

Today

Can you provide a summary note on the use of AI in Town and Community Councils in Wales

Summary note: Town and Community Councils in Wales are beginning to use **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** to improve efficiency, strengthen governance, and enhance services for residents. Adoption is still early, but clear patterns are emerging across Wales.

1. Current Use of AI in Welsh Local Government (relevant to Town & Community Councils)

Larger Welsh councils (Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf) have already demonstrated measurable benefits from AI tools such as **Microsoft 365 Copilot**, including:

- **75% reduction in administrative workload** in social care
- **Needs assessments completed four times faster** and **case note reviews twice as fast**
- **Thousands of staff hours saved** (5,400 hours in four weeks in Swansea)
- **Improved staff wellbeing and output quality** (86% report higher-quality work)

These results provide a practical model for smaller councils: AI works best when paired with structured training, shared learning, and careful governance.

2. Guidance for Town & Community Councils (January 2025 Digital Guidance)

The official *Community & Town Councils Digital Guidance* includes a dedicated section on AI, outlining how councils can safely and effectively adopt emerging tools. Key points include:

- Councils can use AI to support **finance, CRM, document handling, and general digital operations**.
- AI should be used to **streamline repetitive tasks**, improve document drafting, and assist with information retrieval.
- Councils must ensure compliance with legislation such as the **Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014** when using digital or AI-supported systems.
- Councils should adopt AI cautiously, with attention to **data protection, accuracy, and transparency**.

This guidance encourages councils to explore AI but emphasises responsible use.

3. Practical Applications for Town & Community Councils

Although smaller councils operate differently from principal authorities, several AI use cases are already viable:

Administrative Efficiency

- Drafting minutes, agendas, reports, newsletters
- Summarising consultations or resident feedback
- Preparing grant applications or policy notes
- Automating repetitive correspondence (e.g., FOI acknowledgements)

Finance & Governance

- Assisting with budget summaries and financial reporting
- Helping clerks prepare audit documentation
- Supporting compliance checks against standing orders or regulations

Customer Service & Engagement

- AI-powered chat tools to help residents find information
- Automated triage of enquiries (e.g., allotments, hall bookings, local issues)
- Drafting responses to common queries

Planning & Asset Management

- Summarising planning applications for councillors
- Analysing maintenance logs for community assets
- Supporting long-term project planning (e.g., climate adaptation, community halls)

4. Risks and Considerations

Town and Community Councils must manage AI carefully:

- **Data protection:** AI tools must not process sensitive personal data without proper safeguards.
- **Accuracy:** AI-generated content must be checked by the Clerk or Council before publication.
- **Transparency:** Councils should be clear when AI is used to assist with public-facing content.
- **Skills:** Councils should invest in basic training for clerks and councillors.

- **Governance:** AI should support decision-making, not replace human judgement.

5. Emerging Best Practice in Wales

The collaborative model used by the three South Wales councils—joint training, shared prompts, and cross-authority learning—offers a template for Town & Community Councils:

- Start small (minutes, newsletters, simple reports)
- Share learning regionally (e.g., through One Voice Wales clusters)
- Build confidence before expanding into more complex tasks
- Maintain human oversight at all times

Concise takeaway

AI is becoming a practical tool for Town and Community Councils in Wales. It can reduce administrative burden, improve communication, and support better governance—provided councils adopt it responsibly, follow digital guidance, and maintain strong human oversight.