Warndon Villages Parish Council

Artificial Intelligence Usage Policy

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1. Purpose

Warndon Villages Parish Council ("WVPC") recognises that artificial intelligence ("AI") tools can assist the Council in carrying out its functions efficiently and effectively, including through research, document analysis, drafting, summarisation and the organisation of information.

WVPC also recognises that AI systems can produce inaccurate or misleading information and can create risks relating to data protection, confidentiality, information security, records management and accountability.

This Policy establishes principles and controls for the responsible use of AI for WVPC business.

AI is an **assistance tool**. It does not replace human judgement, responsibility or accountability.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to the use of AI tools for WVPC business by:

- the Clerk and any other employees of WVPC;
- councillors when acting on behalf of WVPC, including through committees or working groups; and
- volunteers, contractors or other persons undertaking work on WVPC's behalf where appropriate.

It applies whether AI is accessed through a WVPC-controlled account or, exceptionally, through another account or device.

Use of AI by councillors in a wholly private or personal capacity falls outside this Policy. Council business should, however, remain appropriately distinguishable from private activity.

3. General principles

WVPC will adopt a proportionate and risk-based approach to AI.

AI may be used where it provides a reasonable benefit, provided that the nature of the information involved, the purpose for which AI is being used and the potential consequences of error have been considered.

The following principles apply:

Human responsibility — responsibility for Council business and decisions remains with people, not AI.

Proportionality — the level of control and verification should reflect the sensitivity and significance of the task.

Data minimisation — information supplied to AI should be limited to what is reasonably necessary for the task.

Source integrity — AI output should not displace authoritative source material.

Verification — material AI-generated factual or legal propositions should be appropriately checked before external reliance.

Transparency and accountability — WVPC should be capable, where materially relevant, of explaining how significant AI-assisted work has been produced and assured.

4. Risk-based use

AI uses should be approached according to their potential significance.

Routine/low-risk uses may include brainstorming, improving wording, formatting, preparing outlines, summarising non-sensitive public information and similar administrative assistance.

Controlled uses may include research, evidence analysis, preparation of formal submissions, analysis of consultation material, assistance with minutes, and other tasks where inaccurate output could materially affect WVPC's work. Appropriate human checking is required.

Restricted uses include processing confidential or particularly sensitive information, personnel matters, legally privileged material, significant personal data, or using AI in a way that could substantially determine a decision affecting an individual. Such use should not occur without specific consideration of the legal, information-governance and security implications and any necessary approval.

5. AI tools and accounts

AI tools used for WVPC business should be suitable for their intended purpose.

Before approving or routinely using an AI service, consideration should be given, proportionately, to matters including:

- the provider's arrangements for processing, retaining and securing information;
- whether information supplied to the service may be used for model training or other secondary purposes;
- relevant privacy and contractual terms;
- where material, the location in which information is processed;
- the ability to control retention, sharing and access;
- the nature and sensitivity of the proposed information; and
- any financial implications.

WVPC-controlled accounts should normally be used for substantive Council business where suitable facilities are available.

Public or consumer AI services should not be assumed to be suitable for confidential, sensitive or non-public information merely because they are readily accessible.

6. Data protection

Where AI use involves personal data, WVPC will apply applicable data-protection requirements and its existing data-protection arrangements.

Personal information supplied to AI should be limited to what is necessary for the particular purpose. Where identity is not material to the task, identifying information should normally be removed or minimised.

Particular care is required before supplying AI systems with:

- special-category or criminal-offence data;
- information concerning children;
- personnel or employment information;
- complaints or correspondence containing personal information; or
- substantial information about identifiable residents or other individuals.

The fact that information about an identifiable person is already publicly available does not by itself remove the need for appropriate consideration of its use.

Where proposed AI use involves significant, novel or systematic processing of personal data, WVPC should consider whether further data-protection assessment, including a Data Protection Impact Assessment where required, is appropriate.

Any apparent accidental disclosure of personal or otherwise protected information through an AI service should be reported promptly through WVPC's applicable information-governance arrangements.

