

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

Second 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 meeting on 22 July approval was given to Members undertaking a review on 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. At the first witness session of the review held on 7 September 2010, the POC heard evidence from representatives from the Office for National Statistics and from officers from the Council who were involved in this Council's work on the Census.

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4. Details of the information provided at the first witness session are included in the minutes of the previous meeting, which are attached to this agenda.
5. Part of the evidence provided included reference to the importance of the communications strategy to publicise the Census. The Office for National Statistics would be working closely with local authorities to improve the public awareness of the importance of the Census, and in particular to enable engagement with all communities in the local authority area.

Community engagement

6. Members were informed of a meeting which was taking place with community groups, interfaith networks and residents associations on 29 September. The purpose of the meeting was to explain the Census process, to cover topics such as why the Census took place, the aims of the Census, challenges and opportunities.
7. Feedback from the meeting will be provided at the POC meeting from the Council's Census Liaison Officer and from a community group representative, Mohamud Ahmed.
8. Also attached as **Appendix B** to this report is a paper produced by Lambeth Council who have undertaken a series of focus groups which have looked at the reasons why Census participation rates were lower amongst some groups of residents and also which looked at what measures could be taken to improve responses in 2011.

Communications

9. The review was informed at its last meeting that the Council has a draft communications strategy in place to support communication about the Census with Hillingdon residents. This would be finalised pending information from the Office of National Statistics regarding their national publicity plans. This will ensure that the local communications tie in with national activity and ensure value for money. Furthermore, the Government have recently announced a new draft publicity code, which if implemented within the current expected timescales, will mean that the Council's communications strategy will need to be revised. Further information on this will feed into the POC's review.
10. In the current format, the Council plans to utilise all existing communications channels to help encourage returns of the Census, including the Council magazine, Hillingdon People, the Council website, social media, news media and resident engagement. This is scheduled to begin in the new year.

Homes in Back Gardens

11. Discussion took place at the last meeting on the issue of trying to engage with people who were leaseholders and who sub-let their properties, and particular interest was in the issue of houses in back gardens. The erection of structures in gardens without Planning or Building Control regulation is a particularly challenging issue. This is a London wide matter and reflects demand for rented accommodation and gaps in current Planning legislation. Based on observations during the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) survey, and counts in a number of streets in Hayes, officers estimate there are between 2000 and 3000 such structures, numbers of which are privately rented, either singly or in multiple-occupation. These structures do not tend to show up in HMO counts or censuses and, where occupied, are likely to be on cash basis.
12. The information from this survey could be shared with ONS to enable the participation in the Census of these hidden residents of the Borough.

PCT

13. It was hoped that for this meeting a representative of the PCT would be in attendance to offer Members information on the repercussions of undercounting on the Census for the provision of health services. Unfortunately Dr Ellis Friedman, Joint Director of Public Health could not be in attendance at this meeting.
14. Dr Ellis Friedman, however, commented that whether Hillingdon has significantly lost out due to undercounting on the last Census, depends not only on the absolute assumed undercounting in the borough of the resident population but also more importantly on the relative size of under-reporting compared to other boroughs. It is this latter issue which will determine how far Hillingdon LBH and PCT were underfunded.
15. From his experience there will have been two exercises in estimating the absolute and relative size of under-enumeration. Firstly ONS will have made a calculation of the "correct" borough population and secondly the Councils will have made their independent assessment of their resident population. Almost invariably the Borough estimates of population size are greater than the ONS estimates.
16. Dr Ellis Friedman also said that in respect of PCT funding the Census is much less important than for LBH. This is because NHS funding is predominantly based on historic funding. A target funding based partly on population size is also calculated but the pace of change to the target budget from the historic budget is usually small. The PCTs in London including Hillingdon are over-funded against their target allocations and therefore as the historic budget allocations have given Hillingdon more than our "fair" national share it is not easy to argue that the PCT has suffered overall in funding allocations over the past decade.

17. The formula for calculating the target budgets for PCTs has varied over the years and it is therefore possible to argue that the formula does not reflect the relative needs of Hillingdon but it would not be straightforward to claim PCT under-funding. However, looking ahead it is clearly advantageous to have as complete an enumeration as possible in the next Census in 2011.

Refugees

18. At the POC's last meeting an issue was raised regarding the issue of refugees, particularly with Heathrow Airport within the Borough's boundaries. ONS have confirmed that special enumeration have been in contact with the Borders Agency and the immigration and detention centres to capture information about refugees and asylum seekers.

Witnesses

19. For this meeting Members asked that information be provided from a Finance officer on the implications of an undercounting of the Borough's population data in terms of Government Grant funding for this Council and the impact on Council services. Similarly a representative from the Primary Care Trust (PCT) be invited to the meeting to talk about the impact on the provision of health services. Paragraphs 13-17 provides written evidence regarding the implications of undercounting on the PCT's provision of services.

20. In addition feedback was requested on the meeting which took place with Community groups etc, on the Census on 29 September 2010. The Census Liaison Officer and a representative from a community group would provide Members with this information.

- Pam Nash – Census Liaison Officer - LBH
- Ben Lea – Finance Accountant – LBH
- Amanda King – Area Manager for Office for National Statistics
- Nick O'Donnell – Head of Stakeholder Management for Office for National Statistics
- Mohamud Ahmed – Representative from Community Group

Key Issues and areas of possible questioning

1. What reasons (If any) would participants not complete Census questionnaires?
2. What was the public's awareness of the Census, its purpose and its aim?
3. What would encourage participants to fill in the Census Questionnaire?

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4. What will the role be of Community group leaders in the preparation and publicity for the Census?
5. What is the financial cost to the Council of undercounting the Borough's population?
6. What is the impact on the undercounting of population data in terms of the provision of services?
7. What corroboration takes place with the Council and its partners in relation to sharing of population data and could this information be shared with ONS?

PAPERS WITH THE REPORT

Scoping Report (Appendix A).

Census Focus Group – Report of Lambeth Council (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.