



Policy on Covert Surveillance

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1. Introduction

1.1.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for Council employees where evidence cannot be obtained in any other way, in the course of their duties, to make observations of a person or persons in a covert manner, i.e. without that person's knowledge. By their nature, actions of this sort are potentially intrusive (in the ordinary sense of the word) and may give rise to legal challenge as a potential breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 ("the right to respect for private and family life").

1.2.

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000) [RIPA], the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act (2000) [RIP(S)A] and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 ("the Acts") together provide a legal framework for covert surveillance by public authorities and an independent inspection regime to monitor these activities.

1.3.

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 establishes an Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office whose remit includes providing comprehensive oversight of the use of powers to which this Policy applies.

1.4.

The Investigatory Powers Tribunal, established in terms of RIPA, has jurisdiction to investigate and determine complaints against public authority use of investigatory powers.

1.5.

The Chief Executive is the RIPSAs Senior Responsible Officer, who has oversight and scrutiny in relation to the RIPSAs function and ensures the integrity of the processes in place and acts as the main point of contact with the Investigatory Powers Commissioner. In the Chief Executive's absence, the Head of Corporate Governance will deputise.

1.6.

A detailed procedure has been developed for Covert Surveillance ("the Procedure").

2. Objective

The objective of this policy is to ensure that all covert surveillance by Council employees is carried out effectively, while remaining in accordance with the law. It should be read in conjunction with the Scottish Government's Code of Practice on Covert Surveillance and Property Interference ("the Code of Practice").

3. Scope of the Policy

This Policy applies in all cases where “directed surveillance” is being planned or carried out. Directed surveillance is defined in section 1(2) of the RIP(S) Act as surveillance, which is covert but not intrusive, and undertaken:

3.1.

For the purposes of a specific investigation or specific operation.

3.2.

In such a manner as is likely to result in the obtaining of private information about a person (whether or not one specifically identified for the purposes of the investigation or operation).

3.3.

Otherwise than by way of an immediate response to events or circumstances the nature of which is such that it would not be reasonably practicable for an authorisation under the RIP(S) Act to be sought for the carrying out of the surveillance. In cases of doubt, the authorisation procedures described below should however be followed.

4. Principles of Surveillance

4.1.

In planning and carrying out covert surveillance, Council employees shall comply with the following principles.

4.1.1.

Lawful purposes – covert surveillance shall only be carried out where necessary to achieve one or more of the permitted purposes (as defined in the Acts); i.e. it must be:

- For the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or the prevention of disorder.
- In the interest of public safety.
- For the purpose of protecting public health.

Employees carrying out surveillance shall not cause damage to any property or harass any person.

4.1.2.

Necessity – covert surveillance shall only be undertaken where there is no reasonable and effective alternative way of achieving the desired objective(s).

4.1.3.

Effectiveness – planned covert surveillance shall be undertaken only by suitably trained or experienced employees, or under their direct supervision.

4.1.4.

Proportionality – the use and extent of covert surveillance shall be as defined in section 6(2) of the RIP(S) Act – that the authorised surveillance is proportionate to what is sought to be achieved by carrying it out.

4.2.

Obtaining an authorisation under the Acts will only ensure that there is a justifiable interference with an individual's Article 8 rights if it is necessary and proportionate for these activities to take place. The RIP(S) Act first requires that the person granting an authorisation is satisfied that the authorisation is necessary in the circumstances of the particular case for one or more of the statutory grounds in section 6(3) of the RIP(S) Act for directed surveillance and in section 10(2)(a) of the RIP(S) Act for intrusive surveillance.

4.3.

Then, if the activities are necessary, the person granting the authorisation must be satisfied that they are proportionate to what is sought to be achieved by carrying them out. This involves balancing the intrusiveness of the activity on the target and others who might be affected by it against the need for the activity in operational terms. The activity will not be proportionate if it is excessive in the circumstances of the case or if the information which is sought could reasonably be obtained by other less intrusive means. All such activity should be carefully managed to meet the objective in question and must not be arbitrary or unfair.

4.4.

Intrusive surveillance – no activity shall be undertaken that comes within the definition of "Intrusive Surveillance", as defined in section 1(3) of the RIP(S) Act as covert surveillance that:

4.4.1.

Is carried out in relation to anything taking place on any residential premises or in any private vehicle.

4.4.2.

Involves the presence of an individual on the premises or in the vehicle or is carried out by means of a surveillance device.

4.5.

Collateral intrusion – reasonable steps shall be taken to minimise the acquisition of information that is not directly necessary for the purposes of the investigation or operation being carried out.

4.6.

Before authorising surveillance, the authorising officer should also take into account the risk of intrusion into the privacy of persons other than those who are directly the subjects of the investigation or operation (collateral intrusion). Measures should be

taken, wherever practicable, to avoid or minimise unnecessary intrusion into the lives of those not directly connected with the investigation or operation.

4.7.

Authorisation – all directed surveillance shall be authorised in accordance with the Procedure.

5. The Authorisation Process

5.1.

The statutory purposes for which covert surveillance authorisations may be issued must reflect the functions of the Council.

5.2.

Applications for directed surveillance where knowledge of confidential information is likely to be acquired shall be authorised by a Director.

5.3.

Directors should be the designated officer to give the necessary written authorisation for the use or conduct of covert surveillance. In urgent or exceptional circumstances written or oral authorisation might be given by an officer of Chief Officer grade.

5.4.

In terms of the Scottish Government's Code of Practice a written authorisation granted by an authorising officer will cease to have effect (unless renewed) at the end of a period of three months beginning with the day on which it took effect. Urgent oral authorisations granted by a person who is entitled to act only in urgent cases will, unless renewed, cease to have effect after 72 hours, beginning with the time when the authorisation was granted or renewed. Further details are contained in the Procedure and Chapter 5 of the Code of Practice.

6. Documents

6.1.

The Procedure in implementation of this policy uses the following documents:

6.1.1. Covert Surveillance – Written Authorisation

This should be completed by the applicant in all cases not covered by oral authorisation (below). It is effective from the time that approval is given.

6.1.2. Covert Surveillance – Oral Authorisation

This is a record of an oral authorisation, which should be completed by the applicant. It should be used only in cases where the urgency of the situation makes the submission of a written application impractical. The authorising officer should write out a separate authorisation as soon as practical.

6.1.3. Covert Surveillance – Renewal of Authorisation

This should be completed by the applicant in all cases where surveillance is required beyond the previously authorised period (including previous renewals) and thereafter signed by the authorising officer.

6.1.4. Covert Surveillance – Cancellation

This should be completed by both the applicant and the authorising officer when the authorisation ceases to be either necessary or appropriate.

7. Security and Retention of Documents

7.1.

Documents created under this procedure are highly confidential and shall be treated as such. Services must ensure that arrangements are in place for the handling, storage and destruction of material obtained through the use of covert surveillance. Authorising officers must ensure compliance with the requirements of data protection legislation, the Procedure for Authorisation of Covert Surveillance, Chapter 8 of the Scottish Government's Code of Practice on Covert Surveillance and Property Interference and the Council's RIPSA Data Safeguards Compliance Process.

7.2.

The Head of Corporate Governance shall maintain a register of current and past authorisations. Applicant officers shall ensure that sufficient information is provided to keep this up to date.

8. Central Record of all Authorisations

8.1.

A centrally retrievable record of all authorisations should be held by the Head of Corporate Governance and be regularly updated whenever an authorisation is granted, renewed or cancelled. The record should be made available to the relevant Inspector from the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, upon request. These records should be retained for a period of five years from the ending of the authorisation and should contain the following information:

- The type of authorisation.
- The date the authorisation was given.
- Name and rank/grade of the authorising officer.
- The unique reference number (URN) of the investigation or operation.
- The title of the investigation or operation, including a brief description and names of subjects, if known.
- Whether the urgency provisions were used, and if so why.
- If the authorisation is renewed, when it was renewed and who authorised the renewal, including the name and rank/grade of the authorising officer.
- Whether the investigation or operations is likely to result in obtaining confidential information as defined in this code of practice.
- The date the authorisation was cancelled.

8.2.

In all cases, Services should maintain for a period of three years the following documentation which need not form part of the centrally retrievable record:

- A copy of the application and a copy of the authorisation together with any supplementary documentation and notification of the approval given by the authorising officer.
- A record of the period over which the surveillance has taken place.
- A record of the result of each review of the authorisation.
- A copy of any renewal of an authorisation, together with the supporting documentation submitted when the renewal was requested.
- The date and time when any instruction was given by the authorising officer.

