BRIDGWATER TOWN COUNCIL
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Adopted by the Council at its Meeting held on

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

FOR USE IN COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE COUNCIL

The following procedure has been adopted for dealing with complaints about the Council's administration or its procedures. Complaints about a policy decision made by the Council will be referred back to the Council, or relevant Committee, as appropriate, for consideration.

This procedure does not cover complaints about the conduct of a Member of the Town Council. Such complaints should be made through the District Council.

Before the Meeting

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the Town Clerk or other nominated officer. If the complaint is only notified orally to a councillor, or to the Town Clerk, a written record of the complaint will be made, noting the name and contact details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint.

2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Town Clerk or other nominated officer, he or she should be advised to address it to the Chairman of the Council.

3. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the council or by the committee established for the purposes of hearing complaints. The complainant should also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential or whether, for example, notice of it will be given in the usual way (if, for example, the complaint is to be heard by a committee).

4. The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.

5. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon

which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the claimant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

At the Meeting

6. The council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.

7. The chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.

8. The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the Town Clerk or other nominated officer and then (ii) members.

9. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer will have an opportunity to explain the council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii) members.

10. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.

11. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, *both* parties shall be invited back.

12. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision, but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

After the Meeting

13. The decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.