Buckland Filleigh Parish Council
AI Policy.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) means software or digital systems capable of generating, analysing, summarising, predicting, classifying or otherwise processing information using automated or machine-learning techniques. This includes generative AI tools such as chatbots, text generators, image generators, transcription tools, AI-enabled search tools and AI features incorporated into other software.

1. Purpose.

This policy sets out how Buckland Filleigh Parish Council will use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and services in a lawful, responsible, proportionate and transparent manner. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that any use of AI:

- supports the Council's work without replacing human judgement;
- is consistent with the Council's legal duties and public responsibilities;
- protects confidential and personal information;
- supports accurate, professional and accountable communications; and
- aligns with the Council's other policies, records management and data protection arrangements.

AI may be a useful support tool for drafting, summarising, structuring and improving administrative work, but it must not be treated as a substitute for professional judgement, lawful decision-making or proper Council governance.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors, employees, contractors, volunteers and any other person using AI on behalf of the Council or in connection with Council business. It applies to the use of AI for, or in connection with:

- drafting agendas, minutes, reports, letters, articles or routine correspondence;
- summarising information or preparing first drafts;
- generating website, newsletter or social media content;
- structuring or analysing non-sensitive information;
- improving clarity, tone or formatting of documents;
- research support, idea generation or administrative assistance;
- any other AI-assisted task carried out for Council purposes.

This policy applies whether AI is accessed through a website, app, integrated software tool, email assistant, search function, chatbot, document platform or any other digital service.

3. Relationship with other Council policies

This policy must be read alongside the Council's:

- Data Protection Policy; Privacy Notices;
- Code of Conduct;

Where there is any conflict or uncertainty, users must follow the stricter requirement and seek guidance from the Clerk.

4. Core principles

The Council will apply the following principles when using AI:

Human oversight. AI must be used only as a support tool. Final responsibility for all Council business remains with a human user.

Lawfulness. AI must be used in a way that complies with data protection law, confidentiality duties, copyright, freedom of information and any other relevant legal obligations.

Accuracy and care. AI-generated outputs must be checked for factual accuracy, completeness, tone, legality and appropriateness before they are relied upon, circulated or published.

Proportionality. AI should only be used where it adds value, improves efficiency, or assists with routine work in a proportionate and sensible way.
Security. Council information must only be entered into approved tools and in accordance with the Council's data protection arrangements.
Transparency and accountability. The Council must be able to explain, if asked, how AI has been used in connection with Council work where that use is material or relevant.
Public trust. AI must not be used in a way that is misleading, unfair, discriminatory, deceptive or likely to undermine public confidence in the Council.

5. Permitted use
AI may be used for low-risk support tasks such as:
• preparing first drafts of routine correspondence;
• improving the clarity, structure or tone of draft text;
• summarising non-confidential documents or notes;
• suggesting newsletter or website wording;
• producing draft public engagement content;
• brainstorming headings, formats, checklists or templates;
• assisting with the presentation of non-sensitive information;
• preparing draft social media posts for human review.

6. Prohibited and restricted use
AI must not be used for:
• making autonomous decisions on behalf of the Council;
• making decisions affecting individuals without meaningful human review;
• replacing councillor or officer judgement in matters of policy, discretion or governance;
• generating or sharing unlawful, defamatory, discriminatory, abusive or misleading content;
• producing formal legal, HR, financial or procurement conclusions without proper review;
• conducting Council business through unapproved AI tools or services.

7.Personal data and confidential information
Users must not input the following into a public or unapproved AI system.
• personal data;
• special category data;
• confidential staffing information;
• sensitive complaints information;
• legally privileged material;
• commercially sensitive or contract-sensitive information;
• unpublished Council business where disclosure could create risk;
• any information that should not be shared outside the Council's controlled systems.
do not use AI to identify individuals.
Where there is any doubt, the information must not be entered into an AI tool until the user has checked with the Clerk.

