



Investigatory Powers  
Commissioner's Office

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14 September 2020

Dear Mr. Bradshaw,

### **Inspection of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council**

*Please be aware that IPCO is not a “public authority” for the purpose of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and therefore falls outside the reach of the FOIA. It is appreciated that local authorities are subject to the FOIA and that they may receive requests for disclosure of our reports. In the first instance the SRO should bring the matter to the attention of the IPCO Data Protection Officer (at: [info@ipco.org.uk](mailto:info@ipco.org.uk)), before making any disclosure. This is also the case if you wish to make the content of this letter publicly available.*

Your Council was recently the subject of a telephone-based inspection by one of my Inspectors, Mr Paul Gration. I am grateful to Andrew Wilkins, your Director of Legal Services and RIPA Senior Responsible Officer, who provided all the relevant information and supporting documentation and organised the call. He was joined on the call by Judith Parry, who has participated in previous inspections, and both provided helpful and relevant contributions.

The information provided has demonstrated a level of compliance that removes, for the present, the requirement for a physical inspection. I ask you to consider and to ensure that any observations from the findings of the remote inspection are promptly addressed.

The Council's previous inspection was conducted by Mr Neil Smart, who made a number of recommendations which have been discharged by Mr Gration, who has made some minor observations of his own. I understand, following receipt of my correspondence outlining my expectations regarding handling of data, that you are well placed with regard to the required safeguarding measures. Mr Gration was reassured your SRO has a strong understanding of the requirements, and a number of appropriate measures are in place which are supported by the relevant corporate policies.



It is good to hear that you are maximising your membership of the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) and this process is supported by your recently updated corporate policy for the Acquisition of Communications Data.

As stated, Mr Gration has made some minor observations which require some attention. The finer details of these points, along with others, have been fully discussed with Mr Wilkins and Ms Parry. He has highlighted the Council's RIPA Policy and Procedure as a well written and regularly updated document which incorporates recent legislative changes. The policy however details a long list of Authorising Officers. Mr Gration has discussed, with Mr Wilkins, the benefits of reducing that list and developing a smaller number of confident and competent Authorising Officers.

His main observation relates to the level of knowledge of RIPA across the organisation. There is a clear need to refresh the training (last delivered in 2016) of those actively involved in this area of investigation, but also to increase the awareness across the wider organisation. This will help the organisation to continue to deliver a high level of compliance.

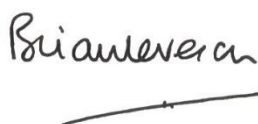
In conclusion, although your Council is a limited user of its surveillance powers, I take the opportunity here to reiterate to you the importance of regular, ongoing internal oversight of the actual or potential use of these powers, which should be managed through your Senior Responsible Officer.

It is also important that officers engaged in investigatory or enforcement areas where RIPA considerations are not so immediately apparent, maintain their levels of knowledge and know whom to approach for guidance. Mr Wilkins, as your SRO, has given the appropriate reassurance that the integrity of your Council's processes and governance procedures will be maintained to ensure that high standards of compliance with the Act and relevant codes of practice are achieved.

I hope that you find this letter to be helpful and constructive. My Office is available to you should you have any queries following the recent inspection, or at any point in the future. Contact details are provided at the foot of this letter.

I shall be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt of the report within two months.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Brian Leveson', with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

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