

This Report will be made public on 12 September 2023

Report Number **C/23/27**

To: Cabinet
Date: 20th September 2023
Status: Non Executive Decision
Responsible Officer: Amandeep Khroud – Assistant Director – Governance and Law
Cabinet Member: Councillor Gary Fuller- Cabinet Member for Resident Engagement and Accountability

SUBJECT: REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 – POLICY

SUMMARY: This report sets out the Council's policy on the use of directed surveillance and covert human intelligence sources under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations set out below to and to approve the policy. This policy forms part of the Policy Framework as set out in the constitution.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/23/27.
2. To recommend to Full Council that the RIPA policy and procedure in appendix 1 to the report be approved.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Part II of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) puts covert surveillance on a statutory basis enabling public authorities identified in the legislation to carry out surveillance operations without breaching the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 1.2 A number of statutory instruments and codes of practice published by the Home Office govern the operation of RIPA; the most recent came into effect in October 2012.
- 1.3 Organisations using RIPA are subject to regular inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office. Previously this was undertaken by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners (OSC) however on 1 September 2017 the OSC were merged with the Interception of Communications, and Intelligence Services Commissioners to form the new regulator.
- 1.4 The most recent onsite RIPA inspection was carried out on 29th August 2023 which demonstrated that Folkestone and Hythe District Council was compliant with the requirements of RIPA legislation

2. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- 2.1 The guidance states:

“elected members of a local authority should review the authority's use of the 2000 Act and set the policy at least once a year. They should also consider internal reports on the use of the 2000 Act on at least a quarterly basis to ensure that it is being used consistently with the local authority's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose. They should not, however, be involved in making decisions on specific authorisations.”

- 2.2 This report sets out the policy and seeks Full Council's endorsement of it.

3. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RIPA

- 3.1 The Act enables senior officers within public authorities to authorise Directed Surveillance and the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS). These authorisations can however only take effect once approved by a Magistrate.
- 3.2 The following sections give a brief overview of the types of surveillance:-

a) Directed Surveillance

RIPA defines Directed Surveillance as surveillance that is covert but not intrusive. Directed Surveillance must relate to a specific investigation or operation and is surveillance that is likely to result in obtaining private information about someone, including the target of the investigation or operation. Private information includes any aspect of a person's private or

personal relationships with others, including family and professional/business relationships.

Directed Surveillance is usually planned surveillance. There is provision, in urgent cases, for an authorisation to be applied for and granted in exceptional circumstances (i.e. where the time taken to apply in writing would, in the judgment of the Authorising Officer, be likely to jeopardise the operation). In such circumstances unless renewed, the authorisation will cease to have effect after seventy-two hours.

b) Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS).

RIPA defines a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) as a person (source) who establishes and/or maintains a personal or other relationship with a person for the purpose of: covertly using the relationship to obtain information or to provide another person with access to information or, covertly disclosing information obtained through the relationship. A CHIS is deployed in a manner intended to ensure that the target is unaware of the investigation or the purpose of the relationship between the source and the target.

The Council has never sought to make use of the CHIS provision. The Policy requires that if the use of CHIS is being contemplated, the officers concerned should seek the appropriate advice from other organisations that more commonly use CHIS surveillance, such as the Police.

- 3.3 The council can only grant an authorisation under RIPA for the use of directed surveillance where the local authority is investigating particular types of criminal offences. These are criminal offences which attract a maximum custodial sentence of six months or more or criminal offences relating to the underage sale of alcohol or tobacco. These latter offences would, in any event, be matters for Kent County Council trading standards.
- 3.4 The Council may only authorise directed surveillance where it is both necessary and proportionate to the investigation or operation being undertaken and to what is being sought to achieve in terms of evidence gathering. The Authorising Officers have a key role in carefully scrutinising all applications for the use of RIPA powers under a specific authorisation. Authorising Officers must ensure that authorisations are granted only in appropriate cases and that the extent of all authorisations are clearly set out.
- 3.5 The last authorisation for directed surveillance was granted on 1 June 2012.

4. THE POLICY

- 4.1 The policy has been reviewed and updated as necessary and is attached as shown in the Appendix 1.

5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

5.1 Legal Officer's Comments

The RIPA codes of practice advises that the elected members of a local authority should set the RIPA policy at least once a year. This is reflected in the council's RIPA policy.

5.2 Finance Officer's Comments

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

5.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications

No implications arising directly from this report.

6. CONTACT OFFICER AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising from this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting:

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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: RIPA Policy and Procedure