offered the opportunity of a final address to the meeting (in this order).
14. Clerk and the complainant will be asked to leave the room while the Complaints Committee decide whether or not the grounds of the complaint have been made.  
(if a point of clarification is necessary, **both** parties will be invited back)
15. Clerk and complainant return to hear the decision, or to be advised when the decision will be made.

***After the meeting:***

16. Conclusions and any action recommended will be reported at the next full meeting of the Town Council.
17. All decisions taken shall be confirmed in writing within 7 working days together with details of any action to be taken

**THIS POLICY WAS ADOPTED BY WATCHET TOWN COUNCIL ON: 5<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2013**