	Audit and Standards Advisory Committee 30 November 2026
	Report from the Director of Law
	Lead Member - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources (Councillor Grahl)

Standards Report (Qtr. 2 update on gifts & hospitality)

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Not applicable
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	Two: Appendix A: Gifts & Hospitality Register (Qtr. 2) Appendix B: Extracted summary of changes to RIPA Policy
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Pameel Crowther-Newman, Director of Law, (Interim) 020 8937 4102 Pameel.Crowther-Newman@brent.gov.uk Biancia Robinson, Principal Constitutional, Governance & Finance Lawyer 020 8937 1544 Biancia.robinson@brent.gov.uk.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee on gifts and hospitality registered by Members; member training provides details on the recent outcome from the Investigatory Powers

Commissioner's Office (IPCO) regarding Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Inspection.

2.0 Recommendations

That the Committee notes

2.1 The contents of the report.

2.2 The positive outcome of the 2026 IPCO inspection into the council's use of RIPA.

2.3 The changes to the updated policies and procedures on RIPA, as set out in Appendix B.

2.4 The Inspection outcome and updated policies and procedures on RIPA are to be noted by Cabinet.

3.0 Detail

Contribution to the Council Plan, *Believe in Brent 2026 – 2030* & Strategic Context

3.1. The reviewing and maintenance of high standards of member conduct supports the delivery of the borough plan by promoting confidence in the operation and good governance of the council.

Gifts & Hospitality

3.2 Members are required to register gifts and hospitality received in an official capacity worth an estimated value of at least £50. This includes a series of gifts and hospitality from the same person that add up to an estimated value of at least £50 in a municipal year.

3.3 Gifts and hospitality received by Members are published on the Council's website and open to inspection at the Brent Civic Centre.

3.4 For quarter two of 2026/27 (July-September 2026) four councillors have declared gifts and hospitality as being received. These are set out in further detail in Appendix A, together with the details of the receiving Councillors.

3.5 The Committee will recall that hospitality accepted by the Mayor in their civic role are recorded separately and published on the Council's website.

Member Training Attendance

3.6 At this Committee's request reports updating it on the attendance records for Member's in relation to mandatory training sessions has become a standard reporting item.

3.7 The majority of members have now completed their core mandatory training with the exception of a few members for Standards and Code of Conduct Data and Protection & Information Security. A re-run of these session has been set for 25.11.26, and the 17.12.26 respectively with members who are yet to complete it all being invited. Officers will inform the Committee, by way of naming councillors, of any member who fails to attend the sessions in November and /or December.

RIPA Inspection

3.8 As this Committee is aware, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) gave the Council significant powers in order to investigate serious matters and offences. It enables the Council to use covert surveillance, covert human intelligence sources (CHIS) and the acquisition of service user or subscriber information in relation to communications data in a manner which is compatible with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (which governs an individual's right to respect for their private and family life). Before the Council may undertake covert surveillance, there are various criteria which must be met including approval of the application by a Magistrate.

3.9. Covert surveillance techniques include static surveillance (e.g. taking up an observer post to monitor the activities and movements of those suspected of having committed criminal offences); mobile surveillance (e.g. following someone to see where they are going without their knowledge) and using hidden CCTV at a crime hotspot. RIPA refers to these techniques as 'directed surveillance'. It also extends to the use of undercover officers and informants. RIPA refers to these as 'Covert Human Intelligence Sources' (more commonly referred to as CHISs).

4.0. The Council is periodically inspected by Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) approximately every 2-3 years. The inspections focus on RIPA policies, procedures and practice. including, for example, the training undertaking by the Council, the use of open-source data in particular via social media, data protection compliance and the processes in place for investigations that do not meet the RIPA thresholds (non-RIPA process).

4.1 The Committee will also be aware that IPCO has responsibility for reviewing the use of investigatory powers by public authorities and other intelligence and law enforcement agencies. They oversee how these powers are used and ensure that investigations are conducted in accordance with the law.

4.2 Brent received a positive inspection report with note to omit references the Office of Surveillance Commissioners' Procedures and Guidance 2016 which are referenced throughout the policy and to distinguish the elements of proportionality that should be considered when authorising directed

surveillance, and CHIS. These have been undertaken, together with a few minor updates officers considered helpful for clarification purposes.

4.3 Substantive changes to the RIPA Policies and Procedures requires formal Cabinet approval. The changes proposed are not deemed substantive changes as they in essence only reference guidance which has been withdrawn and not replaced; and current guidance on the authorisation, management and oversight of covert surveillance and CHIS being continues to be the Home Office's RIPA Codes of Practice, for which our policy already cross-relates.

4.4 It is also proposed to make minor amendments to reflect the change in Director of Law. Extracts of the changes to the RIPA Policy are produced as **Appendix B** for Members consideration.

4.5 Given the positive outcome of the Inspection, Officers propose to update Cabinet and inform Cabinet at the same time of the updates to the policy.

4.0 Financial Considerations

4.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

5.0 Legal Considerations

5.1 Pursuant to the Localism Act 2011, the Council has to have arrangements in place to deal with any allegations of failure to comply with the code of conduct and must appoint an Independent Person whose views are sought and taken into account by the council before it makes its decision on an allegation that it has decided to investigate.

5.2 The Council, individual Members and co-opted Members are required to promote and maintain high standards of conduct in accordance with s27 of the Localism Act 2011. The attendance at mandatory training sessions is a means to achieve this and a requirement pursuant to the Brent Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Part 5, of the council's Constitution.

5.3 The legislative requirements regarding RIPA are contained within the body of this report. RIPA was introduced to ensure that covert surveillance undertaken by public authorities was done in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998. The RIPA framework establishes a lawful process to use covert surveillance and thereby protects the Council from legal claims, providing it have been complied with.

5.4 The use of RIPA was modified by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. These changes mean that a local authority can only grant authorisations under RIPA for the use of directed surveillance where it is for the purposes of investigating criminal offences that carry a custodial sentence of six months or more, or criminal offences relating to the underage sale of alcohol or tobacco. Further, a magistrate's approval is required before the RIPA authorisation can take effect.

6.0 Equity, diversity and inclusion Implications

6.1 There are no equality implications arising out of this report.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 As set out in the body of the report.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

8.1 Not applicable.

Report sign off:

Pameel Crowther- Newman
Interim Director of Law & Monitoring Officer