

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

Third Witness session

Contact Officer: Khalid Ahmed
Telephone: 01895 250833

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. Information is provided in the report which provides the review with details of what other local authorities are doing in terms of promotion and engagement.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

1. Question the witnesses from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
2. Highlight issues for further clarification and investigation
3. To make a note of possible recommendations for the review

INFORMATION

1. At this Committee's last meeting held on 13 October, Members were given further information from ONS on progress to date in terms of preparations for the Census. Discussion took place on the national publicity and communications strategy for the Census and Members were informed that this had been delayed because of the new Coalition Government's restrictions on marketing spend.
2. Details were given by ONS of the intended national advertising campaign which would be taking place which would involve TV and radio commercials to raise awareness of the 2011 Census. However, this Council's own Communication Strategy could not be finalised until final details of the national strategy were released. Nick O'Donnell and Amanda King of ONS will be in attendance at the meeting to update Members on progress on this.
3. Also at the meeting Members were provided with a copy of a report which had been prepared by Lambeth Council and which looked at the reasons why participation rates in the Census differed amongst different groups of the Community. Members asked that for this meeting details of the measures which the report had proposed to be introduced be provided.

Lambeth Council – Census Focus Groups

4. Lambeth Council's corporate research and consultation team ran a series of focus groups in May this year with residents from those groups that are known to be less likely to respond to the Census. Four groups were held with young private renters, Black Caribbean, Black American and Polish residents.
5. The research consolidated the findings that these groups were less likely to respond to the Census with the majority of participants stating that they would not complete and return the Census form.
6. The research consolidated the findings that the four above groups are less likely to respond to the Census with the majority of participants stating that they would not complete and return the census form. Reasons given for this were:
 - Lack of awareness of what the purpose of the Census is, and what is it for
 - Not having English as their first language puts people off as well as the length and complexity of the form
 - There was a belief that the Census questionnaire was unimportant as it was addressed 'to the occupier' whereas anything that they should fill in and return would be addressed to them personally
 - There are misconceptions with the Census such as the belief that completion of the Census is optional and that the Council and the government already know the information about them through previous contact with Council services
 - Young private renters expressed the view that they generally do not use Council services and therefore they do not see the improved government funding the Council would get from improved Census responses, as being of any benefit to them
7. The findings of the research emphasised the importance of effective communications in maximising the response rate to the Census in 2011. Suggestions which came out of the research and which could possibly be used for Hillingdon in terms of publicity were:
 - Early implementation of a Census awareness raising campaign
 - A clear explanation of what the Census is, what it is used for and why it is important for residents to participate
 - Localise the message, help people to see it as important to the borough, rather than a national initiative
 - It is important to focus the message around the increased funding the Council would receive from central government and the positive impact this would have on service delivery

- Include some case studies of potential improved service delivery which are relevant to the groups which are least likely to complete the Census
- Emphasise that the money will be spent on better quality services to combat cynicism about Council ineptitude
- Publicise the translation sheet at the back of the envelope and that people can phone a free helpline number or download an information pack in their language
- Give an explanation that the Census questionnaire will only be addressed to the occupier but that it is still an important document
- The targeting of places of worship through engaging with priests and pastors etc
- Targeting foreign newspapers. For example in relation to Polish newspapers; Panorama, Cooltura, Polish Express and websites
- Reference was made to the Census in Poland which is known as Spis Ludnosci. This or other foreign equivalents to the Census could be used in publicity
- Information posters and leaflets about the Census could be left in nurseries, schools, churches, pubs etc. Also in shops selling foreign cuisine.

8. In terms of practical help

- Attending tenants association meetings to explain the importance of the Census, engage with prominent figures on estates to explain and encourage their tenants to complete the Census form
- Run Census sessions in schools to explain to children the importance of the Census and to encourage them to explain to their parents why they should fill the Census forms in
- Front line Council and partnership staff to ask residents that they encounter whether they have completed their census form
- Engage all community faith leaders to pass on information about the Census to their congregations

London Borough of Hounslow

9. At the last meeting Members asked that officers contact other authorities, including a Port Authority to look at their approaches to promoting the Census and engagement tools which were being used.
10. Hounslow's draft communication strategy is still a work in progress and like Hillingdon's, is dependent on the national campaign. However at this stage Hounslow does have a webpage on the Council's Council and democracy website, which provides residents with information on what the Census is about, why completing the Census questionnaire is important and details on the recruitment of Census staff. Particular reference is made to ONS asking for volunteers from groups of residents who may be

less likely to fill in their Census forms, who would help those people from these groups to fill in their forms.

