



CLIFFE AND CLIFFE WOODS PARISH COUNCIL

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) POLICY

1. Introduction and Purpose

Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council recognises that Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents opportunities to support local governance and the services provided to our community. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has called on parish and town councils to take a balanced and forward-looking approach to AI, and this policy is intended to put a sensible framework in place ahead of any wider need, consistent with that view.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a safe, ethical, and transparent framework for the use of AI tools. It ensures that, whatever use is made of AI, the Council maintains compliance with data protection law, preserves public trust, and keeps democratic accountability solely with elected members and appointed officers. Adopting this policy now is a precautionary governance step, not a signal that the Council intends to expand its use of AI; any change to current practice is addressed in Section 3 below.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals acting on behalf of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council, including Parish Councillors, the Parish Clerk and any council staff, and volunteers, contractors, or third-party agencies undertaking work for the Council.

3. Statement of Current Use

As at the date of this draft, the Council's use of AI is limited to:

- Drafting and formatting social media content
- Assistance with designing posters and visual materials (e.g. using built-in AI features in tools such as Canva)
- Preparing and formatting presentation slides, including for the Annual Parish Meeting

No other use of AI is currently made by the Council. This policy is drafted to cover this existing light-touch use and to set out, in advance, the conditions under which any broader use could be considered in future — not to authorise an expansion of current practice.

4. Core Principles

The Council's use of AI is governed by five core principles, consistent with the data protection, fairness, and transparency principles that inform responsible AI and algorithmic use generally across the public sector, including local authorities such as Medway Council:

- **Data Privacy and Security:** AI usage must strictly adhere to the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- **Transparency:** The Council will be open with residents about how and when AI is used to support public services.
- **Fairness and Bias Prevention:** The Council will remain vigilant against AI-generated bias, ensuring tools do not disproportionately disadvantage any community group.

- **Ethical Use:** AI must be used responsibly, legally, and in a manner that upholds the integrity of the Council.
- **Accessibility:** Any public-facing material generated with the assistance of AI must be accessible and easily understood by all residents.

5. Permitted and Prohibited Uses

5.1 Current confirmed uses. The uses listed in Section 3 (social media content, poster and visual design assistance, presentation slides) are permitted, subject to the safeguards in this policy.

5.2 Other uses permitted in principle, with safeguards. Should the Council's use of AI extend beyond Section 3, the following are also permitted, subject to the safeguards in this policy: drafting non-confidential communications such as newsletters and routine emails; summarising lengthy public documents, consultation responses, or planning frameworks; brainstorming ideas for community projects or structuring grant applications; and proofreading, formatting, or refining the tone of draft minutes or reports. Where any of these moves from occasional to routine practice, this should be noted to the Council so this policy continues to accurately describe what is actually happening.

5.3 Uses requiring prior Council approval. The following require a specific decision of the Council (or relevant committee) before they may be used: procuring or subscribing to any dedicated or paid-for AI tool or system; using AI to process personal or sensitive resident data in any form; and any form of automated decision-making affecting residents, staff, or council resources.

5.4 Embedded AI in existing software. This policy applies equally to AI features embedded within third-party software the Council already uses (e.g. Microsoft Copilot, Zoom transcription, Canva AI). Officers and Councillors must ensure that enabling or using these built-in features does not inadvertently share confidential council data or constituent information with the software provider's public AI training models.

5.5 Prohibited uses. AI must not be used in ways that compromise data security or democratic processes. Prohibited uses include: entering personal, sensitive, or confidential data (e.g. resident complaints, unredacted financial records) into public AI tools such as the free versions of ChatGPT, Claude, or Google Gemini; delegating any form of automated decision-making affecting residents, staff, or council resources; generating content that infringes copyright, intellectual property, or plagiarism rules; and using AI as a substitute for formal legal, financial, or professional planning advice.

6. Human Oversight and Accuracy (The "Human in the Loop" Rule)

AI systems are assistive tools, not substitutes for human judgement. AI platforms are known to occasionally produce inaccurate or fabricated information ("hallucinations"). Therefore: AI must never be used to make democratic decisions; all AI-generated content must be thoroughly reviewed, fact-checked, and approved by a human (the Clerk or a Councillor) before being published, circulated, or acted upon; and the Council accepts full responsibility for the accuracy and legality of all published materials, regardless of whether AI was used in their creation.

