Blackwell Parish Council

AI Policy

Approval Date:

Review Date:

Introduction

As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to evolve, parish councils must navigate its use responsibly and ethically.

This policy document outlines guidelines for when and how AI assistants may be used within the council while prioritising ethics, safety, security, safeguarding, and legal compliance.

1. Purpose of the Policy

This policy aims to ensure that AI technologies are used effectively, ethically, and securely, empowering work while upholding the values and responsibilities that the council holds.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all staff and Councillors who might interact with AI assistants in any capacity within the council.

3. Ethical Considerations

3.1 Transparency
- Ensure clarity on how AI is used in council operations.
- Inform service users about AI involvement in any interactions.

3.2 Non-discrimination
- Avoid using AI that may lead to biased or discriminatory outcomes.
- Regularly evaluate AI systems for fairness and inclusivity.

3.3 Accountability
- Establish clear responsibilities for the oversight and decision-making surrounding AI use.
- Ensure that staff and Councillors understand the implications of AI decisions on individuals and communities.

3.4 User Dignity
- Always respect the dignity, privacy, and autonomy of service users.
- Design interactions with AI that prioritise user well-being.

4. Safety and Security

4.1 Data Protection
- Comply with data protection laws (e.g., General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR], Data Protection Act 2018 in the UK) regarding the collection, use, and storage of personal information.

- Implement strong security measures to protect data from breaches.

4.2 Secure AI Usage
- Train staff and volunteers on the secure use of AI tools.
- Ensure that any AI tools used are from reputable providers with proven cybersecurity protocols.
- Apply the same security measures as are applied to all other IT applications, including strong passwords and updating applications as required.

4.3 Emergency Protocols
- Establish clear procedures for instances when AI tools fail or produce erroneous information.
- Provide alternative support options that do not rely on AI.

5. Safeguarding and Vulnerable Populations

5.1 Protection of Vulnerable Individuals
- Be cautious when using AI tools that provide advice or services to vulnerable individuals (e.g., children, elderly, or those with disabilities).
- AI should not replace human interaction or empathy, especially in safeguarding contexts.

5.2 Informed Consent
- Seek informed consent for the use of AI in any interaction involving service users.
- Ensure users understand their rights and the implications of AI involvement.

6. Authorised AI Applications

The council will allow access to the following AI applications to be used for the purposes of our organisation including:
- preparing the basis of and researching for reports,
- researching policies,
- poster creation,
- design ideas,
- seeking information on historical events or places

This list may be updated at any time by the council. If you think there is an AI application that should or should not be on the permitted list, please contact the Clerk.

7. Legal Compliance

7.1 Adherence to Laws
Understand and comply with all relevant laws and regulations related to AI and data protection, including but not limited to:
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR): Governs data protection and privacy in the UK. It ensures individuals have rights regarding their personal data, including the right to access their information and the right to request correction or deletion. December 2024 Neighbourly AI 123 - AI Policy Template - Draft
- Data Protection Act 2018: This Act supplements the UK GDPR, establishing additional regulations for the processing of personal data, including handling of sensitive personal data, rights of individuals, and obligations for data controllers and processors.
- Equality Act 2010: Protects individuals against discrimination in various areas, including employment and the provision of services. AI systems must not lead to discriminatory practices.
- Children and Families Act 2014: Provides protections for children and young people. When using AI in contexts that involve children, ensure compliance with obligations to safeguard their well-being.

- The Investigatory Powers Act 2016: Regulates the use of surveillance and data collection by public authorities. Any AI usage involving surveillance or data collection must comply with this law.
- Digital Economy Act 2017: Contains provisions related to data sharing and data-related regulations that may influence how AI systems can operate concerning customer data.

7.2 Intellectual Property Rights
- Ensure that AI systems used do not infringe on intellectual property rights.
- Credit original creators of AI tools and content appropriately.

8. When Not to Use AI Assistants

8.1 Sensitive Discussions
Avoid using AI for discussions regarding sensitive issues that require human empathy and understanding (e.g., mental health crises, personal trauma).

8.2 Personalised Care
Do not use AI to provide personalised care or counseling without appropriate human oversight and expertise.

8.3 Critical Decision-Making
Refrain from using AI to make critical decisions affecting individuals' lives without human verification and context.

8.4 Informed Judgment
Do not rely on AI for matters requiring nuanced human judgment, such as ethical dilemmas or complex social situations.

8.5 Legal and Compliance Issues
Abstain from using AI in legal contexts where compliance and regulatory requirements must be meticulously adhered to.

8.6 Confidential Information
Ensure that confidential, sensitive or proprietary information relating to the council, or that of any third-party the council works with, is not entered as a prompt.

9. Review Outputs and Understand Limitations

Apply critical thought to all outputs of AI applications. as AI technology is in its infancy and it cannot apply judgment.

Always fact and sense check output before being relied upon for the purposes of the council.

10. Monitoring

The council reserves the right to monitor all content (including any prompts, or outputs) on any AI technologies used for the organisation's purposes. This will only be carried out to the extent permitted by law, in order for us to comply with a legal obligation or for the legitimate purposes of the organisation, for example:
- to prevent misuse of the content and protect the councils confidential information (and the confidential information of staff, Councillors, contractors and members of the public);
- to ensure compliance with council rules, standards of conduct and policies in force from time to time (including this policy);
- to ensure that the councils facilities or systems are not used for any unlawful purposes or activities that may damage our organisation or reputation; or

- to comply with legislation for the protection of intellectual property rights and to support proprietary rights in the output.

11. Review and Iteration of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or as needed to incorporate new developments in AI technologies, changing legal standards, and evolving ethical considerations. Feedback from staff and Councillors will be taken into account in future iterations.

Conclusion

The responsible use of AI can enhance the councils work, but it is imperative to remain vigilant regarding ethics, safety, security, safeguarding, and legal compliance. Adhering to this policy will help ensure that AI serves to empower rather than misinform.

This policy is fully supported by the members of Blackwell Parish Council

Signed by the Chair of Blackwell Parish Council: _____

Date: _____