Liskeard Town Council

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage Policy

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the capability of computer systems to perform tasks typically associated with human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem solving, perception, and decision making.

1. Purpose

Liskeard Town Council recognises that AI technologies can support the efficient delivery of council services, improve productivity, assist research and draft documents, and enhance communication with residents.

This policy sets out how AI may be used by councillors, employees, contractors and volunteers while ensuring compliance with legal obligations, maintaining public trust, protecting confidential information, and supporting sound decision-making.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All council employees.
- Elected members when acting in their council capacity.
- Contractors, consultants and volunteers working on behalf of the Council.
- Any AI systems or AI-enabled applications used for council business.

Examples include:

- Microsoft Copilot
- ChatGPT
- Google Gemini
- AI transcription services
- AI-powered document drafting tools
- AI image and presentation generation tools

3. Definitions

- **AI System:** Any software or service that generates content, predictions or analysis using machine-learning or similar techniques.
- **Public AI System:** Any AI tool hosted externally and not under the Council's direct control.
- **Material Contribution:** AI-generated content that forms a meaningful part of a report, communication or decision-support document.
- **Approved AI Tools:** AI systems authorised by the Town Clerk following security, data protection and governance checks.
- **Personal Data:** Any information relating to an identifiable individual, as defined by UK GDPR.
- **Special Category Data:** Sensitive personal data including health, ethnicity, political opinions, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and other categories defined in UK GDPR.

4. Policy Statement

AI may be used to support council operations where it:

- Improves efficiency and productivity.
- Supports staff in administrative tasks.
- Enhances access to information.
- Assists with routine drafting and formatting.

AI will not replace human judgement, professional expertise, accountability or decision-making.

The Council remains responsible for all decisions, advice, communications and actions arising from the use of AI.

5. Guiding Principles

5.1 Transparency

Where AI has materially contributed to reports, publications or public communications, this should be disclosed.

5.2 Accountability

Council officers and members remain accountable for all content produced using AI.

No decision affecting residents, employees, contractors or suppliers may be made solely by AI.

5.3 Accuracy

Information generated by AI must be checked for:

- Accuracy
- Completeness
- Bias
- Compliance with legislation and council policy

AI-generated content must never be accepted without review.

5.4 Privacy and Data Protection

The Council will comply with all relevant laws including:

- UK GDPR
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Personal, confidential or sensitive information must not be entered into public AI systems unless appropriate safeguards and approvals are in place.

5.5 Fairness

AI tools shall not be used in a way that unlawfully discriminates against individuals or groups.

5.6 Security

Only approved AI tools may be used for council business.
A register of approved tools will be maintained.

6. Permitted Uses of AI

Subject to appropriate review and verification, AI may be used for:

Administrative Tasks

- Drafting routine correspondence
- Summarising documents
- Creating meeting agendas
- Producing first drafts of policies and procedures, including risk assessments
- Preparing reports and briefing notes
- Supporting accessibility

Research Support

- Gathering background information
- Identifying legislation and guidance
- Comparing best practices

Communications

- Drafting website content
- Drafting social media posts
- Creating newsletter content
- Preparing public engagement materials but not posters

Productivity

- Formatting documents
- Generating templates
- Creating meeting notes
- Assisting project planning

7. Prohibited Uses

The following activities are prohibited unless specifically authorised by the Town Clerk and supported by appropriate safeguards:

Data Input

Users must not enter into public AI systems:

- Personal data relating to residents
- Sensitive personal data
- Employee records
- Confidential council information
- Financial account information
- Legal advice or legally privileged material
- Information classified as confidential or restricted

Decision-Making

AI must not be used as the basis for any decision.

Misrepresentation

Users must not:

- Present AI-generated information as verified fact without checking.
- Create misleading content.

- Use AI to imitate individuals without permission.
- Use AI to generate inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory material.

8. Verification Requirements

Before any AI-generated content is used externally or relied upon internally, users must:

1. Check factual accuracy.
2. Verify references and legal citations.
3. Confirm compliance with Council policies.
4. Ensure content is free from bias and inappropriate language.
5. Apply professional judgement.