7. Confidentiality and Data Protection

The integration of AI must not compromise the Council's data protection obligations. Officers and Councillors must treat interactions with public AI models as if they are posting information on a public noticeboard. If the Council wishes to procure a closed, secure AI system designed specifically for processing confidential or personal data, it must first complete a Data

Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA), consistent with the Council's wider data protection arrangements.

Incident reporting: If a Councillor, officer, or contractor suspects that sensitive, personal, or confidential Council data has been inadvertently entered into an unapproved or public AI system, this must be reported immediately to the Parish Clerk. This will be treated as a potential data breach and handled accordingly.

8. External AI and Public Submissions

The Council recognises that members of the public, developers, and local organisations may use AI to draft correspondence or submit evidence (e.g. planning objections, photographs of local issues). The Council expects all submitted information to be factually accurate. If the Council suspects that photographic evidence or formal submissions have been synthetically generated or altered to mislead it, it reserves the right to request primary sources or disregard the evidence until it can be manually verified.

9. Records and Freedom of Information

Drafts, prompts, and outputs produced with AI assistance in the course of Council business are treated in the same way as any other Council record for the purposes of retention and Freedom of Information / Environmental Information Regulations requests.

10. Transparency Declarations

To maintain public trust, the Council commits to transparency regarding AI-generated content. If a significant council document, formal report, or public consultation was heavily drafted or structured using AI, a brief transparency declaration should be included: *"This document was drafted with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence and has been fully reviewed, fact-checked, and approved by Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council."*

11. Training and Awareness

The Council will share relevant updates and best practice from NALC regarding AI as they become available. Councillors and the Clerk are encouraged to maintain a basic awareness of AI capabilities and risks.

12. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if significant changes in legislation or updated guidance from NALC or Medway Council are issued.

Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council

AI Quick Usage Guide (The Do's & Do Not's)

This guide explains how to safely use AI tools in your role as a Councillor, Clerk, or Volunteer. It reflects the Council's current confirmed use of AI: drafting social media content, assisting with poster/visual design (e.g. Canva), and preparing presentation slides such as for the Annual Parish Meeting.

What AI CAN be used for

You may use AI to support routine council work where no sensitive information is involved: drafting social media posts, newsletters, and website text; designing posters and visual materials; preparing presentation slides; summarising published reports or planning documents; brainstorming community ideas; and improving wording, spelling, or tone of documents. Think of AI as a writing/design assistant, not a decision-maker.

What AI MUST NOT be used for

Never use AI for anything involving confidential or sensitive information: resident complaints or personal details; financial records that are not already public; internal or confidential council discussions; staffing matters; or legal or enforcement issues. Never let AI make decisions on behalf of the Council, treat AI output as fact without checking it, or use AI instead of proper legal, financial, or planning advice. If in doubt: leave it out.

Golden Rule: Treat AI like a public noticeboard

Anything typed into public AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude) could be stored or reused by the provider. Always ask: "Would I be happy putting this on a public noticeboard?" If not, don't enter it.

Before you use AI – quick check

Does this contain personal or sensitive data? Stop. Is this already public information, or would you be comfortable with it being seen publicly? Then it's fine.

After using AI – mandatory checks

You must read everything carefully, check facts and figures, correct any errors, and ensure the tone is appropriate for the Council. AI can get things wrong. You are responsible for the final result.

Human responsibility

The Council (and you) remain fully accountable. AI is assistance only, never authority. Final decisions must always be made by Councillors or the Clerk.

Thinking of using AI for something new?

If you're considering using AI for anything beyond social media, posters, or slides — especially anything involving a new paid tool or any resident data — check with the Clerk first and raise it with the Council before going ahead.

If something goes wrong

If you think you have accidentally entered confidential or personal data into AI, or shared something you shouldn't have, report it immediately to the Parish Clerk. This will be handled as a potential data protection issue.

Transparency (when needed)

For major documents created with AI support, include: "This document was drafted with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence and has been reviewed and approved by the Council."

Simple rule to remember

Safe = Public + Reviewed + Human-approved. Unsafe = Personal + Confidential + Unchecked.

This Policy was adopted by the Parish Council at their meeting on 16/07/2026