Hatfield Peverel Parish Council
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Purpose

This policy supports the safe, proportionate and effective use of artificial intelligence (AI) in Council business while protecting personal data, confidential information and public confidence.

Scope

This policy applies to councillors, employees, contractors and volunteers undertaking Council business.

Approved AI Systems

Microsoft Copilot is the Council's approved AI system for Council work.

Council business data shall only be processed using Microsoft Copilot or such other AI systems as may be specifically approved by the Clerk

Other AI tools, such as ChatGPT or image-generation platforms, may only be used for generic research, design concepts, publicity material, illustrations or similar tasks where no Council, personal, confidential or commercially sensitive information is uploaded.

Principles

AI may assist with tasks, but responsibility remains with the user. All outputs must be checked for accuracy, relevance, bias and suitability before use. AI must not be used to make decisions on behalf of the Council.

Permitted Uses

AI may be used to assist with drafting reports, correspondence, newsletters, policies, procedures, website content, procurement documents, project plans, funding applications, general research and administrative tasks. AI may also be used to improve spelling, grammar, readability and accessibility.

Prohibited Uses

AI must not be used to make Council decisions, approve expenditure, provide legal advice, make employment decisions, create misleading information, impersonate individuals, or process confidential Council information through an unapproved system.

AI should not replace professional advice where the Council would ordinarily engage a suitably qualified adviser, but as an initial first step. AI may be used to assist with initial research and drafting of a proposal. Decisions involving significant public expenditure, legal obligations or specialist technical matters must be supported by appropriate professional expertise where required.

Agendas and Minutes

AI may assist with preparing draft agendas and minutes at the discretion of the Clerk, but all official documents must be checked and approved by the appropriate person in accordance with the Council's established governance procedures. AI-generated summaries do not replace official minutes.

Data Protection

Personal data, confidential information, commercially sensitive information, legal advice, payroll information, complaint details, safeguarding information, passwords and security-related information must not be entered into any public or unapproved AI system. Users must comply with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Council's data protection and retention policies.

Transparency and Record Keeping

AI-generated content used in Council business should be retained where necessary to explain decisions or demonstrate compliance.

Training and Review

Users should receive appropriate guidance on AI. This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required by changes in legislation, guidance or technology.