8,High-risk areas
Particular caution must be exercised before using AI in relation to:
• staffing and HR matters;
• complaints or code of conduct matters;
• procurement or contracts;
• planning consultations or quasi-judicial matters;
• legal disputes or threatened claims;
• personal data breach handling;

• finance, payroll or banking matters.
In these areas, AI may only be used for low-risk drafting support and must not be relied upon without careful human checking.

9. Approved tools and systems
Only AI tools and services approved by the Council, or otherwise authorised by the Clerk may be used for Council business. Users must not:
• sign up to new AI services for Council work without approval;
• upload Council information to unapproved AI platforms;

10. Review and checking of AI outputs
All AI-generated outputs must be reviewed by a competent human before use. The user reviewing the output must check, so far as appropriate:
• factual accuracy;
• relevance and completeness;
• lawful and professional wording;
• confidentiality and privacy risks;
• whether any statements need evidence or source checking;
• whether the tone is suitable for the audience;
• whether the content could mislead or overstate the Council's position;
• whether the output contains invented information, false citations, bias or unsupported conclusions.
AI outputs must never be copied and used blindly.

11. AI and Council decision-making
AI may assist with drafting or summarising information, but it must not be treated as the decision-maker. Council decisions must be made through lawful Council processes and by those with proper authority.
AI must not:
• determine the Council's policy position;
• approve expenditure;
• determine staffing outcomes;
• decide complaints;
• determine responses to statutory consultations;
• replace officer advice, Councillor debate or formal resolutions.
Where AI has been used to help prepare material for Council consideration, the final content remains the responsibility of the person submitting or approving it.

12. AI and communications / social media
AI may be used to help draft:
• newsletters;
• website content;
• routine emails;
• public notices;
• consultation summaries;
• draft social media posts.
However:
• all outward-facing content must be checked by a human before publication;
• AI must not be used to generate misleading engagement, fake testimonials, fake public responses or impersonated communications;
• AI must not be used to automate responses in a way that gives the impression that a human has personally reviewed a matter when they have not.

Where a social media post or public statement concerns a sensitive, controversial or legally significant matter, AI should only be used for limited drafting assistance and the final text should be reviewed particularly carefully.

13. FOI and information rights

The use of AI does not remove or reduce the Council's obligations under freedom of information, environmental information or data protection law.

Where AI has been used in relation to Council business, users must ensure that:

- important records are captured in the Council's own systems where appropriate;
- official information can still be located and retrieved if required;
- drafts, notes or related records are managed in line with the Council's retention arrangements.

AI must not be used as a means of avoiding proper record keeping or disclosure responsibilities.

14. Incident reporting and concerns

Any incident, concern or suspected misuse involving AI must be reported promptly to the Clerk, This includes, for example:

- accidental disclosure of confidential or personal information into an AI tool;
- use of an unapproved AI platform for Council business;
- AI-generated content being published with serious inaccuracies;
- output that is discriminatory, inappropriate or misleading;
- compromised accounts or suspicious AI integrations;
- concerns that AI has been used in a way that bypasses lawful governance.

15. Responsibilities

Full Council is responsible for approving this policy and ensuring that AI use remains proportionate and consistent with the Council's governance arrangements.

The Clerk is responsible for:

- overseeing implementation of this policy;
- identifying or approving suitable AI tools where appropriate;
- ensuring staff and Councillors understand the limits of AI use;
- ensuring that AI use is consistent with the Council's other policies.

Councillors, staff, volunteers and contractors. All users are responsible for:

- complying with this policy;
- checking outputs before use;
- protecting Council information;
- using only approved tools;
- reporting incidents or concerns promptly;
- not presenting AI output as verified fact unless it has actually been checked.

16. Breach of this policy

Failure to comply with this policy may result in:

- withdrawal or restriction of access to AI tools or Council systems;
- internal action under the Council's relevant procedures;
- referral under the Code of Conduct where applicable;
- referral to external authorities where appropriate;
- contractual action in the case of contractors or service providers.

Adopted by Buckland Filleigh Parish Council in September 2026
Review in September 2028