Document control Sheet

Review / Approval History

Date	Name	Position	Version Approved
1 May 2018	Gavin Mitchell	Head of Legal Services	V1.2– approved at General Meeting of the Council
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11 May 2020	Gavin Mitchell	V1.3	Final	Reflect observations contained in IPC Inspection Report
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Procedure for Authorisation of Covert Surveillance

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1. Foreword

1.1.

The use of surveillance to provide information is a valuable resource for the protection of the public and the maintenance of law and order. In order that local authorities and law enforcement agencies are able to discharge their responsibilities, use is made of unaided surveillance and surveillance devices. Where this surveillance is covert i.e. the subject of the surveillance is unaware that it is taking place, then it must be authorised to ensure that it is lawful. CCTV systems in the main will not be subject to this procedure as they are 'overt' forms of surveillance. However where CCTV is used as part of a pre-planned operation of surveillance then authorisation should be obtained. This includes circumstances where such use is sought by the Council or by a third party such as the Police. For the use of CCTV for covert surveillance, officers should refer to paragraph 10 of the Council's CCTV Code of Practice.

1.2.

A legal framework ensures that the use of surveillance is subject to an authorisation, review and cancellation procedure.

2. Implications of this Procedure

2.1.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for Orkney Islands Council employees, in the course of their duties, to make observations of a person or person(s) in a covert manner, i.e. without that person's knowledge. By their nature, actions of this sort may constitute an interference with that person's right to privacy and may give rise to legal challenge as a potential breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 ('the right to respect for private and family life').

2.2.

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000) [RIPA], the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act (2000) [RIP(S) A] and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 ('the Acts') together provide a legal framework for covert surveillance activities by public authorities (including local authorities) and an independent inspection regime to monitor these activities.

2.3.

Whilst the Acts do not impose a requirement for local authorities to seek or obtain an authorisation, where one is available, Orkney Islands Council employees will adhere to the authorisation procedure before conducting any covert surveillance.

2.4.

Employees of Orkney Islands Council will not carry out intrusive surveillance within the meaning of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000. This is surveillance of anything taking place on residential premises or in a private vehicle

that involves the presence of an individual on the premises or in the vehicle or is carried out by means of a surveillance device capable of providing information of the same quality and detail as might be expected to be obtained from a device actually present on the premises or in the house or vehicle.

2.5.

A number of practical examples of the use of directed surveillance are contained in sections 3 and 4 of the Scottish Government's [Code of Practice on Covert Surveillance and Property Interference](#).

3. Objective

3.1.

The objective of this procedure is to ensure that all work involving directed surveillance by Orkney Islands Council employees is carried out effectively, while remaining in accordance with the law. It should be read in conjunction with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Scottish Government's Code of Practice on Covert Surveillance and Property Interference ("the Code of Practice").

3.2.

Definitions:

3.2.1.

Covert surveillance means surveillance that is carried out in a manner calculated to ensure that the persons subject to the surveillance are unaware that it is taking place.

3.2.2.

Authorising officer is the person who is entitled to give an authorisation for directed surveillance in accordance with section 6 of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000.

3.2.3.

Private Information includes information about a person relating to their private or family life.

3.2.4.

Residential premises means any premises occupied or used, however temporarily, for residential purposes or otherwise as living accommodation.

3.2.5.

Private vehicle means any vehicle that is used primarily for the private purpose of the person who owns it or of a person otherwise having the right to use it. This does not include a person whose right to use the vehicle derives only from their having paid, or undertaken to pay, for the use of the vehicle and its driver for a particular journey. A vehicle includes any vessel, aircraft or hovercraft.

4. Scope of the Procedure

4.1.

This procedure applies in all cases where 'direct surveillance' is being planned or carried out. Direct surveillance is defined in the Code of Practice as surveillance undertaken "for the purposes of a specific investigation or operation" and "in such a manner as is likely to result in the obtaining of private information about a person".

4.2.

The procedure does not apply to:

- Ad-hoc covert observations that do not involve the systematic surveillance of specific person(s).
- Observations that are not carried out covertly.
- Unplanned observations made as an immediate response to events.

4.3.

Particular attention should be made to Social Media Networking Sites. A separate policy is in place in connection with surveillance through social media and should be consulted as necessary.

4.4.

In cases of doubt, the authorisation procedures described below should be followed.

5. Principles of Surveillance

In planning and carrying out covert surveillance, Orkney Islands Council employees shall comply with the following principles.

5.1. Lawful purposes

5.1.1.

Directed surveillance shall only be carried out where necessary to achieve one or more of the permitted purposes (as defined in the Acts) namely:

- For the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or the prevention of disorder.
- In the interests of public safety.
- For the purpose of protecting public health.

5.1.2.

Employees carrying out surveillance shall not interfere with any property or harass any person.

5.2. Confidential material

5.2.1.

Particular care should be taken with applications where a significant risk of acquiring confidential material has been identified.

5.2.2.

Confidential material consists of:

- Matters subject to legal privilege (for example between professional legal advisor and client). In terms of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Modification of the Authorisation Provisions: Legal Consultations) (Scotland) Order 2015, directed surveillance carried out on premises in respect of matters subject to legal privilege is to be treated as intrusive surveillance and can only be carried out by the police.
- Confidential personal information (for example relating to a person's physical or mental health).
- Confidential journalistic material.

6. The Authorisation Process**6.1.**

Applications for directed surveillance will be authorised by a Director. In urgent or exceptional circumstances written or oral authorisation might be given by an officer of Chief Officer grade who has not been designated which should as soon as practicable be followed up by a written authorisation from the relevant official.

6.2.

Authorising officers within the meaning of this procedure should avoid authorising their own activities wherever possible and only do so in exceptional circumstances.

6.3.

All applications for directed surveillance authorisations will be made on the appropriate application form. The applicant in all cases should complete this. In urgent cases the authorising officer may give an oral authorisation. A statement that the authorising officer has expressly granted the authorisation should be recorded on the form or, if that is not possible, in the applicant's notebook or diary. This should be done by the person to whom the authorising officer spoke (normally the applicant) but should later be endorsed by the authorising officer. The authorising officer should write out a separate authorisation as soon as practical.

6.4.

All applications for directed surveillance renewals will be made on the appropriate form. The applicant in all cases should complete this where the surveillance requires to continue beyond the previously authorised period (including previous renewals). The renewal of the authorisation should be considered and signed by the authorising officer.

6.5.

Where authorisation ceases to be either necessary or appropriate the authorising officer will cancel an authorisation using the appropriate form submitted by the applicant.

6.6.

Forms, codes of practice and supplementary material are available on the Council's Intranet.

6.7.

Any person giving an authorisation for the use of directed surveillance must be satisfied that:

- Account has been taken of the likely degree of intrusion into the privacy of persons other than those directly implicated in the operation or investigation ('collateral intrusion'). Measures must be taken, wherever practicable, to avoid unnecessary intrusion into the lives of those affected by collateral intrusion.
- The authorisation is necessary (see below).
- The authorised surveillance is proportionate (see below).
- In particular when Environmental Health Investigators deploy DAT noise level monitors to assist in any enforcement action in relation to noisy neighbour complaints. These cases should be reviewed on a case by case basis and if necessary the appropriate authorisation sought.
- In relation to aerial surveillance, using, for example, drones, the same considerations should be made to determine whether a directed surveillance authorisation is appropriate. In considering whether the surveillance should be regarded as covert, account should be taken of the reduced visibility of a craft or device at altitude.

6.8. Necessity

Surveillance operations shall only be undertaken where an authorisation is necessary on grounds falling within S.6(3) of RIP(S)A if it is necessary (a) for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or of preventing disorder; (b) in the interests of public safety; or (c) for the purpose of protecting public health.

6.9. Effectiveness

Surveillance operations shall be undertaken only by suitably trained or experienced employees, or under their direct supervision.

6.10. Proportionality

The use of surveillance shall be proportionate in terms of S6(2)(b) of RIP(S)A to what is sought to be achieved by carrying it out. Further there must be no other reasonable and effective way of achieving the desired objective(s).

A potential model answer would make clear that the following elements of proportionality had been fully considered:

- balancing the size and scope of the operation against the gravity and extent of the perceived mischief.
- explaining how and why the methods to be adopted will cause the least possible intrusion on the target and others.
- that the activity is an appropriate use of the legislation and the only reasonable way, having considered all others, of obtaining the necessary result.

- providing evidence of other methods considered and why they were not implemented.

6.11. Authorisation

6.11.1.

All directed surveillance shall be authorised in accordance with this procedure.

