



Houghton Regis Town Council

Artificial Intelligence Usage Policy

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a fast-developing global technology that is becoming integral in society and because IT and communication systems are a key part of the council's business operation, AI is believed to be fundamental to the council's future success.
- 1.2 The Council aligns its use of Artificial Intelligence with the Global Alliance Responsible AI Guiding Principles, including ethics, transparency, human-led governance, accountability, fairness, and human-centred practice.
- 1.3 The council values the role of AI in its processes and wishes to foster an inclusive and collaborative working environment where it can enhance its working practices. The Council recognise its benefits whilst also being aware of the potential challenges it can bring and will take steps to either remove or mitigate these challenges.
- 1.4 The Council recognises that AI must serve the public good, support accessibility and inclusion, and uphold trust in local government services.
- 1.5 The Council's policies and procedures ensure that AI is used in a professional and ethical way and the council is committed to safeguarding the safety and fundamental rights of colleagues, visitors and all external third parties.
- 1.6 There are many reasons why the council is using AI. The following list, which is non exhaustive, illustrates how using AI supports how the Council operate:
 - Enhances productivity
 - Enables the Council to become more efficient in the way it operate
 - Reduces administrative and financial burdens
 - Improves the council's ability to innovate
 - Remains competitive
- 1.7 Through this policy, the council will ensure that it is transparent in how it uses AI technology in its working practices and decision making so that employees and other individuals who may be impacted by it can understand its use and ask questions where necessary.
- 1.8 This policy is not contractual but aims to set out how the Council uses AI throughout its functions and therefore its impact on employment.

2 Approved AI Platform

- 2.1 Microsoft Copilot, included within the Council's Microsoft 365 subscription, is the only authorised AI platform for use by Houghton Regis Town Council.

- 2.2 No other AI tools, applications, or platforms may be used for council-related activities unless explicitly approved by senior management following a formal risk assessment.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This policy is applicable to all employees, councillors, volunteers and workers, including agency workers, visitors and external third parties.

4 Definitions

- 4.1 The council defines Artificial Intelligence (AI) as being the imitation of human intelligence in computer systems. The computer systems are programmed to ‘think’ like humans and therefore mimic humans in the way they think.
- 4.2 In general, AI allows technology to perform tasks that typically would require human intervention in the form of human visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and natural language processing. It is not the council’s intention for AI to replace the need for people. Instead, the council sees AI complementing the work staff undertake, leading to enhanced working practices and ultimately greater business success. All AI use must be human-centred and must not replace human judgement in decisions that affect individuals or communities.
- 4.3 ‘Generative AI’ refers to algorithms that can be used to create content, whether this is audio, images, text, videos etc.
- 4.4 AI-generated content must be used in ways that support transparency, accountability, and public trust.

5 Ethical and Legal Compliance

- 5.1 The council is committed to using AI technology in an ethical and legal way which respect the rights and well-being of our employees and stakeholders. The council requires everyone to also comply with UK legislation and ethical standards in their work with AI.
- 5.2 The council uses AI in a way that is consistent with our council values and purpose. It will not be used to unlawfully discriminate against anybody or invade privacy.
- 5.3 This policy aims to reduce the risks and dangers of AI in the council which can include:
- Generating out of date content
 - Generating impersonal or insensitive communications
 - Using personal information leading to a risk in data breaches or privacy violation
 - Inadvertently infringe on copyright or trademarks

- The creation and use of AI generated content raise ethical questions about transparency and accountability.
- 5.4 The council will regularly monitor the use and effectiveness of AI to ensure that it is being used in an ethical and responsible manner, as well as to address any potential risks or challenges that may arise. This will include assessing:
- if the AI continues to function as intended
 - if the AI produces accurate and unbiased and non-discriminatory outcomes
 - the data that is used to train the AI models and the algorithms that are used in the outputs produced by the AI systems.
- 5.5 The use of AI in council business and the implementation of this policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

6 The use of AI in the council's business

- 6.1 If AI is used in recruitment, during employment, regarding pay and reward, promotion, health and safety, or in ending employment, then no final decision is taken without human interaction and involvement.
- 6.2 All employees and job applicants are informed in writing on how AI is used in connection with recruitment and employment.
- 6.3 Employees are allowed to use generative AI for the following tasks, and must be in accordance with the rules within this policy:
- Brainstorming ideas
 - Research assistance
 - Automating repetitive tasks
 - Drafting documents
- 6.4 Users must ensure that AI outputs do not mislead, omit context, or create misinformation. This reflects the Global Alliance principle of protecting truth, integrity, and factual accuracy in communication.
- 6.5 Although not an exhaustive list, using AI in the workplace must be in line with the following policies:
- IT
 - Data Protection
 - Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
 - Training and Development
 - Recruitment

