

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee **DATE:** 27<sup>th</sup> January 2011

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### **Census – A Progress Report**

#### **1 Purpose of Report**

The purpose of the report is to update the committee on the current census project with particular reference to recent developments with the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and it's response to elected member concerns.

#### **2 Recommendation(s)**

- a) The committee is requested to examine the responses given by the ONS to concerns registered by elected members at previous meetings.
- b) to consider any further follow-up questions or actions with respect to the Census project.
- c) To note the current progress of the project to date
- c) To examine members' contribution to the Census project.

#### **3 Community Strategy Priorities**

As with all local authorities, Slough Borough Council relies on census population figures to get the government funding needed for public services. The amount of funding the borough receives is related to the diversity and number of people the census says live in our area. An effective census campaign therefore underpins and promotes each of the community strategy priorities with the potential to make a real difference to our residents and communities.

#### **4 Other Implications**

##### **(a) Financial**

There are no financial implications of proposed action.

##### **(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

There are no Human Rights or Legal implications.

## 5 Supporting Information

### **Background to the report: Issues from previous meetings, resolutions and recommendations**

- a) *The Scrutiny Officer referred to the ONS and Census 2011 action point within the minutes. He presented to the meeting copies of correspondence between ONS and SBC which he believed showed an impasse was forming and he suggested a meeting be held with ONS to include two representatives from the Committee. It was RESOLVED that Cllrs Mann and Haines (representing the O&S Committee), the Leader, the Chief Executive and relevant officers meet with ONS. Cllrs O'Connor and Bains indicated they would be willing to join the meeting if one or either of the previously O&S Committee attendees was unable to attend. The Scrutiny Officer would make arrangements accordingly.*
- b) *The Area Manager focuses his effort and time on the Slough area, in particular due to the extraordinary circumstances of the resident and transient population of the area.*
- c) *That additional questionnaires are issued to, and followed up with HMOs subject to methodology to be discussed and agreed with officers of the council*
- d) *That the ONS makes it clear to Slough residents that any data provided by them to the Census 2011 is not supplied to any other agency, government or public body and is only released after 100 years and is, therefore effectively supplied to the ONS on a confidential basis*
- e) *That the ONS monitors responses during the return period and adjusts the workforce, collector activity and publicity awareness accordingly*

5.1 A meeting took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2010 between the ONS, Glen Watson and Garnett Compton and Slough Borough Council, Ruth Bagley and Kevin Gordon. From that meeting the following assurances were given by the ONS.

- 5.1.1 Resources for SBC

The ONS has given assurances to provide additional support and priority given to engage with local community groups. As well as this consideration would be given to examine the arrangements and resourcing for the support of completion events. The ONS would also identify activities that Coordinators can support from 7<sup>th</sup> Feb onwards

- 5.1.2 Hard to Count Classification and follow up resources

The ONS will release the percentage of returned questionnaires every week from the 1<sup>st</sup> April until 13<sup>th</sup> May. From the 8<sup>th</sup> May Slough will be informed of its 'cold spot' out of five coordinator areas. The ONS will not share the return rates of the other four areas, even if they are as low as the cold spot.

- 5.1.3 Slough has been allocated 8,000 hours for follow up – a four fold increase from 2001. Should ONS have concerns about response rates in Slough as the field operation unfolds a number of options will be available including contracting

additional hours for field staff and moving field resources from higher response areas to lower ones.

- 5.1.4 Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and garden annexes.
- 10 Early Collectors will start on the 21<sup>st</sup> March (with remaining collectors beginning their work on the 6<sup>th</sup> April) and part of their role will be to make contact with the HMO addresses to determine the number of people and/or households at the address and then follow the relevant procedures. For large households (more than 6 people) they will issue continuation questionnaires; for addresses with more than one household they will issue a new household questionnaire and record the address on the address register.
- ONS are saying that for beds in sheds and HMOs the approach and guidance to early collectors will be to aim to get the number of people 'on the footprint' right, giving this more priority than getting the number of households at the address right if necessary. ONS have said that this should help the early collectors on the door step in overcoming barriers about the disclosure of illegal annexes.
- 5.1.5 Quality assurance and census coverage survey
- The ONS have told us that the Census Coverage Survey (CCS) will help the ONS to assess and adjust for those households and people who did not complete their census questionnaire. The ONS have told us that the CCS and the subsequent coverage adjustment process is crucial to ensuring that the census population estimate is a robust measure of Slough's population
- The sample for the CSS in Slough will be drawn from a sample of 5% of output areas – considerably more than the average of 3% of output areas for the whole of England and Wales.
- After the coverage assessment there will be an extensive quality assurance process to compare the emerging census population estimates with comparator sources to provide assurance that the estimates are plausible and robust. SBC are already providing the ONS with administrative data or research into Slough's population that will further inform this quality assurance process.

## **5.2 Census – Progress to date**

- Alongside our press and media work an extensive marketing and publicity campaign is well underway and one of the main features is the loan of two outreach vehicles from RBFRS, one of which will tour around the Borough to schools, places of worship etc and the second forming part of a marketing exercise on the high street. In addition there will be information kiosks, banners, leaflets, advert panels on SBC vehicles, and giveaways such as pens for school children. The publicity campaign will commence from the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2011 until 5<sup>th</sup> April when questionnaires will start to arrive on door mats.
- Completion centres will form the backbone of the 2011 Census operation in Slough aimed at providing help and assistance to people with literacy needs, those with English as a second language and disabled people. We are planning for 100+ centres including all primary schools, places of worship, libraries, My Council, and local community and voluntary groups. The RBFRS outreach vehicle will also

operate as a 'mobile completion centre'. The completion centre operating period will be from 27<sup>th</sup> March (Census Day) until the 5<sup>th</sup> April

- Between the 6<sup>th</sup> April until 13<sup>th</sup> May the ONS teams of 5 Area Co-ordinators and 60+ collectors will follow at address that have not posted back or completed the census online. Throughout this SBC will receive updates from the ONS of the percentage of Slough's completion rates.

### **5.3 Members roles and responsibilities**

- The support of councillors is vital to ensure a successful census and members can be involved in a number of ways through:
  - Promoting the census in your area by asking local groups if they have been asked to get involved with the census. If not, to get in touch with us as it's not too late.
  - Using any canvassing as an opportunity to mention the census and convey the key messages to your local residents
  - Informing the census team of any Sheds or HMOs – by emailing the Census Project Manager.

## **6 Conclusion**

The intervention of Overview and Scrutiny Committee has made a marked difference in the way that the ONS now responds to Slough Council. The additional resources that have been provided by the ONS for Slough although not comprehensive are to be welcomed.

## **7 Background Papers**

None