WEST HANNINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) POLICY

1. Introduction

West Hanningfield Parish Council recognises that Artificial Intelligence (AI) can assist officers and councillors in carrying out council business more efficiently. This Policy sets out the rules governing the use of AI technologies by the Council.

This Policy applies to all councillors, employees, contractors and anyone acting on behalf of the Council.

2. Definition of Artificial Intelligence

For the purposes of this Policy, Artificial Intelligence (AI) includes software, applications and online services that generate, analyse, summarise, edit or interpret content using machine learning or similar technologies.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- ChatGPT
- Microsoft Copilot
- Google Gemini
- Claude
- Perplexity
- AI-enabled features within Microsoft 365 and other software products

3. General Principles

The Council's use of AI shall be guided by the following principles:

- AI shall be used as an aid to decision-making, not as a substitute for human judgement.
- All decisions remain the responsibility of the Council, its committees, or authorised officers.
- AI-generated content must be reviewed and checked before use.
- Users remain responsible for the accuracy of any information produced using AI.
- AI must be used in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures.

4. Permitted Uses

AI may be used for:

- Drafting agendas, minutes and reports.
- Preparing correspondence and communications.
- Research and information gathering.
- Summarising documents and legislation.
- Producing training and guidance materials.
- Assisting with website and newsletter content.
- Improving the readability and accessibility of documents.

5. Prohibited Uses

AI must not be used:

- To make decisions on behalf of the Council.
- To determine planning responses or recommendations without human review.
- To make employment, disciplinary or recruitment decisions.
- To approve financial transactions.
- To generate misleading or deceptive content.
- To create or alter official records in a way that misrepresents council decisions.
- In any manner that would breach legislation or Council policies.

6. Data Protection and Confidentiality

Users must not enter into public AI systems:

- Personal data unless there is a lawful basis and the system has been approved by the Council.
- Special category personal data.
- Confidential employment information.
- Information subject to legal privilege.
- Sensitive financial information.
- Information designated as confidential by the Council.

Users must comply with:

- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- The Data Protection Act 2018.
- The Council's Data Protection Policies.

7. Accuracy and Verification

AI systems can produce inaccurate, incomplete or misleading information.
Before any AI-generated content is used:

- Facts must be verified.
- References and quotations must be checked.
- Legal and financial information must be independently validated where appropriate.
- The content must be reviewed by the user.

No Council document shall be issued solely on the basis of AI-generated content without human review.

8. Transparency

The Council may disclose the use of AI where appropriate.
Where AI has materially assisted in the preparation of a significant report, policy or publication, the Council may acknowledge its use.

9. Security

Only AI systems approved by the Clerk, or otherwise authorised by the Council, should be used for Council business.
Users must:

- Protect passwords and account credentials.
- Use Council-issued email addresses for Council business where applicable.
- Follow the Council's IT and Electronic Communications Policy.

10. Monitoring and Compliance

Failure to comply with this Policy may result in:

- Withdrawal of access to AI tools.
- Internal disciplinary action (for employees).
- Referral to the Monitoring Officer or relevant authority where appropriate.

11. Review

This Policy shall be reviewed annually or sooner if required by changes in legislation, guidance or technology.