- Any other such relevant policy

6.6 Employees must not use AI for:

- non work purposes when using council IT and communications systems
- responding to emails or communications, other than as a preliminary draft that would then require tone and fact checked before issue
- internal council reports (other than to contribute to research)
- creating or modifying written content relating to employment such as recruitment, promotion, the appraisal process, pay and reward, absence management, disciplinary and grievance and performance management.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Employer's duties

7.1.1 The Council will:

- consider the ethical and legal implications of using AI technology by ensuring that an impact assessment is carried out and reviewed periodically. This impact assessment will also consider the impact of AI based working practices on employment, finance, third parties, council culture and the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and anyone else who may be impacted by AI through the council's working practices
- use AI technology ethically and responsibly
- ensure that the data used in AI systems is collected, stored and processed in line with relevant legislation
- implement appropriate security measures to protect personal data and to prevent unauthorised access
- evaluate its processes and include human overview to eliminate any risk of bias and discrimination
- regularly audit and monitor AI systems to ensure they are free from bias and discrimination
- inform employees about how the council uses AI systems and how the data gathered is then used in decision making processes
- establish clear lines of accountability for decisions made using AI data
- provide training and education to all employees on the use of AI systems, including how to use them effectively and responsibly.

7.2 Employee's responsibilities

7.2.1 Employees are required to:

- use AI ethically and responsibly and to report any concerns to a manager in a timely manner
- become familiar with this policy for using AI in the workplace, ensuring that it is followed at all times
- never use AI for malicious purposes, to cause harm or to discriminate against others.
- report any issues or concerns they have with the use of AI in the workplace to a manager. For example, if they suspect bias in AI decision making or if they have concerns about data privacy or security or how it is generally being used.
- provide feedback to their manager on the use of AI systems in their job role, including suggestions for improvements or concerns they may have. This will help the council to ensure that AI systems are being used effectively, responsibly, and ethically.
- participate in any training and education provided by the council on the use of AI in the workplace, including how to use AI systems effectively and responsibly.

8 AI Impact Assessment

- 8.1 The use of AI in the council's business operations requires careful development so that the benefits of the technology are enhanced, benefiting all, whilst the challenges are removed or if they cannot be removed, then the appropriate safeguards are introduced to minimise risk. Before developing AI, the council will carry out a full and thorough AI impact assessment.
- 8.2 An AI impact assessment will help the council to identify potential risks and challenges associated with the use of AI, such as bias, discrimination, privacy violations, job displacement, and cybersecurity risks. By identifying these risks early, it is possible to take proactive measures to mitigate them.
- 8.3 AI must only be used in ways that reflect professional ethics, support the public interest, and comply with recognised standards of responsible communication as outlined by the Global Alliance.
- 8.4 Users must ensure AI use promotes fairness, accessibility, and inclusion, and avoids any outcome that may cause harm to individuals or community groups.
- 8.5 It will also ensure the council evaluate the potential benefits, such as increased efficiency, productivity, and innovation, and assess their potential impact on employment, council culture, business finances, relationships with external parties and the health, safety and wellbeing of all those impacted by council business.

- 8.6 The AI impact assessment will also help to ensure that AI is developed and used in an ethical and responsible manner, in line with ethical principles such as fairness, transparency, accountability, and privacy.
- 8.7 It will also provide decision-makers with the information they need to make informed decisions about the development, deployment, and use of AI, considering the potential risks, benefits, and ethical considerations.
- 8.8 The impact assessment will also help to build trust and acceptance of AI by addressing concerns about its potential risks and challenges and demonstrating its potential benefits and ethical use.

9 Training and Development

- 9.1 The council will ensure that employees acquire the skills and knowledge to be able to use AI responsibly when using the technology in their role.
- 9.2 The Council will maintain transparency with the public about how AI is used in its services, including publishing a public-facing summary outlining AI applications and safeguards.
- 9.3 The council will also ensure that employees are aware of their responsibilities, limitations, and potential biases, and provide ongoing support and feedback to help them improve their performance and job satisfaction in an ethical, fair, and transparent way.