The authorising officer must take into account the following issues when considering an application:

- who is to conduct the operation.
- what is being proposed.
- where and when the proposed operation will take place.
- whether it is necessary and proportionate.

6.11.2.

Underlying all of these considerations is the requirement for the authorising officer to be satisfied that the terms of the legislation and relevant guidance are met.

6.11.3.

The case for the authorisation should be presented in the application in a fair and balanced way. In particular, all reasonable efforts should be made to take account of information which supports or weakens the case for the authorisation.

6.11.4.

The authorising officer should clearly complete the “Authorising Officer’s Statement” on the application form, preferably in their own hand, and articulate in their own words what activity they are authorising.

The Authorising Officer must state explicitly what is being authorised.

6.11.5.

The Authorising Officer must describe and specify what they are granting. This may or may not be the same as requested by the applicant. For the benefit of those operating under the terms of an authorisation, or any person who may subsequently review or inspect an authorisation, it is essential to produce, with clarity, a description of that which is being authorised (i.e. who, what, where, when and how). The Authorising Officer should as a matter of routine state explicitly and in their own words what is being authorised, and against which subjects, property or location.

6.11.6.

Mere reference to the terms of the application is inadequate. The Authorising Officer should specify the details of how and why they consider the application to be both necessary and proportionate.

Authorisation different from application.

6.11.7.

If an application fails to include an element in the proposed activity which in the opinion of the Authorising Officer should have been included (for example, the return of something to the place from which it is to be taken for some specified activity), or which is subsequently requested orally by the applicant, it may be included in the authorisation; if so, a note should be added explaining why. Conversely, if an Authorising Officer does not authorise all that was requested, a note should be added explaining why. This requirement applies equally to intrusive surveillance, property interference, directed surveillance and CHIS authorisations.

The Senior Responsible Officer should avoid granting authorisations.

6.11.8.

The role of the Senior Responsible Officer is to oversee the competence of Authorising Officers and the processes in use in their public authority. Whilst legislation does not preclude their use as an Authorising Officer, it is unlikely that they would be regarded as objective if they oversee their own authorisations.

6.11.9.

Applications for covert surveillance that may result in the acquisition of knowledge of matters subject to legal privilege within the meaning given in paragraph 1.1 of the Code of Practice should state whether the covert surveillance is likely or intending to obtain knowledge of matters subject to legal privilege. Where covert surveillance is likely or intended to result in the acquisition of knowledge of matters subject to legal privilege, an authorisation shall only be granted or approved if the Authorising Officer is satisfied that there are exceptional and compelling circumstances that make the authorisation necessary.

6.11.10.

Where the surveillance is not intended to result in the acquisition of knowledge of matters subject to legal privilege, such exceptional and compelling circumstances may arise in the interests of preventing or detecting serious crime.

6.11.11.

Where the surveillance is intended to result in the acquisition of knowledge of matters subject to legal privilege, such circumstances will arise only in a very restricted range of cases, such as where there is a threat to life or limb and the surveillance is reasonably regarded as likely to yield intelligence necessary to counter the threat.

7. Time Periods – Authorisations

7.1.

Urgent oral authorisations granted by a person who is entitled to act only in urgent cases unless renewed, cease to have effect after 72 hours, beginning with the time when the authorisation was granted or renewed.

7.2.

In terms of the Scottish Government's Code of Practice a written authorisation granted by an Authorising Officer will cease to have effect (unless renewed) at the end of a period of three months beginning with the day on which it took effect.

8. Time Periods – Renewals

8.1.

If at any time before an authorisation would cease to have effect, the Authorising Officer considers it necessary and proportionate for the authorisation to continue for the purpose for which it was given, the authorisation may be renewed in writing for a further period of three months. Renewals may also be granted orally in urgent cases and last for a period of 72 hours. Applications should only be made shortly before the authorisation is due to expire.

8.2.

Any person entitled to authorise may renew authorisations. They may be renewed more than once, provided they continue to meet the criteria for authorisation.

9. Review

9.1.

The Authorising Officer shall keep all authorisations under constant review and an authorisation will be cancelled immediately the requirement for surveillance ceases. The Authorising Officer should set review dates and ensure that all reviews are carried out with the review period tailored to meet the particular requirements of the investigation. Details of the review and the decision reached shall be noted on the Review Form.

9.2.

During a review, the Authorising Officer who granted or last renewed the authorisation may amend specific aspects of the authorisation, for example, to cease directed surveillance against one of a number of named subjects or to discontinue the use of a particular tactic.

9.3.

Particular attention should be given to the need to review authorisations frequently where they involve a high level of intrusion into private life or significant collateral intrusion, or particularly sensitive information is likely to be obtained. At the point when the Council is considering applying for an authorisation, it must have regard to whether the level of protection to be applied in relation to information obtained under the warrant or authorisation is higher because of the particular sensitivity of that information.

9.4.

In each case, unless specified by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, the frequency of reviews should be determined by the Council. This should be as frequently as is considered necessary and proportionate.

9.5.

In the event that there are any significant and substantive changes to the nature of the operation during the currency of the authorisation, the Council should consider whether it is necessary to apply for a new authorisation.

10. Cancellation

10.1.

Those acting under an authorisation must keep their authorisations under review and notify the Authorising Officer if they consider that the authorisation is no longer necessary or proportionate, and so should therefore be cancelled.

10.2.

The Authorising Officer and the applicant must cancel an authorisation if they are satisfied that the directed surveillance no longer satisfies the criteria for authorisation.

11. Record Keeping

Each Service or discrete location within Services must maintain a record of all applications for authorisation (including refusals), renewals, reviews and cancellations. A centrally retrievable record of all authorisations will be held by the Head of Corporate Governance and be regularly updated whenever an authorisation is granted, renewed or cancelled. An application for authorisation cannot proceed until a unique reference number (URN) has been issued by the Head of Corporate Governance and the Head of Corporate Governance must have sight of each and every application. The central register should be kept up-to-date at all times. The record should be made available to the relevant Inspector from the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, upon request. These records should be retained for a period of at least five years. Section 8 of Orkney Islands Council's Policy on Covert Surveillance contains further details.

12. Security and Retention of Documents

12.1.

Documents created under this procedure are highly confidential and shall be treated as such. Services shall make proper arrangements for their retention, security and destruction, in accordance with the requirements of data protection legislation and Chapter 8 of the Scottish Government's Code of Practice on Covert Surveillance and Property Interference and the Council's RIPSAs Data Safeguards Compliance Process.

12.2.

Dissemination or copying of material must be limited to the minimum necessary for authorised purposes. The purposes are authorised if the material:

- Is, or is likely to become, necessary for any of the statutory purposes set out in RIPSAs in relation to covert surveillance or property interference;
- Is necessary for facilitating the carrying out of the functions of public authorities under RIPSAs;
- Is necessary for facilitating the carrying out of any functions of the Investigatory Powers Commission or the Investigatory Powers Tribunal;
- Is necessary for the purposes of legal proceedings; or
- Is necessary for the performance of the functions of any person by or under any enactment.

12.3.

The Head of Corporate Governance will maintain the Central Register of Authorisations. Authorising Officers shall notify the Head of Corporate Governance of the grant, renewal or cancellation of any authorisations and the name of the Applicant Officer within one working day to ensure the accuracy of the Central Register.

12.4.

The Authorising Officer shall retain the original Authorisation and Renewal Forms until cancelled. On cancellation, the original Application, Renewal and Cancellation forms shall be forwarded to the Head of Corporate Governance with the Authorising Officer retaining a copy.

12.5.

The Authorising Officer shall retain the copy forms for a period of three years after cancellation. The Head of Corporate Governance will retain the original forms for a period of five years after cancellation. In both cases these will not be destroyed without the authority of the Authorising Officer if practicable.

13. Oversight

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 establishes an Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office to provide comprehensive oversight of the use of the powers to which this Procedure applies. This oversight includes inspection visits by Inspectors appointed by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner.

14. Complaints

The Investigatory Powers Tribunal has jurisdiction to investigate and determine complaints against public authority use of investigatory powers. Any complaints in respect of the use by the Council of its powers described in this Procedure should be directed to the Investigatory Powers Tribunal. Full details of how to present a complaint are available on the Tribunal's website – <https://investigatorypowerstribunal.org.uk/>.

Document control Sheet

Review / Approval History

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1 May 2018	Gavin Mitchell	Head of Legal Services	V1.2– approved at General Meeting of the Council
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Policy on Use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources

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1. Introduction

1.1.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for Orkney Islands Council employees where evidence cannot be obtained in any other way, in the course of their duties, to make use of informants and to conduct ‘undercover’ operations in a covert manner, i.e. without a person’s knowledge. By their nature, actions of this sort may constitute an interference with that person’s right to privacy and may give rise to legal challenge as a potential breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 (“the right to respect for private and family life”).