7. Confidentiality and legal material

Confidential Council information should not be supplied to an AI service unless WVPC has established that the service and proposed use provide appropriate protection for that information.

Information relating to confidential Council business, personnel matters or information received subject to an obligation of confidence requires particular care.

Legal advice received by WVPC, and material which may attract legal professional privilege, should not normally be supplied to an external AI service. Any proposed exception should first be specifically considered having regard to confidentiality, privilege, contractual protection and the data-handling arrangements of the service concerned.

8. Human control and public-facing material

AI must not autonomously determine WVPC's formal position or make Council decisions.

Material intended for publication or external communication on WVPC's behalf must be subject to appropriate human review.

This includes, where applicable, formal submissions, consultation responses, correspondence, reports, website material, newsletters and social-media content.

AI may assist in preparing minutes or records from notes or recordings, but any resulting document remains subject to the Council's normal procedures for preparation, verification and approval.

AI-generated images or other synthetic media must not be represented as authentic records of real events where this could mislead.

9. Records and information rights

The use of an AI system does not place Council business outside WVPC's normal information-governance responsibilities.

Recorded information relating to Council business may potentially be information held by or on behalf of WVPC irrespective of the technology, account or device through which it was created or processed.

Council business should therefore, so far as reasonably practicable, be conducted or retained within appropriate Council-controlled systems.

WVPC will apply its records-retention arrangements proportionately. There is no general requirement under this Policy to retain every exploratory prompt, intermediate AI response or discarded drafting exchange.

For significant formal work, however, the Council should retain sufficient material to demonstrate the evidential and approval basis for the final product where this may reasonably be required.

10. Accountability

The individual, committee or Council responsible for approving work remains responsible for it notwithstanding the use of AI.

AI output is not an independent authority or evidential source merely because it appears confident, detailed or technically sophisticated.

WVPC will not justify a material proposition solely on the basis that an AI system generated it.

11. Adoption, review and related governance

This Policy is adopted by resolution of WVPC and should operate alongside the Council's other applicable governance, data-protection, records-management, financial and conduct arrangements.

It should be reviewed periodically and when material changes occur in relevant law, regulatory guidance, technology or WVPC's use of AI.

Annex A

AI-Assisted Research and Quality-Assurance Protocol

A1. Purpose

This Protocol applies particularly to evidence-heavy research, analysis and formal submissions undertaken with AI assistance.

Its purpose is to ensure that such work remains **evidence-led, traceable, appropriately verified and subject to human judgement and accountability**.

The governing model is:

Primary/source evidence → AI-assisted analysis → human verification and judgement → final human approval

The underlying evidence, rather than AI output, remains the evidential foundation for material propositions.

A2. Source traceability

Material factual propositions intended for external reliance should be capable, so far as reasonably practicable, of being traced to their underlying source.

AI-generated statements, summaries or interpretations are not themselves primary evidence.

Where AI identifies a potentially important fact, quotation, inconsistency, omission or chronological relationship, the relevant source material must be checked before the proposition is materially relied upon in a significant formal submission.

A3. Distinguishing evidence from interpretation

WVPC will seek to distinguish clearly between:

FACT — a proposition directly demonstrated by reliable source evidence.

REPORTED FACT — evidence that a person or organisation made a particular statement or recorded a particular conclusion; this establishes the existence of the statement or conclusion but does not necessarily establish its underlying correctness.

INFERENCE — a conclusion which WVPC considers can reasonably be drawn from identified evidence.

OPINION/ASSESSMENT — WVPC's evaluation of the meaning, significance or consequences of the evidence.

Particular care must be taken to prevent an assumption, inference or AI-generated interpretation from becoming presented subsequently as established fact merely through repetition.

A4. Verification proportionate to significance

The degree of verification should reflect the importance of the proposition and the purpose for which it will be used.

Material factual propositions contained in significant submissions to statutory bodies, auditors, regulators, planning authorities or other formal decision-makers should be checked against the underlying evidence before final approval.

Routine drafting, formatting and organisational assistance will not normally require equivalent verification.

A5. Legal and policy authorities

AI may assist in identifying legislation, case law, appeal decisions, national policy, guidance and other authorities.

