

IPCO

Authorisation & Oversight

PO Box 29105, London
SW1V 1ZU

Mr John Edwards
Riverside House,
Main Street,
Rotherham,
S60 1AE

26th January 2026

Dear Chief Executive,

Thank you for providing IPCO with your response to the matters identified in my Inspector's letter dated 8 December 2025. I am also grateful for the subsequent engagement with my Inspector as they followed up on the information you provided. This was facilitated through Phil Horsfield (SRO) and Michelle Scales, Service Manager, Litigation and Property who provided information during professional discussion. This information comprised a briefing note on the response to the previous inspection, records of surveillance authorisations, and copies of policies and procedures.

The last inspection took place in 2023, and on this occasion my Inspector found your authority to be in a good position regarding RIPA compliance. Since that inspection, only limited use has been made of the covert powers available, consisting of a single Directed Surveillance authorisation.

The application, authorisation and cancellation documents clearly set out the statutory considerations of necessity and proportionality, and they appropriately assessed the risk of collateral intrusion. Additional safeguards were implemented to restrict camera viewing angles to avoid capturing windows and neighbouring properties, demonstrating that careful thought had been given to managing and mitigating collateral intrusion.

My Inspector noted that the policy documents were well structured and had been updated since the last inspection. The policy includes informative diagrams and flow charts to aid staff in their understanding of when RIPA protections should be considered and sought.

It is clear to my Inspector that your Council takes its responsibilities in relation to the management of covert activities seriously and this is reflected in the quality of the application and authorisation viewed during the inspection (URN 9246).

The Council continues to perform well, and the staff engaged with, are fully aware of their responsibilities and eager to achieve the highest of standards.

My inspector has provided advice which it is hoped will assist in improving already good standards. Those 'fine tuning' improvements relate to the updating of RIPA forms to remove out of date references to the Code of Practice.

I am satisfied your reply provides your assurance that ongoing compliance with RIPA 2000 and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 will be maintained. As such, your Council will not require further inspection this year.

I would ask that you ensure the key compliance issues continue to receive the necessary internal governance and oversight through: policy refreshes; annual updates to your Elected Members; ongoing training and awareness raising; internal compliance monitoring by lead managers within their business areas; and the retention, review and destruction (RRD) of any product obtained through the use of covert powers (Records and Product Management in accordance with the Safeguards Chapters of the relevant Codes of Practice).

Your Council will be due its next inspection in 2029, but please do not hesitate to contact my Office if IPCO can be of assistance in the intervening period.

It is, of course, the responsibility of your authority to ensure that any covert activity is conducted in accordance with the legislation. The IPC expects early notification of any Errors in the use of the powers, which will then be investigated fully.

I shall be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt of this letter within two months and let me know your plans in relation to the matters identified.

Yours sincerely,



The Rt. Hon. Sir Brian Leveson
The Investigatory Powers Commissioner

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