1.2.

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000) [RIPA], the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act (2000) [RIP(S)A] and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (“the Acts”) together provide a legal framework for use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources by public authorities and an independent inspection regime to monitor these activities.

1.3.

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 establishes an Investigatory Powers Commissioner’s Office whose remit includes providing comprehensive oversight of the use of powers to which this Policy applies.

1.4.

The Investigatory Powers Tribunal, established in terms of RIPA, has jurisdiction to investigate and determine complaints against public authority use of investigatory powers.

1.5.

The Chief Executive is the RIPSAs Senior Responsible Officer, who has oversight and scrutiny in relation to the RIPSAs function and ensures the integrity of the processes in place and acts as the main point of contact with the Investigatory Powers Commission. In the Chief Executive’s absence, the Head of Corporate Governance will deputise.

1.6.

A detailed procedure has been developed for Covert Human Intelligence Sources (“the Procedure”).

2. Objective

The objective of this Policy is to ensure that all use or conduct of a source by Council employees is carried out effectively, while remaining in accordance with the law. It should be read in conjunction with the Scottish Government’s [Covert human intelligence sources: code of practice](#) (“the Code of Practice”).

3. Scope of the Policy

3.1.

This Policy applies in all cases where the use of an undercover officer or source is being planned or carried out. All Officers involved should be suitably trained and experienced.

3.2.

This Policy does not apply to covert test purchase transactions under existing statutory powers where the officers involved do not establish a personal or other relationship for the purposes stated. As an example the purchase of music CD for subsequent expert examination would not require authorisation but where the intention is to ascertain from the seller where he/she buys suspected fakes, when he/she takes delivery etc. then authorisation should be sought beforehand; or tasks given to persons (whether that person is an employee of the Council or not) to ascertain purely factual information (for example the location of cigarette vending machines in licensed premises).

3.3.

In terms of Section 1(7) of RIPSAs a person is a covert human intelligence source if the person:

1. Establishes or maintains a personal or other relationship with another person for the covert purpose of facilitating the doing of anything falling within paragraph 2 or 3 below.
2. Covertly uses such a relationship to obtain information or to provide access to any information to another person.
3. Covertly discloses information obtained by the use of such a relationship or as a consequence of the existence of such a relationship.

4. Principles of the Use and Conduct of a Source

4.1.

In planning and carrying out the use of covert human intelligence sources, Council employees shall comply with the following principles.

4.1.1.

Lawful purposes – the use and conduct of a source shall only be carried out where necessary to achieve one or more of the permitted purposes (as defined in the Acts); i.e. it must be:

1. For the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or the prevention of disorder.
2. In the interest of public safety.
3. For the purpose of protecting public health.

Employees carrying out source work or using sources must be aware that a source has no licence to commit crime.

4.1.2.

Necessity – An authorisation for the use of a Covert Human Intelligence Source is necessary on grounds falling within section 7 (3) of RIP(S)A if it is necessary (a) for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or of preventing disorder; (b) in the interests of public safety; or (c) for the purpose of protecting public health.

4.1.3.

Effectiveness – planned undercover operations shall be undertaken only by suitably trained or experienced employees, or under their direct supervision.

4.1.4.

Proportionality – the use and extent of a source shall be as defined in section 6(2) of the RIP(S)A – that the authorised use and conduct of a source is proportionate to what is sought to be achieved by carrying it out.

4.2.

Obtaining an authorisation under RIP(S)A will only ensure that the authorised use or conduct of a source is a justifiable interference with an individual's Article 8 rights if it is necessary and proportionate for the source to be used. RIP(S)A first requires that the person granting an authorisation is satisfied that the authorisation is necessary in the circumstances of the particular case for one or more of the statutory grounds in section 7(3) of RIP(S)A.

4.3.

If the use of the source is necessary, the person granting the authorisation must be satisfied that the use of a source is proportionate to what is sought to be achieved by the conduct and use of that source. This involves balancing the intrusiveness of the use of the source on the target and others who might be affected by it against the need for the source to be used in operational terms. The use of a source will not be proportionate if it is excessive in the circumstances of the case or if the information which is sought could reasonably be obtained by other less intrusive means. The use of a source should be carefully managed to meet the objective in question and sources must not be used in an arbitrary or unfair way.

4.4.

Collateral intrusion – reasonable steps shall be taken to minimise the acquisition of information that is not directly necessary for the purposes of the investigation or operation being carried out.

4.5.

Before authorising the use or conduct of a source, the Authorising Officer should take into account the risk of intrusion into the privacy of persons other than those who are directly the subjects of the operation or investigation (collateral intrusion).

Measures should be taken, wherever practicable, to avoid unnecessary intrusion into the lives of those not directly connected with the operation or investigation.

4.6.

Authorisation – all use and conduct of Covert Human Intelligence Sources shall be authorised in accordance with the Procedure. Additionally, the Authorising Officer must make an assessment of any risk to a source in carrying out the conduct in the proposed authorisation and satisfactory arrangements exist for the management of the source.

5. The Authorisation Process

5.1.

Applications for use of a Covert Human Intelligence Source will be authorised by a Director.

5.2.

A Director should be a designated officer to give the necessary written authorisation for the use or conduct of a Covert Human Intelligence Source. In urgent or exceptional circumstances written or oral authorisation might be given by an officer of Chief Officer grade which should as soon as practicable be followed up by a written authorisation from the relevant official.

5.3.

In terms of the Scottish Government's Code of Practice a written authorisation granted by an Authorising Officer will cease to have effect (unless renewed) at the end of a period of 12 months beginning with the day on which it took effect. Urgent oral authorisations granted by a person who is entitled to act only in urgent cases will unless renewed, cease to have effect after 72 hours, beginning with the time when the authorisation was granted or renewed. Further details are contained in the Procedure. Particular special rules apply to the use of vulnerable individuals or juvenile sources. Additional guidance is contained in Chapter 5 of the Code of Practice.

6. Documents

6.1.

The Procedure in implementation of this Policy uses the following documents:

1. Use or conduct of a covert human intelligence source – Written Authorisation

This should be completed by the applicant in all cases not covered by oral authorisation (below). It is effective from the time that approval is given.

2. Use or conduct of a covert human intelligence source – Oral Authorisation

This is a record of an oral authorisation, which should be completed by the applicant. It should be used only in cases where the urgency of the situation makes the submission of a written application impractical. The Authorising Officer should write out a separate authorisation as soon as practical.

3. Use or conduct of a covert human intelligence source – Renewal of Authorisation

This should be completed by the applicant in all cases where surveillance is required beyond the previously authorised period (including previous renewals) and thereafter signed by the Authorising Officer.

4. Use or conduct of a covert human intelligence source – Cancellation

This should be completed by both the applicant and the Authorising Officer when the authorisation ceases to be either necessary or appropriate.

7. Security and Retention of Documents

7.1.

Documents created under this procedure are highly confidential and shall be treated as such. Services must ensure that arrangements are in place for the handling, storage and destruction of material obtained through the use of a covert human intelligence source. Authorising Officers must ensure compliance with the requirements of data protection legislation, the Procedure for Authorisation of the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources, Chapter 7 of the Scottish Government's Code of Practice on Covert Human Intelligence Sources and the Council's RIPSAs Data Safeguards Compliance Process.

7.2.

The Head of Corporate Governance shall maintain a register of current and past authorisations. Applicant officers shall ensure that sufficient information is provided to keep this up to date.

8. Central Record of all Authorisations

8.1.

A centrally retrievable record of all authorisations should be held by the Head of Corporate Governance and be regularly updated whenever an authorisation is granted, renewed or cancelled. The record should be made available to the relevant Inspector from the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, upon request. These records should be retained for a period of five years from the ending of the authorisation and should contain the following information:

- The type of authorisation.
- The date the authorisation was given.
- Name and rank/grade of the authorising officer.
- The unique reference number (URN) of the investigation or operation.

- The title of the investigation or operation, including a brief description and names of subjects, if known.
- Whether the urgency provisions were used, and if so why.
- If the authorisation is renewed, when it was renewed and who authorised the renewal, including the name and rank/grade of the authorising officer.
- Whether the investigation or operations is likely to result in obtaining confidential information as defined in this code of practice.
- The date the authorisation was cancelled.

8.2.

