



Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

January 2026

Policy No. IM 011

Version Control Sheet

Title: **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy**

Purpose: **To detail the Artificial Intelligence policy Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) in the protection of all Information Assets and the security of MDDC. These standards apply to all Officers, Councillors, Third Party Contractors, Suppliers, and Partner Organisations using or sharing MDDC's information.**

Owner: **Deputy Chief Executive & S151 Officer – Senior Information Risk Owner**

Date: **January 2026**

Version Number: **1.1**

Status: **Final**

Review Frequency: **Every six months**

Next review date: **July 2026**

Consultation **This document was sent out for consultation to the following:**
IT & Information Governance Board

Document History

This document requires/obtained the following approvals.

Title	Date	Version Approved
Cabinet	April 2025	V1.0
IT & Information Governance Board	Jan 2026	V1.1

Related Policies:

IM001 – Information Security Management
IM002 – Information Security Incident
IM003 – Data Protection
IM004 – Records Management
ICT005 – Acceptable Use
ICT007 – Software Compliance & Legislation
ICT009 – Internet Use
Risk Management Policy

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1 Introduction

Mid Devon District Council acknowledges that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is widely used in commercial and daily applications, with its influence expected to grow across almost all industries, including the public sector, especially with the rise of Generative AI (GenAI).

While AI was once restricted to specialists for specific tasks, GenAI is now widely accessible to non-specialists. This rapidly evolving technology can generate new writing, audio, code, images, and videos. It offers opportunities to enhance efficiency, decision-making, and service delivery for the Council and its residents but also introduces risks.

Many GenAI tools like Chat GPT, Google Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot are freely available. The Council must ensure that AI use is organised and controlled to protect its safety, integrity, and reputation.

The Council acknowledges the fast pace of technological advancements and, like many other organisations, continually reviews and adjusts its practices accordingly. The Council is minded to explore the opportunities presented by AI technology. This policy will be regularly reviewed by the IT and Information Governance (ITIG) Board to ensure it remains relevant and practical during this period of rapid change. The Council finds it important to provide timely guidance and advice to employees, promote transparency in the use of AI, and support a culture of responsible AI use as these changes occur.

Changes to policy and guidance will occur reasonably frequently due to the rapid pace of development in AI. Any changes will be globally communicated, and all users are expected to ensure they remain up to date with the latest policy and guidance.

2 Purpose

This policy ensures users are aware of the methods the Council uses to manage AI. Users must comply with this policy to ensure appropriate use of AI tools. It links with other policies, including Corporate Data Protection, Information Security, ICT Acceptable Use, and Freedom of Information Policy. This policy supplements and should be read alongside existing policies.

3 Scope

This policy governs the use and configuration of all AI tools provided by the Council as part of general IT resources available to staff, including Microsoft Copilot and other AI tools accessible via free or subscription-based internet services. It will also apply to AI tools procured by the Council for specific purposes. These regulations are applicable when using both corporate-owned devices and personal devices used for Council business. The policy includes all employees, agency staff, elected members, contractors, suppliers, volunteers, apprentices, student/work experience placements, and partner agencies who have access to these tools, collectively called "users" in this document.

4 Responsibilities

There are several roles in the Council that form key contributors to AI policy, development, and governance:

- The Head of Digital Services & Customer Engagement leads the Council on AI technology and ensures policy compliance.
- Line managers and Data Owners will initially monitor staff use of AI.
- The ITIG Board will manage, promote, and regulate AI use, including necessary training.
- The Senior Information/Data Protection Officer (DPO) advises on data protection related to AI.
- ICT and Information Management teams provide technical support and guidance for AI operations.
- The ITIG Board governs AI and reviews related policies.

5 Policy Statement

Whilst there are many freely available GenAI tools, users must use Microsoft Copilot instead of other tools if provided as any data entered remains within the tenancy owned by the Council. This also allows the Council to have better control and oversight of the use of GenAI by users, which is key to effective governance. If Copilot is not suitable or unavailable for the task required, then users should consult ICT for further advice.

A central register of authorised AI tools in use at MDDC will be created for reference.

All users of AI will comply with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines including intellectual property, copyright, data protection, and other relevant areas. There will be no unauthorised use of copyrighted material or creation of content that infringes on the intellectual property of others. Users will prioritise the safeguarding of stakeholders and will not knowingly use any AI technology that puts their safety or privacy at risk. Users will not allow or cause intellectual property to be entered into GenAI models without appropriate consent or exemption to copyright.

Users of AI technology will acknowledge its rapid evolution and adapt their methods of working as necessary according to this policy. Users will ensure transparency and accountability in the use of AI technology so that stakeholders are informed about where and how AI is used and who is responsible for it. Key documents, such as Privacy Notices, will be updated as needed to maintain transparency for the data subjects affected and clearly communicate the specific rights around such processing. Any feedback or questions from stakeholders regarding the use of AI will be considered and addressed appropriately, in accordance with Council policy and processes.

By adhering to this policy, users understand and support the Council's aim to foster a responsible and inclusive environment for the use of AI by upholding privacy, fairness, and transparency for the benefit of all involved.

By combining the benefits of AI technology with professionals' expertise, experience, and judgment, users understand that they can create a collaborative and effective service that maximises the benefits of both human and AI capabilities.

