

**CORPORATE SERVICES & PARTNERSHIPS
POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE ON THE CENSUS 2011
HOW THE COUNCIL CAN CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVING
THE POPULATION DATA FOR THE BOROUGH**

Cabinet Member	Councillor Douglas Mills
Cabinet Portfolio	Improvements, Partnerships & Community Safety
Officer Contact	Khalid Ahmed, Deputy Chief Executive's Office
Papers with report	Final Report

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	To receive the Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee's report which has made recommendations to improve the Borough's returned Census questionnaires for the Census for 2011
Contribution to our plans and strategies	The data from the Census will contribute to a whole range of Council plans and strategies
Financial Cost	There are no direct financial costs associated with the recommendations of this report, as any resource requirements will be provided from within existing resources. However the benefits of a more robust set of population data collected through the Census could potentially have a positive impact on the resources that the Council receives in the future , as Government funding provided to local authorities takes into account population statistics.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee
Ward(s) affected	All

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 1. Welcomes the review's final report from the Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee and gives consideration to the following recommendations;**
 - a) That where practicable and subject to budgetary provision, officers be asked to consider some of the engagement methods and techniques gathered during the review, and tailor them towards the needs and issues applicable to Hillingdon. These be integrated into the Council's Census and Engagement and Consultation strategy.**

- b) That the data from the Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) survey be shared with the Office for National Statistics to enable the engagement and participation in the Census of those residents who lived in structures in back gardens.
- c) That Hillingdon's Census Engagement and Communications Strategy be aligned as far as possible with the national initiatives and timescales, to ensure maximum impact and participation in the Census process.
- d) That in the Council's Census Engagement and Communications Strategy reference be made in the publicity for the Census to the strictly confidential nature of the information provided in the Census questionnaire and also the impact of non-participation in the Census on the Council's funding and on the delivery of essential services.
- e) That support be given to ONS working in collaboration with front line Council services to promote the participation of residents in the Census 2011 and to helping them complete the Census questionnaire.

INFORMATION

Reasons for recommendations

The recommendations are aimed at allowing Cabinet to take forward the POC's recommendations in relation to the review they undertook for the Census 2011.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject or amend the Committee's recommendations.

Supporting Information

The review held three witness sessions in September, October and November 2010 and the purpose behind the review was to work with the Office for National Statistics on engagement and communication measures which will be required to ensure the maximum participation and coverage of all residents in the Borough.

A high return of Census questionnaires is beneficial to the Council as in the long term the population data which results from a Census will contribute to the level of funding the Council receives from Central Government. Also, In view of the present economic climate with local government having to rationalise budgets, it will be to the Council's advantage if population data from the Census is as accurate as possible to ensure Government funding reflects the true population of the Borough.

The Committee's final report which is attached to this report provides full details of the review.

Officer Comments on Recommendations

The review proposed the following five recommendations. Comments from officers regarding the recommendations are provided for Cabinet's information.

Recommendation 1: That where practicable and subject to budgetary provision, officers be asked to consider some of the engagement methods and techniques gathered during

the review, and tailor them towards the needs and issues applicable to Hillingdon. These be integrated into the Council's Census and Engagement and Consultation strategy.

The review was provided with various methods which other local authorities were to use to get the Census message across to residents. Working in conjunction with the Office for National Statistics and within budgetary provision, the Council's Census Engagement and Communications Strategy would supplement ONS engagement and publicity activity to ensure the best possible count for the Borough.

This would include utilising the existing Council and Local Partnership communications channels to promote the Census; promoting the Census with communities throughout the Borough who are classified as "Hard to Count" and who have historically had a low response rate to the Census. Work would take place with local and regional organisations who have contact with communities to promote the Census and encourage local groups to assist others to complete their Census forms through completion events. One of the main tasks undertaken has been effectively promoting Census jobs to residents and Council staff to ensure Hillingdon has a strong field workforce to support Census delivery and collection.

The initial communications methods used so far have been community events which have involved community groups, interfaith networks and residents associations, marketing on the Council's website, an article in Hillingdon People and press releases to the local media. Activities will step up as Census Day on 27 March 2011 approaches.

Recommendation 2: That the data from the Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) survey be shared with the ONS to enable the engagement and participation in the Census of those residents who lived in structures in back gardens.