In all cases, Services should maintain for a period of three years the following documentation which need not form part of the centrally retrievable record:

- A copy of the application and a copy of the authorisation together with any supplementary documentation and notification of the approval given by the authorising officer.
- A record of the period over which the activities of the source has taken place.
- A record of the result of each review of the authorisation; the results of which should be recorded in the central record.
- A copy of any renewal of an authorisation, together with the supporting documentation submitted when the renewal was requested.
- The date and time when any instruction was given by the authorising officer.

Document control Sheet

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Date	Name	Position	Version Approved
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Date	Author	Version	Status	Reason
11 May 2020	Gavin Mitchell	V1.3	Final	Reflect observations contained in IPC Inspection Report
9 October 2023	Gavin Mitchell	V1.4	Final	Reflect observations contained in P&R Committee Report on 19 September 2023 and subsequently ratified by Full Council on 3 October 2023.
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Procedure for Authorisation of the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources

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1. Foreword

1.1.

The use of human beings to provide information ('informants') is a valuable resource for the protection of the public and the maintenance of law and order. In order that local authorities and law enforcement agencies are able to discharge their responsibilities, use is made of 'undercover' officers and informants. These are referred to as 'covert human intelligence sources' or 'sources' and the area of work of undercover officers and informants to whom this procedure applies will be referred to as 'source work'.

1.2.

A legal framework ensures that the use, deployment, duration and effectiveness of sources is subject to an authorisation, review and cancellation procedure.

2. Implications of this Procedure

2.1.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for Orkney Islands Council employees, in the course of their duties, to make use of informants and to conduct 'undercover' operations in a covert manner, i.e. without a person's knowledge. By their nature, actions of this sort may constitute an interference with that person's right to privacy and may give rise to legal challenge as a potential breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 ('the right to respect for private and family life').

2.2.

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000) [RIPA] and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act (2000) [RIP(S)A] and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 ('the Acts') together provide a legal framework for covert surveillance activities by public authorities (including local authorities) and an independent inspection regime to monitor these activities.

2.3.

Whilst the Acts do not impose a requirement for local authorities to seek or obtain an authorisation, where one is available Orkney Islands Council employees will adhere to the authorisation procedure before using a source or allowing or conducting an undercover operation.

2.4.

Employees of Orkney Islands Council will not carry out intrusive surveillance within the meaning of RIPA nor will they authorise any person for any covert human intelligence source activity as an opportunity to install any surveillance equipment into residential premises or private vehicle.

2.5.

A number of practical examples of the use of covert human intelligence sources are contained in sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Scottish Government's [Code of Practice on Covert Human Intelligence Sources](#).

3. Objective

3.1.

The objective of this procedure is to ensure that all work involving the use or conduct of a source by Orkney Islands Council employees is carried out effectively, while remaining in accordance with the law. It should be read in conjunction with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Scottish Government's Code of Practice on the Use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources ("the Code of Practice").

3.2. Definitions

3.2.1.

Covert human intelligence source means a person who establishes or maintains a personal relationship with another person for the covert purpose of facilitating anything that:

1. Covertly uses such a relationship to obtain information or to provide information or to provide access to information to another person; or
2. Covertly discloses information obtained by the use of such a relationship or as a consequence of the existence of such a relationship.

A relationship is used covertly if, and only if, it is conducted in a manner calculated to ensure that the person is unaware of its purpose.

3.2.2.

Directed surveillance is defined in the Code of Practice as surveillance undertaken "for the purposes of a specific investigation or operation" and "in such a manner as is likely to result in the obtaining of private information about a person".

3.2.3.

Authorising Officer is the person who is entitled to give an authorisation for use and conduct of a Covert Human Intelligence Source in accordance with section 7 of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000.

3.2.4.

Handler means the person referred to in section 7(6) of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 holding an office or position within the local authority and who will have day to day responsibility for:

- Dealing with the source on behalf of the local authority.
- Directing the day to day activities of the source.

- Recording the information supplied by the source.
- Monitoring the source's security and welfare.

3.2.5.

Controller means the person/the designated managerial officer within the local authority referred to in section 7(6)(b) of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000, responsible for the general oversight of the use of the source.

3.2.6.

The conduct of a source is action of that source, falling within the terms of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000, or action incidental to it.

3.2.7.

The use of a source is any action to induce, ask or assist a person to engage in the conduct of a source or to obtain information by means of an action of the source.

3.2.8.

Private information includes information about a person relating to their private or family life.

3.2.9.

Residential premises means any premises occupied or used, however temporarily for residential purposes or otherwise as living accommodation.

3.2.10.

Private vehicle means any vehicle that is used primarily for the private purpose of the person who owns it or of a person otherwise having the right to use it. This does not include a person whose right to use the vehicle derives only from their having paid, or undertaken to pay, for the use of the vehicle and its driver for a particular journey. A vehicle includes any vessel, aircraft or hovercraft.

4. Scope of the Procedure

4.1.

This procedure applies in all cases where the use of an undercover officer or source is being planned or carried out.

4.2.

The procedure does not apply to:

- Covert test purchase transactions under existing statutory powers where the officers involved do not establish a personal or other relationship for the purposes stated (see definition of a covert human intelligence source). As an example, the purchase of a music CD for subsequent expert examination would not require authorisation but where the intention is to ascertain from the seller where they buy suspected fakes, when they take delivery etc. then authorisation should be sought beforehand.

- Tasks given to persons (whether that person is an employee of the Council or not) to ascertain purely factual information (for example the location of cigarette vending machines in licensed premises).
- Particular attention should be made to Social Media Networking Sites. A separate policy is in place in connection with surveillance through social media and should be consulted as necessary. In cases of doubt, the authorisation procedures described below should be followed.

5. Principles of Use or Conduct of Covert Human Intelligence Source

In planning and carrying out the source work, Orkney Islands Council employees shall comply with the following principles.

5.1. Lawful purposes

Source work shall only be carried out where necessary to achieve one or more of the permitted purposes (as defined in the Acts) namely:

- For the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or the prevention of disorder.
- In the interests of public safety.
- For the purpose of protecting public health.

Employees carrying out source work or using sources must be aware that a source has no licence to commit crime. Any source that acts beyond the acceptable limits of case law in regard to this principle risks prosecution.

It may be necessary to deploy directed surveillance against a potential source as part of the process of assessing their suitability for recruitment, or in planning how best to make the approach to them. An authorisation under this procedure authorising an officer to establish a covert relationship with a potential source could be combined with a directed surveillance authorisation so that both the officer and potential source could be followed.

5.2. Confidential material

5.2.1.

Particular care should be taken with applications where a significant risk of acquiring confidential material has been identified.

5.2.2.

Confidential material consists of:

- Matters subject to legal privilege (for example between professional legal advisor and client); special rules apply in relation to directed surveillance carried out on premises where legal consultations are taking place and are referred to in the Procedure for Authorisation of Covert Surveillance.
- Confidential personal information (for example relating to a person's physical or mental health).

- Confidential journalistic material.

5.3. Vulnerable individuals

5.3.1.

Vulnerable individuals, such as a person aged 16 or over whose ability to protect him/herself from violence, abuse or neglect is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, through old age or otherwise, will only be authorised to act as a source in the most exceptional circumstances.

5.3.2.

Special safeguards also apply to the use or conduct of juvenile sources, that is, those under the age of 18 years. The use or conduct of any source under 16 years of age living with their parents cannot be authorised to give information about their parents.

5.3.3.

Subject to the above, juvenile sources can give information about members of their immediate family in exceptional cases. A parent, guardian or other 'appropriate adult' should be present at meetings with the juvenile source under the age of 16 years.

5.3.4.

An authorisation for the conduct or use of a source may not be granted or renewed in any case where the source is under the age of 18 at the time of the grant or renewal, unless:

- A person holding an office, rank or position with the relevant investigating authority has made and, in the case of a renewal, updated a risk assessment sufficient to demonstrate that:
 - The nature and magnitude of any risk of physical injury to the source arising in the course of, or as a result of, carrying out the conduct described in the authorisation have been identified and evaluated.
 - The nature and magnitude of any risk of psychological distress to the source arising in the course of carrying out the conduct described in the authorisation have been identified and evaluated.
- The person granting or renewing the authorisation has considered the risk assessment and is satisfied that any risks identified in it are justified and, if they are, that they have been properly explained to and understood by the source.
- The person granting or renewing the authorisation knows whether the relationship to which the conduct or use would relate is between the source and a relative, guardian or person who has for the time being assumed responsibility for the source's welfare, and, if it is, has given particular consideration to whether the authorisation is justified in the light of that fact.

