

25 November 2021		ITEM: 5
Standards and Audit Committee		
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) - Activity Report 2021/22 (April to September)		
Wards and communities affected: N/A	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Lee Henley – Strategic Lead – Information Management		
Accountable Strategic Lead: Lee Henley – Strategic Lead – Information Management		
Accountable Director: Sean Clark – Corporate Director Resources and Place Delivery		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the usage and activity of RIPA requests during the period April 2021 to September 2021.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 To note the statistical information relating to the use of RIPA for the period April 2021 to September 2021.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, legislates for the use of local authorities of covert methods of surveillance and information gathering to assist in the detection and prevention of crime in relation to an authority's core functions.

2.2 The Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) is responsible for the judicial oversight of the use of covert surveillance by public authorities throughout the United Kingdom.

2.3 The RIPA Single Point of Contact (SPOC) maintains a RIPA register of all directed surveillance RIPA requests and approvals across the council.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 RIPA Activity:

3.1.1 No RIPA surveillance authorisations were processed during April 2021 to September 2021. The table below summarises 2021/22 RIPA volumes along with the full year figures for 2020/21:

	2020/21	2021/22
Trading Standards	0	0
Fraud	1	0
Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) authorisations	0	0
Total	1	0

3.1.2 Low numbers of RIPA authorisations are a result of the council utilising other forms of investigation due to its collaboration with the police and/or enforcement work being more overt rather than covert. In addition to this, the COVID pandemic has seen a reduction in the need for a response requiring the use of last resort tactics like covert direct surveillance authorisations. The council continues to work with partners across the public sector to ensure that Thurrock as an area is protected from crime.

3.1.3 The outcomes of the above RIPA directed surveillance authorisations cannot be summarised in detail. This is due to Data Protection requirements and to ensure that any on-going investigations are not compromised as a result of any disclosure of information.

3.1.4 The table below shows the number of requests made to the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) for Communication Data requests: **Note** - 2020/21 figures are full year figures.

Application Type:	2020/21	2021/22
Events (Service) Data	1 (Fraud)	1 (Fraud)
Entity (Subscriber) Data	9 (Fraud)	2 (1 Fraud and 1 Trading Standards)
Combined	12 (11 Fraud and 1 Trading Standards)	3 (2 Fraud and 1 Trading Standards)
Totals	22	6

Notes in relation to NAFN applications:

- Events Data – Is information held by a telecom provider including itemised telephone bills and/or outgoing call data.
- Entity Data – Includes any other information or account details that a telecom provider holds e.g. billing information.

- Combined – Includes applications that contain both Events and Entity data.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 This report provides an update on the usage and activity of RIPA requests for April 2021 to September 2021.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 The RIPA SPOC has consulted with the relevant departments to obtain the data set out in this report.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 Monitoring compliance with RIPA supports the council's approach to corporate governance and will ensure the proper balance of maintaining order against protecting the rights of constituents within Thurrock.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director of Finance

The reported RIPA Activity is funded from within agreed budget envelopes.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Ian Hunt**
Assistant Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal implications from this update report. Whilst the Council is empowered to use covert surveillance in investigations this should only be undertaken where they are necessary and proportionate and the evidence cannot be obtained in another more proportionate way.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Smith**
Community Development and Equalities Manager

There are no such implications directly related to this report.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder and Impact on Looked After Children

None.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None.

9. **Appendices to the report**

None.

Report Author:

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