

## **Major Review - Census 2011 – To look at how this Council can contribute to improving the population data for the Borough**

### **First Witness session**

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### **REASON FOR ITEM**

To enable the Committee to gather evidence as part of their major review into how this Council can contribute to improving the population data for the Borough.

### **OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE**

1. Question the witnesses
2. Highlight issues for further investigation
3. To make a note of possible recommendations for the review

### **INFORMATION**

1. At this Committee's last meeting Members agreed to undertake a review on the preparations for the 2011 Census and what the Council could do to encourage residents of the Borough to participate in the Census to ensure more accurate population data and greater funding from central government. The scoping report for the review is attached as **Appendix A** to this report.
2. The population information obtained from the Census is used to determine the level of grant support the Council receives from central government and helps the Council in terms of its strategic planning and service delivery. From the last Census which took place in 2001, in certain areas of London and amongst some population groups, a number of people failed to respond to Census questionnaires. Maximising the number of returned questionnaires will provide more accurate data.

### **BACKGROUND**

3. A census of population has been carried out in Great Britain every 10 years from 1801 to 2001, except in 1941. The census is the only method of producing the information on housing and population that government needs to develop policies, and to plan and run public services such as

health and education. The information it provides is also widely used by academics, businesses, voluntary organisations and the public.

4. The planning process for the 2011 Census started in 2002 with a wide-ranging review of the future requirements for information, and alternative ways of gathering it. This confirmed that there is an ongoing need for high quality census information, and that it can only be provided by a traditional census in 2011. No alternative source would provide the quality of data required.
5. In its report on the 2001 Census, the Treasury Select Committee recommended that any future census should be justified in cost-benefit terms. A detailed business case has therefore been produced. This clearly demonstrates the unique value of the census and that the benefits of having the information far outweigh the costs of its collection. For example, over £100 billion per year (over £1 trillion in the decade between each census) is allocated from central government to local authorities and to NHS Primary Care Trusts. The business case demonstrates the value of census information in ensuring that this funding is distributed appropriately between different parts of the country to meet the needs of local populations.
6. For the 2011 Census the Office for National Statistics (ONS) will be drawing on the experiences of the 2001 Census, world best practice and changes in available technology. ONS is also looking to make best use of the knowledge that exists within local authorities about their own communities. It is clear from the 2001 experience that it will be mutually beneficial for local authorities and ONS to work in partnership when conducting the Census for 2011.
7. ONS want to benefit from local authority resources and their knowledge of governed areas to improve the enumeration process, and in turn, local authorities should benefit from better Census results.
8. For the 2011 Census in England and Wales a number of new approaches will be introduced which have been designed to improve census return rates in all areas and with all population groups. These include:
  - Wide engagement in the community with the help of local authorities, representatives of target population and accessibility groups and a national publicity campaign
  - Post out of all household questionnaires (around 25 million), based on a newly developed national address register
  - Online completion: people will be able to complete and submit their answers online or fill in and return the paper questionnaire
  - Questionnaire tracking and targeted filed follow ups: to identify and follow up households which have not returned a questionnaire

9. Attached for Member's information is the household questionnaire which will be used for the 2011 Census. At this stage it is not envisaged that any changes will be made to this questionnaire (**Appendix B**).

**NB:** Members should note that the design of the Census questionnaire, together with the planning process for the Census has already been agreed.

## **WITNESSES**

- Amanda King – Area Manager for Office for National Statistics
- Pam Nash – Strategic Information Officer - LBH
- Emma Marsh- Deputy Head of Communications - LBH

## **Key Issues and areas of possible questioning**

1. How will the Census 2011 hope to ensure that all community groups will participate in the Census?
2. How is the approach to the Census 2011 different to the last Census?
3. What work has been undertaken with this authority in terms of preparation for the Census?
4. What local publicity will be given to the Census and how will this be communicated to residents?
5. What are the repercussions to local authorities of residents not completing Census questionnaires?
6. What can the Council's strategic partners do to help the process and ensure Census questionnaires are completed?
7. What are the different forms of engagement which will be used to maximise resident participation?
8. What role do Ward Councillors have in terms of delivering the message of the Census and the implications of "undercounting" of Census data and the impact on the Government Grant the Council receives?
9. What more could this Council do in terms of promoting the Census?

## **PAPERS WITH THE REPORT**

Scoping Report (Appendix A).

Household questionnaire for the 2011 Census (Appendix B)

## **SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY**

1. Members question the witnesses and identify important issues for their review.
2. Members identify areas where further information and evidence is required to help greater understanding of the issues.
3. Members to give consideration to initial recommendations for the review.