

**Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board**

21 June 2019



**Report on the Council's use of powers
under the Regulation of Investigatory
Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 4 - 2018/19**

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Purpose of the Report

1. To inform members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period 1 January 2019 until 31 March 2019 (Quarter 4) to ensure that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

Executive summary

2. Durham County Council, in exercising its use of powers under RIPA during Quarter 4, were authorised to carry out 1 Directed Surveillance (DS) operation. There were no Covert Human Intelligence Surveillance applications were made during Quarter 4.
3. The Council's Senior Responsible Officer is satisfied that the Council's use of its powers under RIPA during Quarter is consistent with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

Recommendation(s)

4. It is recommended that members receive the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period 1 January 2019 until 31 March 2019 and resolve that the powers are being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

Background

5. As members are aware, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) enables local authorities to carry out certain types of surveillance activity provided that specified procedures are followed.
6. Directed Surveillance is covert surveillance that is not intrusive and is carried out in relation to a specific investigation or operation in such a manner as is likely to result in the obtaining of private information about any person (other than by way of an immediate response to events or circumstances such that it is not reasonably practicable to seek authorisation under the 2000 Act)
7. The Local Authority is able to rely upon the information obtained from those surveillance activities within court proceedings.
8. This report gives details of RIPA applications that have been authorised during the period 1 January 2019 until 31 March 2019 and the outcomes following surveillance.

Quarter 4 Activity

9. During Quarter 4 there was one RIPA Directed Surveillance authorisation which was granted at Magistrates Court. This relates to an operation being conducted by the corporate fraud team regarding direct payments. The surveillance is considered a necessary and proportionate measure to investigate whether a claim for direct payment of benefits is being made fraudulently. This investigation is currently ongoing.

Outcome following surveillance – Quarter 4

10. This is an ongoing investigation. The aim of the surveillance is to obtain evidence to either prove the claim is not fraudulent or to provide evidence to assist with a possible prosecution should it be identified that an offence has been committed. The outcome of this investigation will be provided in the Quarter 1 report.

Background papers

None.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Council's objective is to make lawful and appropriate use of surveillance techniques where required whilst complying with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and in particular the provisions of Article 8 of the ECHR securing respect for an individual's (qualified) right to privacy. Quarterly oversight by the board helps secure this objective.

Finance

Not applicable.

Consultation

Not applicable.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable.

Human Rights

Use of investigatory powers potentially engages the Human Rights Act 1998 and in particular the qualified right to private and family life under article 8 of the European Convention. This right may only be interfered with in circumstances where it is necessary and proportionate to do so in pursuit of the public interest. Oversight by the Board of the Council's RIPA operations is designed to facilitate compliance with the Human Rights Act.

Crime and Disorder

The appropriate use of an oversight of RIPA powers will enable the Council to provide evidence to support appropriate prosecutions and tackle crime.

Staffing

Not applicable.

Accommodation

Not applicable.

Risk

An individual may complain to Investigatory Powers Tribunal that surveillance has been unlawful and if found to be unlawful could result in financial penalties and reputational damage.

Procurement

Not applicable.