6. The Authorisation Process

6.1.

Applications for the use or conduct of a source will be authorised by a Director, who will give the necessary written authorisation for the use or conduct of the Covert Human Intelligence Source. In urgent or exceptional circumstances written or oral authorisation might be given by an officer of Chief Officer grade who has not been designated which should as soon as practicable be followed up by a written authorisation from the relevant official.

6.2.

Authorising Officers should ensure that arrangements are in place for the proper oversight and management of sources, including appointing individual officers as defined in section 7(6)(a) and (b) of RIP(S)A for each source as handler and controller. All Officers involved should be suitably trained and experienced.

6.3.

Authorising Officers should not be responsible for authorising their own activities, for example, those in which they, themselves, are to act as the Covert Human Intelligence Source or the handler of the Covert Human Intelligence Source. Furthermore, Authorising Officers should, where possible, be independent of the investigation. It is recognised that this is not always possible, especially in the cases of small organisations. However, where possible, clear separation should be maintained between those responsible for the investigation and those managing the Covert Human Intelligence Source to ensure that the safety and welfare of the Source are always given due consideration.

6.4.

All applications for covert human intelligence source authorisations will be made on the appropriate form. The applicant in all cases should complete this. In urgent cases an oral authorisation may be given by the Authorising Officer. A statement that the Authorising Officer has expressly granted the authorisation should be recorded on the form or, if that is not possible, in the applicant's notebook or diary. This should be done by the person to whom the Authorising Officer spoke (normally the applicant) but should later be endorsed by the Authorising Officer. The Authorising Officer should write out a separate authorisation as soon as practical.

6.5.

The case for the authorisation should be presented in the application in a fair and balanced way. In particular, all reasonable efforts should be made to take account of information which supports or weakens the case for the authorisation.

6.6.

All applications for covert human intelligence source renewals will be made on the appropriate form. The applicant in all cases should complete this where the source work requires to continue beyond the previously authorised period (including

previous renewals). The renewal of the authorisation should be signed by the authorising officer.

6.7.

Where authorisation ceases to be either necessary or appropriate the Authorising Officer and the applicant will cancel an authorisation using the appropriate form.

6.8.

Forms, codes of practice and supplementary material are available on the Council's Intranet.

6.9.

Any person giving an authorisation for the use of a Covert Human Intelligence Source must be satisfied that:

- Account has been taken of the likely degree of intrusion into the privacy of persons other than those directly implicated in the operation or investigation ('collateral intrusion'). Measures must be taken, wherever practicable, to avoid unnecessary intrusion into the lives of those affected by collateral intrusion. Particular consideration should be given in cases where religious, medical, journalistic or legally privileged material may be involved, or where the communications of a member of a relevant legislature may be involved.
- The authorisation is necessary (see below).
- The authorised surveillance is proportionate (see below).
- Satisfactory arrangements exist for the management of the source.
- In particular when Environmental Health Investigators deploy DAT noise level monitors to assist in any enforcement action in relation to noisy neighbour complaints. These cases should be reviewed on a case by case basis and if necessary the appropriate authorisation sought.

6.10.

Authorisation for use of a Covert Human Intelligence Source can only be granted if sufficient arrangements are in place for handling the Source's case. The arrangements that are considered necessary are that:

6.10.1.

There will at all times be a person holding the requisite office, rank or position with the relevant investigating authority who will have day to day responsibility for dealing with the Source on behalf of that authority and for the Source's security and welfare – this should be the Source's line manager (the Handler).

6.10.2.

There will at all times be another person holding the requisite office, rank or position with the relevant investigating authority who will have general oversight of the use made of that Source – this should be the Handler's line manager (the Controller).

6.10.3.

There will at all times be a person holding the requisite office, rank or position with the relevant investigating authority who will have responsibility for maintaining a record of the use made of that Source – this should be the Authorising Officer.

6.10.4.

The records relating to the use of that Source are maintained by Orkney Islands Council which will always contain particulars of such matters as may be specified in regulations made by the Scottish Ministers.

6.10.5.

The records maintained by Orkney Islands Council that disclose the identity of the Source will not be available to persons except to the extent that there is a need for access to them to be made available to those persons. The records kept by Orkney Islands Council should be maintained in such a way as to preserve the confidentiality of the Source and the information provided by that Source. There should, at all times, be a designated person within the authority who will have responsibility for maintaining a record of the use made of the Source.

6.11. Necessity

An authorisation for the use of a Covert Human Intelligence Source is necessary on grounds falling within section 7 (3) of RIP(S)A if it is necessary (a) for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or of preventing disorder; (b) in the interests of public safety; or (c) for the purpose of protecting public health.

6.12. Effectiveness

Planned undercover operations shall be undertaken only by suitably trained or experienced employees, or under their direct supervision.

6.13. Proportionality

The use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources must be proportionate or in terms of section 7(b) of RIP(S)A that the authorised conduct or use is proportionate to what is sought to be achieved by that conduct or use.

A potential model answer would make clear that the following elements of proportionality had been fully considered:

- Balancing the size and scope of the operation against the gravity and extent of the perceived mischief.
- Explaining how and why the methods to be adopted will cause the least possible intrusion on the target and others.

- Whether there are any implications of the authorised conduct for the privacy of others, and an explanation of why (if relevant) it is nevertheless proportionate to proceed with the operation.
- That the activity is an appropriate use of the legislation and the only reasonable way, having considered all others, of obtaining the necessary result.
- Providing evidence of other methods considered and why they were not implemented.

The degree of intrusiveness of an authorisation of a Covert Human Intelligence Source will vary from case to case, and therefore proportionality must be assessed on an individual basis.

6.14. Authorisation

All use and conduct of Covert Human Intelligence Sources shall be authorised in accordance with this procedure.

The Authorising Officer must take into account the following issues when considering an application:

- Who is to be deployed as the source.
- What is being proposed.
- Where and when the proposed deployment will take place.
- Whether it is necessary and proportionate.

6.14.1.

However, the tasking of a person should not be used as the sole benchmark in seeking an authorisation. It is the activity of the Covert Human Intelligence Source in exploiting a relationship for a covert purpose which is ultimately authorised by RIP(S)A, whether or not that source is asked to do so by the Council. It is possible therefore that a person will become engaged in the conduct of a Covert Human Intelligence Source without the Council inducing, asking or assisting the person to engage in that conduct. An authorisation should be considered, for example, where the Council is aware that a third party is independently maintaining a relationship (i.e. self-tasking) in order to obtain evidence of criminal activity, and the Council intends to make use of that material for its own investigative purposes.

6.14.2.

Underlying all of these considerations is the requirement for the Authorising Officer to be satisfied that the terms of the legislation and relevant guidance are met.

6.14.3.

The Authorising Officer should clearly complete the “Authorising Officer’s Statement” on the application form, preferably in their own hand, and articulate in their own words what activity they are authorising.

The Authorising Officer must state explicitly what is being authorised.

6.14.4.

The Authorising Officer must describe and specify what they are granting. This may or may not be the same as requested by the applicant. For the benefit of those operating under the terms of an authorisation, or any person who may subsequently review or inspect an authorisation, it is essential to produce, with clarity, a description of that which is being authorised (i.e. who, what, where, when and how). The Authorising Officer should as a matter of routine state explicitly and in their own words what is being authorised, and against which subjects, property or location. Mere reference to the terms of the application is inadequate. The Authorising Officer should specify the details of how and why they consider the application to be both necessary and proportionate.

Authorisation different from application.

6.14.5.

If an application fails to include an element in the proposed activity which in the opinion of the Authorising Officer should have been included (for example, the return of something to the place from which it is to be taken for some specified activity), or which is subsequently requested orally by the applicant, it may be included in the authorisation; if so, a note should be added explaining why. Conversely, if an Authorising Officer does not authorise all that was requested, a note should be added explaining why. This requirement applies equally to intrusive surveillance, property interference, directed surveillance and CHIS authorisations.

6.14.6.

It is important to note that the reactive nature of the work of a Covert Human Intelligence Source, and the need for them to maintain cover, may make it necessary for the Source to engage in conduct which was not envisaged at the time the authorisation was granted, but which is incidental to that conduct. Such incidental conduct is regarded as properly authorised by virtue of sections 1(6)(a), 5 and 7(5) of RIP(S)A, even though it was not specified in the initial authorisation.

The Senior Responsible Officer should avoid granting authorisations.

6.14.7.

The role of the Senior Responsible Officer is to oversee the competence of Authorising Officers and the processes in use in their public authority. Whilst legislation does not preclude their use as an Authorising Officer, it is unlikely that they would be regarded as objective if they oversee their own authorisations.

