

CABINET
8 SEPTEMBER 2026

REGULATORY INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA)

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Mandy Porter, Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - Elizabeth Davison,
Executive Director – Resources and Governance**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report informs and updates Members about issues relevant to the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and developments that have taken place since the last report to Cabinet in March 2026. Members are also asked to consider and approve the RIPA Policy.

Summary

2. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (“RIPA”) enables local authorities to carry out certain types of surveillance activity, as long as specified procedures are followed. The information obtained as a result of surveillance operations can be relied upon in court proceedings providing RIPA is complied with.
3. The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (“IPA”) is the main legislation governing the acquisition of communications data. The information obtained as a result of these acquisitions can also be relied upon in court proceedings providing IPA is complied with.
4. This report updates members on issues relevant to this area of work and gives details of RIPA directed surveillance applications and IPA communications data applications that have been authorised since the last report to Cabinet.
5. The RIPA Policy is also attached for Members to consider and approve. This is in line with the Home Office Code of Practice which recommends an annual approval process.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Members:-
 - (a) Note the issues raised in the report
 - (b) Approve the RIPA Policy at **Appendix 1** to this report

- (c) Members receive further reports on the Council's use of RIPA and IPA and other associated issues.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) As stated in the Home Office Code of Practice, the RIPA Policy should be approved by Members on an annual basis.
- (b) In order to ensure that the Council complies with the legal obligations under RIPA, IPA and national guidance.
- (c) To help in raising awareness and giving transparency about the use of RIPA and IPA in this Council.

Elizabeth Davison
Executive Director, Resources and Governance

Background Papers

General Information: Investigatory Powers Commissioners Office website: [Home page - IPCO](#)
Home Office, Covert Surveillance and Property Interference, Revised Code of Practice, August 2018

Jim Langley : Extension 3137

Council Plan	The appropriate use of powers can help improve the quality of lives, local communities and the environment.
Addressing inequalities	The RIPA Policy treats all groups equally
Tackling Climate Change	There are no issues that this report needs to address
Efficient and effective use of resources	Clarity about the lawful use of RIPA and IPA will help in understanding their efficient and effective use
Health and Wellbeing	There are no specific implications for Health and Wellbeing
S17 Crime and Disorder	The appropriate use of and oversight of RIPA and IPA powers can help the Council to provide evidence to support prosecutions and tackle crime.
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	All groups
Budget and Policy Framework	This does not represent a change to the Council's budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Annual Approval of this Council's RIPA Policy

8. Paragraph 4.47 of the Home Office, Covert Surveillance and Property Interference, Revised Code of Practice, August 2018, states that elected members of a local authority should set the RIPA policy at least once a year. The policy is therefore due for approval again having last been reviewed by Cabinet on 8 September 2025.
9. To confirm, there have been no amendments made to the policy since it was last reviewed by Cabinet.

Investigatory Powers Commissioner

10. The Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) has recently highlighted concerns on the use of AI in their Spring 2026 Quarterly Update:

'Artificial Intelligence remains a significant priority. AI is now being considered in the majority of our inspections, and we will be broadening our engagement with public authorities over the coming months to develop a clearer picture of how AI is being used and governed. Effective oversight must be capable of adapting as technology develops. We're also considering how IPCO can itself harness AI to improve effectiveness without in any way compromising on the integrity of our oversight'.

11. In the event of a RIPA application being made by the Council, we would require the applying officers to outline if AI has been used and to what extent in their applications. Legal Services will also make such enquiries as part of their due diligence. This double confirmation will act to ensure that any applications submitted, along with any subsequent reviews, reflect a clear commitment to operating within the bounds of legislation and the Codes of Practice. This method should enable the Council to continue to demonstrate a high standard of compliance in their use of covert investigatory powers.

Training and awareness raising – Update

12. Training sessions will be held in Autumn 2026 for Council Officers in service areas that use or may need to consider using RIPA. This training will be delivered by the Principal Lawyer (Litigation).
13. In addition, all of the designated Authorising Officers and Chief Officers will receive refresher RIPA training. This training will be delivered by the Assistant Director, Law and Governance.
14. It is an essential requirement for us to conduct annual refresher training with our staff and we have to demonstrate our compliance with this requirement when we are inspected by IPCO.
15. Information about the need to consider RIPA continues to be highlighted to staff at regular intervals via the weekly "The Briefing" email, most recently featuring on 15 July 2026.

Bi-Annual Report Regarding this Council's RIPA and IPA usage

Directed Surveillance Authorisations

16. There have been no authorisations granted since the last Cabinet Report.

Communications Data Authorisations

17. There have been no authorisations granted since the last Cabinet Report.