However, **any legal authority materially relied upon or cited in a significant formal submission must be verified against an authoritative or otherwise reliable source before citation**.

Particular care must be taken to detect:

- fabricated or non-existent cases;
- inaccurate case names or citations;
- quotations not found in the cited authority;
- incorrect statutory provisions;
- superseded legislation or policy;
- inaccurate descriptions of what a judgment, decision or policy actually establishes; and
- secondary commentary presented as though it were primary authority.

AI output is not itself verification of a legal authority.

A6. Critical and adversarial testing

AI may be used both to develop and to challenge WVPC's analysis.

Where proportionate, significant arguments should be tested by considering:

- contrary evidence;
- plausible alternative explanations;
- weaknesses in WVPC's interpretation;
- likely substantive counterarguments;
- whether an inference extends beyond what the evidence supports;
- whether relevant evidence has been omitted; and
- what additional evidence would be required to strengthen or disprove the proposition.

This is an internal quality-control process and must not be represented as independent professional assurance.

A7. Evidential neutrality

WVPC should apply the same evidential discipline to propositions favourable and unfavourable to its position.

Absence of evidence of improper conduct must not be converted into an assumption of improper conduct.

Equally, absence of evidence of improper conduct does not justify inventing or assuming a benign explanation for otherwise unexplained evidence.

Where evidence does not establish motive, intention, knowledge or state of mind, WVPC should distinguish that uncertainty from matters which the evidence itself demonstrates.

A8. Known limitations of AI

WVPC recognises that AI systems can:

- make factual errors;
- omit relevant information;
- misread or conflate documents;
- fabricate quotations, references or authorities;

- misunderstand legal or technical material;
- confuse versions or dates;
- overstate the strength of evidence;
- reproduce an earlier assumption as though independently established; and
- produce persuasive-sounding conclusions unsupported by adequate evidence.

AI output must therefore be evaluated critically rather than presumed correct.

Where a material error is identified during analysis, it should be corrected rather than defended merely because it appeared in an earlier draft or analysis.

A9. Documentary integrity and provenance

Significant quotations must be checked against their source before material external reliance.

Original source documents should be retained independently of AI-generated summaries.

Where different versions of a document exist, care should be taken to establish which version is relied upon and, where material, its date and provenance.

An AI summary must not substitute for examination of the underlying source where exact wording, context, chronology or documentary provenance is material.

A10. Significant-submission assurance record

For particularly significant formal submissions, WVPC should consider retaining a proportionate assurance record comprising:

- the final approved submission;
- the principal source documents relied upon;
- identification of particularly material factual and legal propositions;
- a brief record of the principal verification undertaken;
- any significant qualifications or unresolved uncertainties; and
- where necessary to understand the methodology, relevant AI-assisted analytical material.

This need not amount to a record of every prompt, exploratory exchange or discarded draft.

Its purpose is to preserve a proportionate audit trail between **source evidence, analysis, verification and final submission**.

A11. Human accountability

Responsibility for WVPC's conclusions remains with WVPC.

AI may assist with identifying evidence, organising information, testing propositions and drafting analysis. It does not determine whether WVPC should adopt a conclusion.

The relevant human decision-maker must be satisfied that a significant formal submission fairly reflects the evidence and that appropriate checks have been undertaken.

"**The AI said so" is not an evidential justification for a WVPC proposition.**

A12. Transparency

WVPC does not regard the use of AI assistance as reducing its responsibility to substantiate material assertions.

Where the nature or extent of AI assistance becomes materially relevant to understanding a piece of work, WVPC should be prepared to explain its methodology and the assurance applied.

Routine disclosure or labelling of every instance of AI assistance is not required by this Protocol.

The principal test is whether material conclusions are appropriately supported by, and traceable to, their underlying evidence.

A13. Proportionality

This Protocol should be applied proportionately, having regard to:

- the significance and complexity of the matter;
- the reliability and accessibility of the evidence;
- the potential consequences of error; and
- the nature of the recipient or decision-making process.

The highest level of assurance should ordinarily be reserved for work carrying the greatest evidential, legal, reputational or decision-making significance.