CREDITON
TOWN COUNCIL

Manor Office
6 North Street
Crediton
Devon
EX17 2BT
Telephone: 01363 773717
Email: reception@crediton.gov.uk

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage Policy

Purpose

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools now play an increasing role in helping local authorities work more efficiently, support decision-making, and improve the quality of written information.
When used properly, AI is a helpful assistant as it supports the work of officers and members, but it does not replace human judgement.

This policy sets out how Crediton Town Council (CTC) will use AI safely, lawfully, and responsibly, ensuring that:

- Sensitive or confidential data is protected
- AI outputs are used with care and verification
- Only secure, approved systems are used
- Officers and members understand both the benefits and the risks.

This policy applies to all officers, contractors, volunteers, and members when carrying out any CTC business, whether on CTC-owned devices or personal devices.

Approved AI Systems

CTC currently approves the following AI systems for internal use:

Microsoft 365 Copilot

Where a CTC-owned licence is provided, Copilot may be used because:

- All data remains within the Council's Microsoft 365 tenant
- It uses the same secure permissions as Outlook, Teams, and SharePoint
- No data is used to train public AI models
- Microsoft meets UK GDPR and public sector security standards

New AI Systems

New AI systems may require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) before implementation. Any software containing AI functionality must be assessed prior to procurement.

Decisions

Where a CTC-owned licence is provided, in-built AI tools in the Decisions App may be used because:

- Decisions is hosted on CTC's Microsoft 365 tenant, and Microsoft Azure services are operated by Decisions
- Decisions' Azure services are hosted in several regions (UK, EU) depending on the type of service. All data storage is hosted in Azure EU data centres but may expand into additional GDPR-compliant regions according to the GDPR adequacy
- Decisions follow the GDPR and is ISO 27001:2013 certified. Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Azure have several certifications of their own as well that Decisions has obtained
- None of the AI interactions are used to train any public models.

CTC uses AI-supported transcription or summarisation tools through paid Microsoft Teams and Cloudy IT app accounts (Decisions).

To maintain confidentiality:

- No confidential Full Council or committee sessions are recorded or summarised using AI
- Any informal meetings dealing with sensitive matters must use Teams, which meets the same security standard as Copilot.

Permitted Uses of AI

AI is a practical tool to save time and improve clarity. Officers and members may use approved AI tools only to:

- Draft reports, letters, agendas, or meeting summaries
- Reformat or improve the tone and readability of written work
- Summarise long reports or transcripts
- Generate ideas, options, or structures for consultations or public engagement
- Clarify technical information in plain English.

AI should be treated as a thinking partner, not an author or decision-maker.

All outputs must be checked and edited before use by the officer or member.

Where AI is used for permitted uses as above, the author should provide a clear statement to confirm what AI was used for.

Officers and members should not make unfounded allegations that another person used AI tools. The use of AI should not be assumed purely on the basis of writing style, tone, or the results of AI detection software. Concerns regarding inappropriate AI use should be raised through appropriate management or governance process and supported by evidence. CTC will not tolerate bullying, harassment, ridicule, or unfair criticism of individuals based on suspected AI use

Prohibited Uses of AI

To protect data, reputation, and legal compliance, the following uses are strictly prohibited.

Shadow AI – Absolutely Forbidden

'Shadow AI' means any AI tool outside CTC's approved systems, and are forbidden. w

No officer or member may use shadow AI for any CTC-related task whatsoever. This includes copying or pasting text, uploading documents, or using personal accounts to draft or summarise material.

Handling of Sensitive or Confidential Information

You must not enter into AI systems:

- Personal data (names, addresses, HR information, staff matters, salaries, phone numbers, email addresses)
- Legally sensitive or confidential documents (staffing, legal disputes, tenders, disciplinary matters)
- Any unredacted data relating to individuals or commercially confidential material.

If in doubt, do not use AI.

Prohibition on AI-Generated Images

To protect artistic integrity, avoid copyright risks, and support local creative professionals, CTC will not use AI to generate:

- Photographs
- Graphics or illustrations.

Safeguards and Required Practices

To ensure safe and responsible AI use:

- Use only approved tools
  Copilot, Teams and Decisions (with a valid CTC-owned licence)
- Redact or anonymise sensitive information
  If a document contains personal or confidential information, remove identifiers before using AI or do not use AI at all
- Maintain human oversight
  AI is advisory. Officers and members remain fully responsible for decisions, reports, and published material
- Verify all outputs
  Check for accuracy, tone, relevance, and potential bias. AI may make errors or produce outdated or misleading information
- Store documents correctly
  Misplaced SharePoint or Teams files can be surfaced by Copilot. Always save documents in the correct CTC folders and report any inappropriate access immediately.
- Transparency
  Where relevant, note that AI supported the drafting process (internal comment or note).
- Report concerns
  Raise any uncertainty with the Town Clerk before proceeding.

Why This Approach Is Responsible

This policy ensures:

- Compliance with UK GDPR
- Security, as all information stays within approved, encrypted systems
- Transparency and accountability for all AI-generated content
- Proportionate use, supporting efficiency without handling sensitive data
- Support for local creative industry, by avoiding AI image generation
- Confident, safe working practices, reducing risk to CTC and the public.

AI assists our work, it does not drive it. Human judgement remains at the centre of CTC operations. No decision affecting staff, residents, suppliers or councillors shall be made purely by AI without meaningful human review.

Training and Building Confidence

CTC recognises that AI is a developing area. Confidence grows through practice and understanding. To support this:

- Further training for staff and members will be sought on request
- Officers and members will be able to ask questions and see practical examples
- Training will emphasise safe use, accuracy, and professional responsibility
- The aim is to empower users; 'You control it, it doesn't control you'.

Environmental Considerations

CTC recognises that AI systems consume energy and computing resources which may contribute indirectly to carbon emissions and water consumption through data centre operations. Officers and Members should use AI proportionately and only where it adds clear value.

Future Changes and Review of this Policy

CTC is actively considering:

- Strengthening tenant security with Business Premium for members.

Confidential information will remain protected under tenant permissions.

It is recognised that this AI Policy is an interim policy, and requires further review as further information is obtained.
Until then, this interim policy remains in force in full.

This AI policy will be reviewed every 3–6 months, or sooner if required by legislative or technical change, to reflect the speed of change in this developing technology.