6.14.8.

Additionally, the Authorising Officer must assess risks to a Source in carrying out the conduct in the proposed authorisation. The risk assessment must be made by the applicant and presented to the Authorising Officer for consideration. A risk assessment is carried out to determine the risk to the Source of any tasking and the likely consequences should the role of the Source become known. The ongoing

security and welfare of the Source, after the cancellation of the authorisation, will also be considered from the outset.

Use of a Covert Human Intelligence Source with technical equipment.

6.14.9.

A Covert Human Intelligence Source wearing or carrying a surveillance device and invited into residential premises or a private vehicle does not require special authorisation to record activity taking place inside the premises or vehicle. Authorisation for the use of that Covert Human Intelligence Source may be obtained in the usual way.

6.14.10.

Applicants should apply within their own line management structure unless other arrangements have been agreed or it is unreasonable or impractical in the circumstances.

7. Security and Welfare

The Council, when deploying a Covert Human Intelligence Source, should take into account the safety and welfare of that Source when carrying out actions in relation to an authorisation or tasking, and the foreseeable consequences to others of that tasking. Before authorising the use or conduct of a Covert Human Intelligence Source, the Authorising Officer should ensure that a risk assessment is carried out to determine the risk to the Source of any tasking and the likely consequences should the role of the Source become known. This should consider the risks relating to the specific tasking and circumstances of each authorisation separately and should be updated to reflect developments during the course of the deployment, as well as after the deployment if contact is maintained.

8. Time Periods – Authorisations

8.1.

Urgent oral authorisations granted by a person who is entitled to act only in urgent cases will, unless renewed, cease to have effect after 72 hours, beginning with the time when the authorisation was granted or renewed.

8.2.

In terms of the Scottish Government's Code of Practice a written authorisation granted by an Authorising Officer will cease to have effect (unless renewed) at the end of a period of 12 months beginning with the day on which it took effect. Authorisations for the deployment of a juvenile Source are for one month.

9. Time Periods – Renewals

9.1.

Before an Authorising Officer renews an authorisation, they must be satisfied that a review has been carried out of the use of a Source as outlined in paragraph 10.1 of this Procedure.

9.2.

If at any time before an authorisation would cease to have effect, the Authorising Officer considers it necessary for the authorisation to continue for the purpose for which it was given, they may renew it in writing for a further period of twelve months. Renewals may also be granted orally in urgent cases and last for a period of 72 hours.

9.3.

A renewal takes effect at the time at which, or day on which the authorisation would have ceased to have effect but for the renewal. An application for renewal should not be made until shortly before the authorisation period is drawing to an end. Any person who would be entitled to grant a new authorisation can renew an authorisation. Authorisations may be renewed more than once, in necessary, provided they continue to meet the criteria for authorisation. The renewal should be kept/recorded as part of the authorisation record.

9.4.

Authorisations for the deployment of a juvenile Source are renewable for a further period or further periods of one month each.

10. Review

10.1.

The Authorising Officer shall keep all authorisations under constant review and an authorisation will be cancelled immediately the requirement for surveillance ceases. The Authorising Officer should set review dates and ensure that all reviews are carried out immediately after the Source has been deployed with the review period tailored to meet the particular requirements of the investigation. Details of the review and the decision reached shall be noted on the Review Form.

10.2.

Particular attention should be given to the need to review authorisations frequently where they involve a high level of intrusion into private life or significant collateral intrusion, or particularly sensitive information is likely to be obtained. At the point when the Council is considering applying for an authorisation, it must have regard to whether the level of protection to be applied in relation to information obtained under the warrant or authorisation is higher because of the particular sensitivity of that information.

10.3.

In each case, unless specified by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, the frequency of reviews should be determined by the Council. This should be as frequently as is considered necessary and proportionate.

10.4.

In the event that there are any significant and substantive changes to the nature of the operation during the currency of the authorisation, the Council should consider whether it is necessary to apply for a new authorisation.

11. Cancellation

11.1.

The Authorising Officer and the applicant must keep each authorisation under review. The applicant must notify the Authorising Officer if they consider that the authorisation is no longer necessary or proportionate. The Authorising Officer must cancel an authorisation if they are satisfied that the use or conduct of the Source no longer satisfies the criteria for authorisation or that procedures for the management of the Source are no longer in place. Where possible, the Source must be informed that the authorisation has been cancelled.

11.2.

Where necessary and practicable, the safety and welfare of the Covert Human Intelligence Source should continue to be taken into account after the authorisation has been cancelled and risk assessments maintained. The Authorising Officer will wish to satisfy themselves that all welfare matters are addressed and should make appropriate comment in their written commentary.

12. Record Keeping

12.1.

Each Service or discrete location within Services must maintain a record of all applications for authorisation (including refusals), renewals, reviews and cancellations. A centrally retrievable record of all authorisations will be held by the Head of Corporate Governance and be regularly updated whenever an authorisation is granted, renewed or cancelled. An application for authorisation cannot proceed until a unique reference number (URN) has been issued by the Head of Corporate Governance, who must have sight of each and every application. The central register shall be kept up-to-date all times. The record should be made available to the relevant Inspector from the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office, upon request. These records should be retained for a period of at least five years. Section 8 of the Council's Policy on Use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources contains further details.

12.2.

In addition, consideration should be given to maintaining auditable records for individuals providing intelligence who do not meet the definition of a Covert Human Intelligence Source. This will assist the Council to monitor the status of an individual and identify whether that person should be duly authorised as a Covert Human Intelligence Source. This should be updated regularly to explain why authorisation is not considered necessary.

13. Security and Retention of Documents**13.1.**

Documents created under this Procedure are highly confidential and shall be treated as such. Services shall make proper arrangements for their retention, security and destruction, in accordance with the requirements of data protection legislation, Chapter 8 of the Scottish Government's Code of Practice on Covert Human Intelligence Sources and the Council's RIPSAs Data Safeguards Compliance Process.

13.2.

Dissemination or copying of material must be limited to the minimum necessary for authorised purposes. The purposes are authorised if the material:

- Is, or is likely to become, necessary for any of the statutory purposes set out in RIPSAs in relation to covert surveillance or property interference;
- Is necessary for facilitating the carrying out of the functions of public authorities under RIPSAs;
- Is necessary for facilitating the carrying out of any functions of the Investigatory Powers Commission or the Investigatory Powers Tribunal;
- Is necessary for the purposes of legal proceedings; or
- Is necessary for the performance of the functions of any person by or under any enactment.

13.3.

The Head of Corporate Governance will maintain the Central Register of Authorisations. Authorising Officers shall notify the Head of Corporate Governance of the grant, renewal or cancellation of any authorisations and the name of the Applicant Officer within one working day to ensure the accuracy of the Central Register.

13.4.

The Authorising Officer shall retain the original Authorisation and Renewal Forms until cancelled. On cancellation, the original Application, Renewal and Cancellation forms shall be forwarded to the Head of Corporate Governance with the Authorising Officer retaining a copy.

13.5.

The Authorising Officer shall retain the copy forms for a period of three years after cancellation. The Head of Corporate Governance will retain the original forms for at least five years after cancellation. In both cases these will not be destroyed without the authority of the Authorising Officer if practicable.

13.6.

All information recovered through the use of a Source which is relevant to the investigation shall be retained for a period of five years after the cancellation of the authorisation or the completion of any Court proceedings in which said information was used or referred to. All other information shall be destroyed as soon as the operation is cancelled.

14. Particulars to be Contained in Records

The following particulars should be contained in the records:

1. The identity of the Source.
2. The identity, where known, used by the Source.
3. Any relevant investigating authority other than the authority maintaining the records.
4. The means by which the Source is referred to within each relevant investigating authority.
5. Any other significant information connected with the security and welfare of the Source.
6. Any confirmation made by a person granting or renewing an authorisation for the conduct or use of a Source that the information in paragraph 5 has been considered and that any identified risks to the security and welfare of the Source have, where appropriate, been properly explained to and understood by the Source.
7. The date when, and the circumstances in which, the Source was recruited.
8. The identities of the persons who, in relation to the Source, are discharging or have discharged the functions.
9. The periods during which those persons have discharged those responsibilities.
10. The tasks given to the Source and the demands made of them in relation to their activities as a Source.
11. All contacts or communications between the Source and a person acting on behalf of any relevant investigating authority.
12. The information obtained by each relevant investigating authority by the conduct or use of the Source.