6 Use of AI

Users may use AI tools for tasks such as document improvements, meeting notes, report writing, data analysis, summarising complex documents, translation, drafting communications, content creation, workflow management, and reviewing accessibility. AI supports users while allowing them to apply their professional judgment and expertise.

Users will not rely on AI to replace strategic decision making or rely on it to make decisions that could have a significant impact on people.

AI tools will be used in a manner that compliments professional judgement and expertise, without replacing them. Users remain responsible and accountable for the quality and content of any AI-generated output, regardless of how it is generated or used. Staff should always review and tailor any AI output based on their expertise.

AI notetakers should only be used in a meeting after completing a data protection impact assessment (DPIA) and informing all participants before the meeting begins. If a participant objects to the use of an AI notetaking app, the meeting organiser should consider the nature of their objection and, if their concerns cannot be resolved, determine whether it is appropriate to proceed without the AI. While it is challenging to control the actions of external attendees at meetings you organise, you should inform them in advance that AI notetakers should not be used and take responsibility for the taking and distribution of notes.

Users will receive training and support to integrate AI into their work effectively, including professional development opportunities focused on AI tools and their integration into working practices. Training and support will be planned as part of user personal development reviews and appraisals or on an as-needed basis.

AI generated data and decisions are subject to Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests.

Users must ensure that they complete all mandatory policies and training identified on page 2, or as determined by the ITIG board.

7 Data Protection implications of using AI

Users should be aware that any information entered into a GenAI model may no longer remain private or secure. When entering personal data or confidential information, including data with intellectual property implications or commercially or legally sensitive information such as contracts, users must utilize the Council's Copilot tool. If this tool is not available, no sensitive data should be entered into the GenAI tool. **If a user has any doubt about the confidentiality of information, they should not use GenAI.** Users intending to systematically employ AI tools must assess whether the proposed use constitutes data processing or profiling activities that necessitate a Data Protection Impact Assessment. In such cases, users are required to adhere to the Council's Data Protection Policy and follow the Data Protection Impact Assessment Procedure.

AI usage, or the use of datasets that poses high risks to personal rights and freedoms requires a DPIA. Users must not assume AI tools are not processing personal data, as it is not always obvious.

A DPIA or data protection assessment for AI may also include:

- Consideration of alternative methods (both AI and non-AI) for the planned processing, including justification for choosing this method and its fairness.

- Clear identification of where AI processing and automated decisions may impact individuals.
- Assessment of both individual and allocative harms (e.g., decisions declining services to specific persons) and representational harms (e.g., selection biases based on gender or race).
- Evaluation of the proportionality and fairness of using the AI tool by weighing benefits against risks to individual rights and freedoms, and whether safeguards can be implemented.
- Analysis of potential biases or inaccuracies within algorithms that could negatively affect individuals.
- Comparison of human and algorithmic accuracy if AI replaces human intervention, to justify the AI tool's usage in the DPIA.
- Explanation of how individuals will be informed about automated decisions and their options for challenging those decisions.
- Examination of relevant variations or margins of error in system performance that may influence the fairness of processing (including statistical accuracy), and description of any human involvement in the decision-making process.

8 Ethical use of AI

AI systems, particularly GenAI, will be used with caution and awareness of their limitations. Users should be mindful of the following considerations:

Bias – AI-generated content may reflect biases in its dataset, potentially leading to discriminatory content based on race, gender, or socioeconomic background. Users must comply with the Equality Act (2010) as outlined in the Council Equality Impact Assessment. Extra caution is necessary when using AI for profiling, such as identifying ideal job candidate characteristics.

Accuracy – information may be inaccurate when generated so any content should be fact-checked. Tools may provide highly plausible and coherent results but may still contain errors.

Human oversight – a lack of human intervention may result in AI outputs going unchecked. Staff should ensure that outputs align with MDDC values, and users should be aware that GenAI lacks flexibility, human understanding, and compassion.

Currency – some AI models only collate data prior to a certain date so content generated may not reflect the most up-to-date information.

Environmental issues – use of AI requires energy to run. Therefore, it should only be used when relevant, appropriate and proportionate, where it is the most suitable and sustainable option.

9 Breaches of Policy

Breaches of this policy or security incidents are events that could result in loss or damage to Council assets or violate the Council's security procedures.

All Council employees, elected members, partner agencies, contractors, volunteers, and vendors must report security incidents and policy breaches promptly through the Council's Incident Reporting Procedure.

This duty also applies to external organisations contracted to support or access the Council's Information Systems.

The Council will implement appropriate measures to address any policy breach and its associated procedures and guidelines through the established frameworks.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in formal disciplinary action, termination of contract, or criminal proceedings.

10 Glossary of terms

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to a variety of algorithm-based technologies and approaches designed to solve complex tasks. These tasks include visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages.

GenAI is a type of artificial intelligence that creates new content, such as images, text, or computer code. It operates by analyzing large datasets, often sourced from the internet, to train a model on the underlying patterns and structures of that data. After extensive training, which may involve both automated processes and human intervention, the model becomes proficient in generating new content. When provided with a prompt or input, the AI assesses the probability of various potential responses based on its training data. It then selects and presents the response deemed most appropriate for the given prompt. This prompt and response can also be used to further refine the model through additional training.

This document is owned by the IT & Information Governance (ITIG) board and forms part of the Council's IT and Information Management Policy framework and as such, must be fully complied with.