

Standards Committee  
24 September 2024

## WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on Tuesday 24 September 2024 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors M.Birleson (Chairman)  
T.Kingsbury, P.Zukowskyj, A.Chesterman and  
M.Siewniak

B.Morris, Co-Optee

### OFFICIALS

PRESENT: S.McDaid, Executive Director (Resident Services & Climate Change)  
C.Cade, Governance Services Manager

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#### 22. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

#### 23. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

#### 24. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Declarations of interest were received from Councillors Zukowskyj and Kingsbury declared interests as Hertfordshire County Councillors.

#### 25. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 6

No notifications for urgent business were received.

#### 26. RIPA REPORT

The Committee received a report and presentation from the Executive Director (Resident Services & Climate Change). During the presentation it was highlighted what the Council's powers were under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

It was noted that the main amendments were job title updates, the single point of contact, and two additional authorising officers.

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There had been no RIPA applications or authorisations in the last 12-month period.

The following points were clarified during the discussion:

- Surveillance would be done in conjunction with the police or by the Council independently. If the council needs to undertake surveillance it would be responsible for obtaining the RIPA authorisation. The police support may be required as part of the investigation. The Police were also able to request evidence from the Council such as CCTV.
- The RIPA Policy was rarely used as many investigations do not require covert surveillance.
- Fly tipping cameras may trigger an authorisation for RIPA in certain circumstances.
- Investigations can be conducted by a range of Council officers, however, if there was a need for RIPA authorisation officers would be expected to complete the RIPA form, approval by an Authorising Officer and then and this would go for approval to the Magistrate Court.
- It was queried why the Council was not using the powers available to them for issues such a council housing fraud, fly tipping and so on. It was clarified that there are a number of alternative powers available to Enforcement Officers so surveillance is not always required to gain evidence of crimes. The Council works with the Shared Anti-Fraud Service who review fraud on behalf of the Council, and if RIPA applies they would apply for this for the Council. There is a considered approach to using the RIPA powers by the Council.
- It was highlighted that the Council's website or contact centre could be used to report crimes such as fly tipping.

The Committee approved the changes to the RIPA Policy.

27. SUCH OTHER BUSINESS AS, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, IS OF SUFFICIENT URGENCY TO WARRANT IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION

Meeting ended at 7.51 pm