11. In addition Hounslow has an explanation leaflet for residents which provides key points on the Census and provides easy to understand instructions on how to complete the Census questionnaire.
12. The main points of Hounslow's communications and engagement strategy in support of ONS is to:
 - To Identify those groups who are classified as 'hard to count' groups who had significantly low response rates during the last Census
 - To also identify from local intelligence those groups of people who have a low level of engagement with the Council i.e. private tenants, hard to reach white working class residents, residents with learning difficulties etc
 - Using ONS population estimates, and local intelligence to identify the main cluster areas where these 'hard to count' groups are located
 - Planned communication and engagement activities divided by Council Department and Partner Organisation and working with a Census Stakeholder Group
 - A wide range of activities such as front line staff talking to clients about the importance of the Census, public notices, use of local media, websites, use of youth centres, schools, community centres and voluntary groups and so on

Dover District Council

13. In relation to Dover District Council, contact has been made with the Area Manager of ONS for Dover and the surrounding areas. He has been very active with the migrant communities, being in close contact with all the organisations that offer help and support to recent and longer term migrants within the East Kent area.
14. In summary, promoting the Census completion is being carried out through these organisations who provide support to migrants and all promotional materials are being provided in a variety of languages. It was noted, however that many of these communities were very hesitant to provide official sources with information on themselves. The Roma community which forms a large percentage of the local migrant communities is very difficult to contact as they do not have strong links with churches and do not have identified community leaders. In addition this group have an inherited resistance to giving out information due to the years of persecution they have suffered.
15. Many of the recent and longer terms migrants tend to settle in small geographical areas and ONS tend to use this information. ONS will be linking in with local shops and using these as information hubs. Local

Gateways would be used to promote the Census, links would be developed with local letting agents who would be asked to promote the Census completion by having posters up in their offices and by passing on messages in any written communication they had with their clients.

16. The Hillingdon Area Manager for ONS will provide Members with further information on engagement measures which would be used in Dover at the meeting. Also at the last meeting of the Committee Members were informed that Crawley Borough Council had undertaken a scrutiny review into the Census, and that information from their review could be useful as Gatwick airport was within the Borough. Officers from ONS would update Members on this.

BACKGROUND

PAPERS WITH THE REPORT

Scoping Report (Appendix A).

APPENDIX A

CORPORATE SERVICES & PARTNERSHIPS POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

2010/11

REVIEW SCOPING REPORT

Proposed review title:

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

Aim of the review

To make a positive contribution to improving local population estimates and to maximise the data which is gathered for the 2011 Census for the Borough. There are a number of implications of undercounting the population of the Borough and the review would focus on how the Council could promote the importance of residents of the Borough filling in the Census forms.

Proposed outcome

A report summarising the Committee's findings would be completed and presented to the Council's Cabinet. The report will explore proposals for the improvement of the gathering of data for the 2011 Census, the Council's engagement in preparations for the Census and opportunities for the generating of improved population counts for the Borough. Improved information on population figures will help the Council in terms of its strategic planning and service delivery and also ensure that the Council receives appropriate funding from Government based on accurate population statistics

Terms of reference

1. To look at the preparations and methods used for the 2011 Census and to support and add value through engagement with the area manager for the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
2. To look at measures which could be used to improve the accuracy of local population information to help the Council in its service planning.
3. To examine the role the Council has in promoting and encouraging residents of the Borough in conjunction with the ONS, to actively participate in the Census to ensure the best results for the Council and its residents.

4. To look at the plans the Council has to communicate the purpose of the Census and to see how the Council can work with community groups to maximise the response to the Census questionnaire.
5. To look at the measures which will be used to capture data from those hard to reach groups within the Borough.
6. To examine the implications of undercounting the Borough's population in relation to the grant funding the Council received from Government.
7. To consider measures which could be used with the Council's Strategic Partners to ensure population figures are accurate.
8. To look at the methods other local authorities use to improve the accuracy of Census data
9. To make recommendations to Cabinet on what the Council can do in relation to the promotion of the Census to residents of the Borough to ensure the Census questionnaire is widely completed.

Reasons for the review

The Census is the definitive source of population and household information and takes place every 10 years. The ONS is responsible for carrying out the Census and the information provided forms essential information from national to neighbourhood level for government, business and the community.

The next Census will take place on 27 March 2011 and the population data obtained underpins the amount of funding each local authority receives from central government.

The last Census in 2001 saw response rates in local authority areas vary between 64% and 99%. Hillingdon achieved a response rate of 91.5%. In certain areas of London and among some population groups, significant numbers of people failed to complete the Census questionnaire. This has serious consequences for Councils, as population is one of the main factors in determining how much funding various public services including local authorities, primary care trusts and the Probation Service receive from government.

Hillingdon births have risen for several consecutive years with births in 2008 being exceptionally high at 4,126 children, which was several hundred more than the previous record high.