The user remains responsible for the final content.

9. Data Protection and Information Governance

When using AI, staff and councillors must:

- Follow the Council's Data Protection Policy.
- Use only approved systems and accounts.
- Report data breaches immediately.
- Seek advice from the senior leadership team where necessary.

Any proposed AI tool involving personal data must undergo appropriate data protection and security assessments before implementation.

10. Copyright and Intellectual Property

Users should be aware that:

- AI-generated content may be subject to copyright restrictions.
- AI-generated images and text may unintentionally reproduce copyrighted material.
- Existing copyrights must be respected.
- All promotional materials must be approved by a member of the senior leadership team or other approved officer
- Published content remains the responsibility of the Council.

Where required, sources should be acknowledged and records retained.

11. Training and Awareness

Staff, councillors and volunteers using AI tools will be provided with appropriate guidance and training covering:

- Responsible AI use
- Data protection
- Information security
- Content verification
- Ethical considerations

12. Monitoring and Compliance

The Council reserves the right to:

- Monitor the use of approved AI systems.
- Review compliance with this policy.
- Restrict or withdraw access where misuse is identified.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action and, where appropriate, referral to external authorities.

13. Handling AI-Generated Errors

Artificial Intelligence systems can produce inaccurate, misleading, incomplete, biased or fabricated information (sometimes referred to as "hallucinations"). Users must therefore treat all AI-generated content as a draft requiring human review.

13.1 Identifying Errors

Users should be alert to:

- Incorrect facts or figures.
- Invented references, legislation or case law.
- Outdated information.
- Misleading summaries.
- Biased or discriminatory language.
- Incorrect interpretations of council policy.
- Errors in calculations or financial information.

13.2 Correcting Errors

Where an AI-generated error is identified:

1. The information must be independently verified using reliable sources.
2. The content must be corrected before use or publication.
3. Any significant changes should be documented where the content forms part of official council business.
4. The corrected version must be reviewed by the Town Clerk before release.

13.3 Published Errors

If inaccurate AI-generated information has been published or shared:

- The error must be corrected as soon as practicable.
- Any affected parties should be informed where appropriate.
- A revised version should be issued clearly identifying any corrections.
- The incident should be reported to the Town Clerk or designated manager.

13.4 Data Protection Incidents

If a user accidentally enters personal, confidential or sensitive information into an AI system:

- The incident must be reported immediately to the Town Clerk
- Appropriate containment and mitigation measures must be implemented.
- Where required, consideration must be given to reporting the incident to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

13.5 Learning from Errors

The Council will use identified AI-related errors as learning opportunities to:

- Improve staff awareness and training.
- Strengthen guidance on AI use.
- Review approved AI tools and processes.
- Reduce the risk of similar incidents occurring in the future.

13.6 Escalation of Significant Errors

Any AI-generated error that could:

- Affect a council decision;
- Cause financial loss;
- Result in legal or regulatory non-compliance;
- Impact public confidence; or
- Cause harm to residents, staff or councillors

must be reported immediately to the Town Clerk and, where appropriate, to the relevant committee or Council.

14. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if:

- Significant changes occur in legislation;
- New AI technologies are adopted;
- National guidance affecting local government is issued.

Transparency Statement: Artificial Intelligence (AI) was used to assist in the drafting of this policy. The final content has been reviewed and approved by Liskeard Town Council, which retains full responsibility for the document.

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Appendix A: Quick Rules for Users

DO

✅ Use AI for drafting, research and productivity tasks.
✅ Check all AI-generated content before use.
✅ Use approved council systems.
✅ Protect personal and confidential data.
✅ Apply professional judgement at all times.

DON'T

❌ Upload personal or confidential information into public AI tools.
❌ Assume AI outputs are accurate.
❌ Allow AI to make decisions on behalf of the Council.
❌ Use AI in a way that could be discriminatory or misleading.
❌ Publish AI-generated content without review.