During the review the ONS were made aware of the London wide issue of houses / structures in the back gardens of homes, something raised by the Residents' and Environmental Services POC in a review on Planning Enforcement – Construction and Use of Detached Out Buildings (Homes in Back Gardens) undertaken last year. The people who lived in these structures were not known to the authorities and were not on the electoral register or registered for Council Tax. Reference was made to observations made during a Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) survey whereby it was estimated that in Hayes alone there were between 2000 and 3000 such structures.

The review asked that the information from the HMO survey be passed to ONS to enable contact to be made with residents in these properties to ensure their participation in the Census process. This information sharing between the Council and ONS was important as it would enable ONS to identify those people in the Borough that they would not have been able to engage with. It was stressed to the Committee that Census information would not be shared and was confidential.

Recommendation 3: That Hillingdon's Census Engagement and Communications Strategy be aligned as far as possible with the national initiatives and timescales, to ensure maximum impact and participation in the Census process.

The ONS provided the review with extensive details of the national communications strategy which would run from February 2011 to May 2011. Joint working was taking place between the Area Manager for ONS and Council officers to ensure maximum impact of the Census message. Particular importance would be the engagement of the community and voluntary sector.

The ONS and the Council had worked closely on covering the engagement which was planned with community and voluntary groups and organisations operating in the Borough that support “Hard to Count” groups.

Recommendation 4: That in the Council’s Census Engagement and Communications Strategy reference be made in the publicity for the Census to the strictly confidential nature of the information provided in the Census questionnaire and also the impact of non-participation in the Census on the Council’s funding and on the delivery of essential services.

As detailed in the final report, in the long term, Council funding is affected by the population data which comes out a Census. This directly affects the planning and delivery of Council services. Therefore, the message should be communicated to residents of the Borough that completing the Census questionnaire will benefit the Council in terms of the funding it receives from Government and the service provided to residents of the Borough.

From research undertaken one of the reasons that some residents gave for not wanting to participate in the Census, was the distrust in public authorities in terms of the use of personal information as supplied in the Census questionnaire. ONS officers gave assurances to the review that the information supplied on Census questionnaires was treated in strictest confidence and would not be used for any other purpose, other than for the purpose of the Census. The information supplied would not be used by any other Government Department, local Councils or marketing agencies. It is important that the message of confidentiality be communicated to residents during the publicity for the Census.

Recommendation 5: That support be given to ONS working in collaboration with front line Council services to promote the participation of residents in the Census 2011 and to helping them complete the Census questionnaire.

A major part of the ONS recruitment strategy for the Census has been recruiting Council employees to the Census as field staff and enumerators. Field staff recruited will be representative of the community areas they will be covering to encourage participation and to assist residents in the translation of the Census material, if required.

Of particular importance is the use of Council front-line staff that have face-to-face contact with the public.

Protocols were being worked on with local Councils in relation to the ONS enabling Council front line staff such as carers, to communicate the message of the Census to service users. Included in this would be providing an appropriate level of assistance to users to enable them to complete the Census questionnaire.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendations?

The Committee’s recommendations will improve the profile of the Census campaign and remind residents of the importance of completing the Census questionnaire. This is because the population data which comes out of a Census affects Council funding and the planning and delivery of services.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The Committee took evidence from ONS officers, from Council officers and from a Community Advisor for ONS.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial costs associated with the recommendations of this report, as any resource requirements will be provided from within existing resources. However the benefits of a more robust set of population data collected through the Census could potentially have a positive impact on the resources that the Council receives, as Government funding provided to local authorities takes into account population statistics.

The activities which will be undertaken as part of the Census process and which will be included in the Council's Census Engagement and Communications Strategy will all be within existing budgets and within planned workloads of officers concerned. ONS, through the national communications strategy will provide the overall funding for most of the engagement activities for the Census.

Joint working will take place between ONS and public organisations such as Hillingdon Council, and the Council on its part is providing assistance to the Area Manager of ONS in terms of providing storage space for literature associated with the Census.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Financial Implication

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and is satisfied that the financial implications properly reflect the direct resource implications for the Council. An improved returned Census questionnaire may have a positive impact for Hillingdon, as the Government takes into account population statistics, when allocating funding.

Legal Implications

Ensuring maximum participation in the census will help direct Council services where they are most needed and will inform future policy decisions. The recommendations tabled in this report are designed to ensure that maximum benefit is obtained from statistics that are compiled from information gathered during the Census.

Cabinet is authorised by Regulation 7.08(c) (5) of the Constitution to consider this matter.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee's final report on the Census review.