10 Privacy and Security

- 10.1 The council will comply with all applicable data protection laws and regulations when using AI in the workplace. This includes the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, which are the primary data protection laws in the UK.
- 10.2 The privacy and security principles the council will follow when using AI in the workplace include:
- Only collect personal data that is necessary for the specific purpose for which it is being collected.
 - Use personal data in a fair and transparent manner.
 - Keep personal data secure and protect it from unauthorised access, use, disclosure, alteration, or destruction.
 - Provide individuals with access to their personal data and the right to have it corrected or deleted.

- Not use personal data for automated decision-making that could have a negative impact on individuals without their explicit consent.
- 10.3 Risk assessments must be overseen by the Head of Democratic Services, who is accountable for governance of AI-related activities. The Data Protection Officer will review all assessments relating to privacy and data protection. This reflects the Global Alliance requirement for clear human-led governance.
- 10.4 A risk assessment is not required for routine or low-risk business use; however, any change in how AI is deployed must trigger a review. AI deployment refers to any workflow, system, or communication process where AI influences internal decisions or public-facing outputs.
- 10.5 The Council will take all reasonable steps to protect the security of personal data that is used in AI systems. This includes:
- Using appropriate technical and organisational security measures to protect personal data from unauthorised access, use, disclosure, alteration, or destruction.
 - Regularly testing and assessing the effectiveness of these security measures.
 - Keeping personal data up-to-date and accurate.
 - Deleting personal data when it is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was collected.
- 10.6 Furthermore, employees have the right to:
- Be informed about the use of AI in the workplace.
 - Request access to their personal data that is used in AI systems.
 - Request that their personal data be corrected or deleted.
 - Object to the use of their personal data for automated decision-making.

11 Intellectual property issues

- 11.1 The council requires all employees to proceed with caution when using content created by AI because intellectual property issues have not yet been legally resolved.
- 11.2 If employees are producing content for external publication (including sending to residents, councillors or any other third party) and are using AI to assist with its creation then employees should seek the approval of their line manager before any publication or transmission so that any intellectual property risks can be properly assessed.
- 11.3 The council may require employees to identify any AI generated content that has been used in their work when the work is made public or disclosed to clients or other third parties.

12 Concerns and Complaints

- 12.1 Employees can raise concerns or complaints about the use of AI technology in the workplace. In the first instance, employees are encouraged to raise their concerns directly with their immediate line manager. Alternatively, concerns or complaints can be raised with Head of Democratic Services. Further information on how to raise a complaint please refer to the council's Grievance Policy.
- 12.2 The Council will periodically audit AI-assisted work to identify and mitigate bias, ensuring alignment with global ethical standards for fairness and accountability.
- 12.3 If an employee has any concerns about the privacy or security of their personal data that is used in AI systems, they can contact Houghton Regis Town Council's Data Protection Officer or Head of Democratic Services.

13 Disciplinary

- 13.1 Failure to adhere to this policy may be a gross misconduct offence and may result in action being taken under the council's disciplinary policy, which could lead to dismissal. Depending on the nature of the offence it may also be necessary to notify the police.
- 13.2 Anyone who discovers someone abusing the council's computer, email or internet facilities should inform that person's manager or the Head of Corporate Services. An employee who is found to be concealing the activities of a work colleague who is abusing the council's computer, email or internet facilities and AI policy may face disciplinary action themselves.

14 Related policies and documents

- Bullying and harassment
- Data protection
- Disciplinary
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Fraud prevention
- Grievance
- IT
- Recruitment and selection
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- Social media
- Whistleblowing

The above list is not exhaustive.

15 Further information

Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to The Head of Democratic Services.

16 Training and Awareness

16.1 Mandatory training will be provided covering:

- AI ethics and the Global Alliance principles
- Identifying and mitigating bias
- Privacy, data protection, and secure use
- Transparency and disclosure requirements
- Reviewing AI outputs for accuracy and context
- Responsible prompt creation and safe content practices

16.2 Role-specific training will be provided for managers, data handlers, and staff producing public communications.

17 Review

17.1 This policy will be reviewed annually and when significant regulatory or technological changes occur.

18 Policy owner

This policy is owned and maintained by The Head of Democratic Services.

Microsoft 365 Copilot Data Use and Model Training Assurance:

In line with Microsoft's published commitments, the Council confirms that any data, prompts, or responses provided to Microsoft 365 Copilot are not used to train foundation AI models.

Microsoft states: 'Prompts, responses, and data accessed through Microsoft Graph aren't used to train foundation LLMs' and 'Microsoft will never use your files or communications with Copilot to train models or share with other customers.' For transparency, the Council will monitor any future model changes introduced by Microsoft and update this policy to ensure these protections remain.

Reference: <https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/copilot/microsoft-365/microsoft-365-copilot-privacy>