13. Any dissemination by that authority of information obtained in that way.

14. In the case of a Source who is not an undercover operative, every payment, benefit or reward and every offer of a payment, benefit or reward that is made or provided by or on behalf of any relevant investigating authority in respect of the Source's activities for the benefit of that or any other relevant investigating authority.

15. Oversight

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 establishes an Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office to provide comprehensive oversight of the use of the powers to which this Procedure applies. This oversight includes inspection visits by Inspectors appointed by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner.

16. Complaints

The Investigatory Powers Tribunal has jurisdiction to investigate and determine complaints against public authority use of investigatory powers. Any complaints in respect of the use by the Council of its powers described in this Procedure should be directed to the Investigatory Powers Tribunal. Full details of how to present a complaint are available on the Tribunal's website – <https://investigatorypowerstribunal.org.uk/>.

Document control Sheet

Review / Approval History

Date	Name	Position	Version Approved
1 May 2018	Gavin Mitchell	Head of Legal Services	V1.2– approved at General Meeting of the Council
1 May 2019	Gavin Mitchell	Head of Legal Services	V1.3
11 May 2020	Gavin Mitchell	Head of Legal Services	V1.4
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1 May 2019	Gavin Mitchell	1.3.	Final	Amendment of Paragraph 5.3.1.
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7 October 2025	Gavin Mitchell	V1.6	Final	Reflect observations contained in P&R Committee report on 23 September 2025 and subsequently ratified by Full Council on 7 October 2025.



Surveillance through Social Media Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1.

This document sets out Orkney Islands Council's policy regarding internet surveillance using Social Media.

1.2.

Reference is made to Orkney Islands Council's policies and procedures in respect of covert surveillance and use of covert human intelligence sources (hereinafter collectively referred to as 'the Council's RIPSAs policies and procedures'), to which this policy is subsidiary.

1.3.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for Orkney Islands Council employees, in the course of their duties, to access social media websites either by creating covert identities or through the officer's Service identity.

1.4.

Directed online surveillance using an officer's private social media account should not be undertaken in any circumstances given the personal and operational security risks which such use would be liable to present.

1.5.

Officers are referred to paragraphs 3.11 to 3.16 of the Scottish Government's [Code of Practice on Covert Surveillance and Property Interference](#) (December 2017) and paragraphs 4.7 to 4.14 of the Scottish Government's [Code of Practice on Covert Human Intelligence Sources](#) (December 2017) which provide operational examples that would assist staff in recognising situations where RIPSAs are potentially engaged in their investigations.

1.6.

Whilst much of the work undertaken by social workers is not in pursuance of the prevention or detection of crime, and is not within the purview of RIPSAs, research conducted online in the interests of a child may still engage an individual's rights under Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights (right to respect for one's private and family life). This should be considered by staff prior to conducting any research online, being aware of their obligations in ensuring such Article 8 rights are not infringed by any online research conducted in child protection cases. Therefore, a protocol containing an auditable process has been developed for circumstances where online research is considered necessary in the interests of child protection. The process is similar to the procedure for seeking a RIPSAs authorisation as commended by the Investigatory Powers Tribunal. The Orkney Health and Social Care Partnership shall be responsible for ensuring that this process is observed and responsible for adherence to the Safeguards in relation to retention, review and destruction of material obtained in accordance with the Council's RIPSAs Data Safeguards Compliance Process.

2. Statement of Intent

The aim of this policy is to provide the framework outlining the Council's process for authorising and managing internet surveillance operations using social media, and to set the parameters for expected good practice.

3. Objective

The objective of this policy is to ensure that all surveillance through social media conducted by Orkney Islands Council employees is carried out effectively, while remaining in accordance with the law. It should be read in conjunction with the Council's RIPSAs policies and procedures, the relevant legislation, the Scottish Government's Codes of Practice on Covert Surveillance and Property Interference and on Covert Human Intelligence Sources ('the Codes of Practice') and any guidance which the Investigatory Powers Commission may issue from time to time.

4. Orkney Islands Council's Social Media Presence

The Council has several social media accounts, covering authority-wide and individual service areas or establishments. There are four authority-wide channels – Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn and Instagram. These channels are managed by the Communications team and provide information about a range of Council activities.

5. Types of Investigators' Accounts

There are two different ways in which social media websites may be accessed by Council officers to carry out investigations:

- Through an identity created specifically as the service's representative.
- Through a covert identity using a false name.

6. Types of Surveillance

Investigators utilise social media in two different ways:

- By simply visiting / viewing third party accounts or groups.
- By entering into a personal relationship with the third party/group member.

7. Privacy Settings of Account under Investigation

7.1.

Most social media websites will have a variety of privacy settings that users can apply to protect their accounts from others accessing the information contained therein. Facebook would be the social media website that would be most commonly used by Council Officers to investigate service users or potential service users and it has several different privacy settings. Therefore, Facebook will be used as an example in this policy. Depending on what privacy setting a user chooses, different people can access the account and see all or some of its contents.

7.1.1. 'Public'

All Facebook users can see the account and all of its content, including the user's "friends", their timeline and photographs. Non-Facebook users can see photographs and posts published on the account, but not who has 'liked' a post or the marital status or geographic location of the user.

7.1.2. 'Friends'

Only those whom the user has accepted as Facebook 'friends' are able to see the entire content of the user's page.

7.1.3. 'Custom'

The user can create lists of specific contacts and Facebook users and designate them as the audience for – or block them from view of – any posts.

Of these three options, the relevant options for investigating officers are 'public' and 'friends', as option 3 is a sub-category of 'friends'.

8. Utilisation of Social Media

8.1. Surveillance using identity as department's representative or departmental account

'Public' privacy setting

8.1.1.

If an investigating officer views a service user's Facebook profile, with whom they are not 'Friends' via a normal route, and where the content is not protected by any privacy settings, then information on this profile can be treated as being in the public domain. If the viewing/visiting of this profile is not specifically targeted, such viewing/visiting will be overt and no authorisation under RIPSAs will be required.

8.1.2.

Notwithstanding paragraph 8.1.1 above, directed online surveillance may be invoked even where a service user posts publicly. If the officer frequently or regularly views/visits the same individual's profile this must be considered as targeted, particularly where regular views/visits are likely to result in obtaining private information, irrespective of privacy settings. Whilst, strictly speaking, it may be argued that no authorisation under RIPSAs for directed surveillance is required in respect of public posts, as a matter of best practice, an appropriate RIPSAs authorisation should be sought in such circumstances.

8.1.3.

If an investigating officer enters into a 'conversation' with the service user, and if the officer informs them that they are contacting them in their role as an employee of Orkney Islands Council, then this contact will be overt and no authorisation under RIPSAs will be required.

‘Friends’ privacy setting

8.1.4.

To investigate a service user whose Facebook account is protected by privacy settings, the investigating officer will have to send the service user a ‘friend request’. As it is obvious from the department name that the person behind it is an Orkney Islands Council employee, then the action could not be classified as covert. No RIPSAs authorisation would be needed.

8.1.5.

In either of the above privacy settings, although the officer has been given access to the account with the consent of the owner, the officer will still need to consider whether the account may contain information about others who have not given their consent. If there is a likelihood of obtaining private information about others, the need for a directed surveillance authorisation should be considered, particularly where it is intended to monitor the account going forward.

8.2. Surveillance using covert identity

8.2.1.

If an investigating officer establishes a relationship with a service user under a covert identity in order to obtain, provide access to, or disclose information, then a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) authorisation will always need to be in place before that is done.

8.2.2.

However if a covert identity is presented but no steps are taken to form a relationship with the subject, a CHIS authorisation may not be required. For example, where a website or social media account requires a minimum level of interaction (such as sending or receiving a friend request before access is permitted) this may not in itself amount to establishing a relationship. Equally, the use of electronic gestures such as “like” or “follow” in order to react to information posted by others online would not in itself constitute forming a relationship. Nonetheless, it should be borne in mind that entering a website or responding to such gestures may lead to further interaction with that user or other users. A CHIS authorisation should be obtained if it is intended to engage in such interaction to obtain, provide access to, or disclose information.

9. Best practice for the use of social media in investigations

As a matter of best practice, whenever a Council officer intends to investigate a particular service user through social media, rather than conducting a general sweep of social media sites, an appropriate RIPSAs authorisation should be completed.

10. Authorisation for all types of surveillance

Please refer to Orkney Islands Council's Policies and Procedures on Covert Surveillance and Use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources.

11. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every year from the date of approval.

Document control Sheet

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1 May 2018	Gavin Mitchell	Head of Legal Services	V1.2– approved at General Meeting of the Council
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