Demographic professionals at the Greater London Authority (GLA) have indicated a prolonged period of births at around the high 2008 level. This

demographic pressure is exacerbated by unusual family movements within the Borough caused by the economic climate.

In the present economic climate with local government having to cut budgets it is vital that the Council does as much as it can to ensure that population data from the Census is as accurate as possible to ensure the Council receives maximum funding from the Government.

Key issues

1. What preparations have ONS made to ensure that the Census for 2011 is as accurate as possible?
2. What are the forms of engagement which are used to collect Census and population data and what other measures could be used to improve engagement with residents?
3. How does the Council and the ONS engage with community groups to ensure those 'hard to reach' groups are made aware of the importance of the completion of Census questionnaires?
4. What can the Council and its partners do to promote the importance and purpose of the Census to ensure residents return Census questionnaires?
5. What promotional and publicity tools could the Council use to obtain maximum engagement with all residents within the Borough?
6. What is the financial cost to the Council of undercounting the Borough's population?
7. What are the rules in relation to temporary residents in the Borough i.e. students in the Borough's Higher Education establishments for purposes of the Census?
8. What corroboration takes place between other London Boroughs and other public sector organisations on sharing data relating to population?

Methodology

Witness sessions to potentially include:

Area Manager from Office for National Statistics (ONS)
Strategic Information Officer – LBH
Head of Communications - LBH
Officer from GLA
Representatives from community groups
Officer from another London Borough
Officer from London Councils

A review of the relevant literature and websites.

Written evidence from witnesses

Office for National Statistics – Information paper on The 2011 Census – A design for England and Wales

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/about>

Powerpoint presentations from the Census Liaison Officer and the Area Manager of ONS from the meeting which took place with community groups , interfaith networks and residents associations on 29 September 2010.

Questions following presentation to Assistant Census Liaison Managers and a number of Area Managers who attended the Census Forum on 8 September 2010.

Stakeholders and consultation plan

As many stakeholders as possible would be invited to give evidence to the Committee in person. In addition to those outlined above, further stakeholders could be invited to give written evidence to the review.

Connected work (recently completed, planned or ongoing)

The ONS in July 2010 released new population projections which replaced the 2006 based sub national projections which were published in June 2008.

The population projections were used by the previous Government in the local authority grant allocation process.

The projections are based on the assumption that recent trends in fertility, mortality and migration at local authority level will continue; they take no account of local development policy, economic factors, or the capacity of areas to accommodate population changes.

Projections are available for each year from 2008 to 2033 for all local authorities in England, with aggregates to counties, Government Office regions, and health areas. Data is available by gender and for five year age groups to 90+.

For London the key results are an increase in population of 1.520 million persons (19.8 per cent) between 2008 and 2033, reaching a population of 9.188 million. This is considerably higher than the highest recorded population in London: 8.6 million in 1939. London's projected growth of nearly 20% compares with an 18.0% increase for England.

It is projected that London's female population will grow more slowly than the male: 19.7% compared to 20%. This is mainly caused by the assumed continuation of the improvement in rates of male survival at older ages.

Implications for Hillingdon

All Borough populations are projected to grow between 2008 and 2033 however there is a great deal of variation. Brent has one of the lowest projected growths of 4% (10.1 thousand) with Hammersmith & Fulham only slightly higher at 6.4% (10.8 thousand).

Hillingdon's population is projected to grow by 23.0% (59.4 thousand). Ealing is mid way with a projected growth of 14.3% (44.5 thousand) while, Hounslow 24.3% (55.9 thousand) and Harrow 24.4% (55.0 thousand).

Although the above figures are projections, the latest actual figures show that births rose again in Q4 2009. There is no sign of decline in London, although the rate of increase has slowed. Across London there is no clear pattern: in Enfield the birth rate is declining while in Ealing it is increasing.

Proposed timeframe & milestones

Meeting	Action	Comments
22 July 2010	Consideration of a draft scoping report	
7 September 2010	First Witness Session and approval of final scoping report	Witnesses to include : Head of Stakeholder Management for ONS Area Manager for ONS Strategic Information Officer and Head of Policy – LBH Deputy Head of Communications – LBH
13 October 2010	Second Witness Session and draft recommendations of the review	Witnesses to include: Finance Officer - LBH Representative(s) from community group(s) or feedback from a meeting which took place on 29 September

		<p>Written evidence from the Joint Director of Public Health</p> <p>Head of Stakeholder Management for ONS</p> <p>Area Manager for ONS</p>
11 November 2010	Third witness session	<p>Witnesses to include:</p> <p>Head of Stakeholder Management for ONS</p> <p>Area Manager for ONS</p>
19 January 2011	Consideration of draft final report	