



Investigatory Powers
Commissioner's Office

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4 January 2019

Inspection of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Dear Mr Schneider,

Your authority was recently subject to a desktop based documentary inspection by one of my Inspectors, Mr Paul Donaldson. I am grateful to you for facilitating this through your Business Partner – Information Governance Kate Fulton who has provided all the relevant material and documentation and has been extremely helpful throughout the process.

The information you have provided, and the documentation examined, has demonstrated a level of compliance that removes, for the present, the requirement for a full inspection. At the last inspection of 2015 your authority was the subject of three recommendations which I note from the comprehensive Action Plan provided by you have been the subject of a great deal of scrutiny in the intervening period. I am satisfied that your responses and actions taken with regard to these recommendations allow them to be discharged.

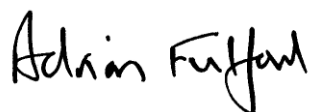
Your authority has embarked on, and maintained, a regular training programme and through your RIPA Coordinator a structured plan is in place to ensure wider RIPA awareness is refreshed at regular intervals. Your RIPA policy is well written and I note your intimation that it is due to be revised to include the recent legislative changes with signposts to the Codes of Practice on Covert Surveillance and Property Interference as well as Covert Human Intelligence Sources. I note that in respect of oversight and governance of matters relating to RIPA you have a solid structure in place through your RIPA Steering Group and its connection to the Corporate Information Governance Group which is reassuring. There have been no further recommendations from Mr Donaldson.

I take the opportunity here to remind you of the importance of regular, ongoing internal oversight of the actual or potential use of these powers, which should be managed through your Senior Responsible Officer Beccy Brown. Officers need to maintain their levels of training lest, however remote a possibility it may appear, the powers need to be used. I note that you have identified the use of social media as a potential means of providing investigative leads to assist with your enforcement or other responsibilities, but it

behoves you to ensure that such resources as these are used in a controlled, auditable, and well understood manner, and I note that a business case for this will receive close scrutiny. The Home Office Covert Surveillance and Property Interference Code of Practice provide some very helpful advice on this point.

My Office is available to you should you have any queries following the recent desktop inspection, or at any point in the future. Contact details are provided at the foot of this letter.

Yours sincerely



The Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Fulford
The Investigatory Powers Commissioner