Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Subject: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Date: 16th November 2026

Author: Dan Reason – Chief Digital and Customer Officer

Wards Affected: All

Purpose

To provide Overview and Scrutiny committee with an update on the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy for Gedling since its implementation.

To seek committee views on whether to establish a working group to inform the policy review.

Key Decision: This is not a key decision

Recommendation(s)
THAT: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **1) Notes the progress made in the implementation of an AI Policy, including the introduction of an AI register managed by the Business and Technical Design Authority (BTDA) and restrictions on access to unapproved AI tools.** **2) Notes the increase in requests for AI tools and the opportunity to review the policy in light of experience since implementation.** **3) Considers whether to establish a time-limited working group to examine the implementation and effectiveness of the AI Policy and make recommendations to inform its review, with the scope, timetable and reporting arrangements agreed by the Committee.**

1 Background

1.1 Although AI has been available and in use for several years, over the last 2 – 3 years its prevalence has grown, and generative AI models are now increasingly being used across all sectors including local government.

1.2 The Council started to make some use of generative AI and software suppliers are/will be increasingly making use of wider AI tooling, with vendors embedding AI capabilities as part of their product roadmaps.

1.3 It therefore became appropriate to implement a specific AI Policy (Appendix 1), which supplemented and complemented existing policies through which AI must be considered including the Council's Data Protection Policy and its Equalities Policy.

1.4 When the policy was drafted it was reviewed with input from the Assistant Director – Governance and Democracy, by colleagues in ICT and by Data Protection colleagues. Analysis was also undertaken of national AI guidance, as well as guidance from the LGA and other sources to ensure that the Council aligns with current best practice.
All feedback given on it was incorporated before its approval by Cabinet in October 2025.

1.5 The Policy is based around 6 key principles –

1. Seek to balance risk and benefit in the use of AI
2. Ensure lawful and ethical use
3. Ensure AI services are secure and resilient
4. Ensure data processing transparency.
5. Train employees on the benefits and risks of AI.
6. Ensure value for money

2 Implementation and review of the AI Policy

2.1 Since the AI Policy was approved by Cabinet in October 2025, the Council has introduced arrangements to manage the use of AI in a controlled way. These include establishing an AI register, managed by the Business and Technical Design Authority (BTDA), and restricting access to AI software to approved tools.

2.2 The register provides a central record of approved AI tools and supports oversight of their use across the Council. The BTDA provides the route for considering requests for new tools, helping to ensure that their proposed use is considered before access is granted.

2.3 Access restrictions support this approach by limiting the AI tools available to staff to those approved for Council use. Together, these measures put

the policy into practice and help reduce the risk of Council information being entered into unapproved software.

2.4 The Council is seeing interest growing in access to AI tools, namely, paid-for Copilot capabilities, from staff interested in using AI to support their work. It does not demonstrate increased use or benefits achieved, but it highlights demand to explore what these tools could offer.
Useful training guides on how to use approved AI tools to find information quickly and to help interrogate data have started to be prepared and will be shared across the organisation to try and provide some assistance with productivity.

2.5 This growing interest and the expectation that we expect to see an increase in requests submitted, makes it timely to review the policy, drawing on any experience since its introduction. The review would consider whether the current arrangements remain clear and proportionate, enabling appropriate use of AI while maintaining safeguards for Council information and public trust.

2.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider whether it would wish to establish a working group to help inform the review. This would provide an opportunity for members to consider how the policy is operating in practice and contribute to any proposed changes.

2.7 The working group could consider the approval process, the guidance staff need and how the Council should assess the benefits and risks of more advanced AI tools. Its findings would inform proposed revisions to the policy, with any changes considered through the Council's existing approval arrangements.

3 Alternative Options

3.1 The alternative option is to do nothing. Whilst some risks of AI use are already covered under the existing Data Protection Policy, the rise in the use of AI means that a separate policy is prudent and aligned to good practice. Reviewing that policy in order to ensure it remains relevant and considers latest learnings is also a recommended activity.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 Although the policy has no direct financial implications, there is a cost to using AI that will be considered as part of any requests for its enablement.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 The legal implications of misuse of AI are potentially significant and include the potential for:

- Personal data breaches (GDPR breaches)
- Intellectual property and Copyright infringement
- Bias and discrimination, failure to adhere to the Equalities Act.
- Weaponisation / creation of distrust.

The implementation of a specific AI Policy, consistently applied, will help Gedling to mitigate these risks.

6 Equalities Implications

6.1 Generative AI has a potential for bias and may unintentionally discriminate or reinforce social inequality. This can be mitigated by appropriate controls, included within the approved policy.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

7.1 There are no known carbon reduction or sustainability implications as a direct result of this paper, however the ongoing deployment of AI at a global scale requires additional computing power, and therefore increased energy use that is not always obvious. While Gedling alone cannot mitigate these risks, being cognisant of using AI only where there is wider benefit and carefully considering the supply chain as far as reasonably possible can help to offset some of this impact.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 - AI Policy v1.0

9 Background Papers

9.1 None

10 Local Government Reorganisation

10.1 As Local Government Reorganisation progresses, maintaining a robust AI Policy will help support the safe and consistent use of AI during the transition. Reviewing the policy provides an opportunity to capture learning thus far from its implementation and support future alignment with partner councils as services are brought together.

11 Reasons for Recommendations

11.1 To enable the Committee to examine progress in implementing the AI Policy, identify areas where further assurance or evidence is required, and consider how member-led scrutiny could inform a proportionate review.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:
Date:
On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:
Date:
On behalf of the Monitoring Officer