

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee **DATE:** 31 March 2011

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### **Census 2011 – Progress update**

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

Further to reports presented previously to Committee, this paper provides members with an update although the production deadline of this paper means further progress will have been made since drafting.

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

The Committee is invited to comment on the campaign to date and make recommendations to senior officers to maximise the response and return rate for the benefit of the area and all residents.

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

As with all local authorities, Slough Borough Council relies on correct census population data to ensure it receives suitable central government funding for essential public services. The level of funding received relates to the number of people, and their diversity, living in an area as captured by the census. Therefore, it is vital that a successful project is run to effectively and accurately record population data; this 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 Project Progress**

The project has now moved from the preparatory phase to one of operational delivery with an enhanced, invigorated local team moving it forward. This is being handled within the Chief Executive's directorate with day-to-day SBC executive responsibility undertaken by Andrew Millard supported by Naveed Mohammed (LSP manager),

Noreen Mian (communities), Sam Daynes (communications and engagement), Russ Bourner (quality assurance) and Theresa Carter (administration).

SBC chairs the local area Census 2011 Project Board (chaired by Ruth Bagley) with representation from Thames Valley Police (TVP), the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS), the Berkshire East Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the Slough Voluntary and Community Service (SVCS).

There are, in the main, three thrusts to the work programme:

- Publicity and Awareness
- Assistance and Completion Centres
- Quality Assurance

### Publicity and Awareness

- 5.1 Alongside our press and media work, an extensive local marketing and awareness campaign has been launched. This includes a four page pull-out due to be published in the Slough Express on 25 March 2011, several features (including cover page) in Citizen and an active Grapevine awareness campaign for all SBC.
- 5.2 RBFRS has provided two vehicles which have been badged with the census logo and in the census colours. These move around the borough and provide high profile support at venues and functions including at Assistance and Completion events; the larger of the two vehicles has the added advantage of hosting mobile workstations where residents wishing to complete their census returns online may do so from within the vehicles.
- 5.3 A number of very substantial banners have been erected in prominent locations around the borough to draw attention to the census. These have been personalised with the Slough name and logos. Locations include: the front of the Town Hall, at the entrance to the Walk In Centre at Upton Hospital and at both Langley and Slough Fire Stations.
- 5.4 Local businesses and the Business Forum (consisting of some of the most high-profile businesses in Slough) have agreed to support Census 2011 within internal newsletters and publicity. This includes payslip and email campaigns.
- 5.5 Posters and leaflets have been produced in all of the main community languages. These have been and continue to be distributed by all customer facing points across the borough including: libraries, community centres, leisure centres, GP surgeries, voluntary help groups (such as Citizens Advice Bureau) and MyCouncil. A range of additional supporting merchandise (such as pens, balloons, sweets, etc) has been produced which is used at outside events to help publicise and promote the census.
- 5.6 TVP and the PCT have been and continue to send out internal electronic newsletters.
- 5.7 Information briefings have been held for SBC elected members on 7 and 9 March 2011. Five key points were included as to how councillors can help and contribute to the census' success.

## Assistance/Completion Centres

5.8 A range of Centres, at different locations across the borough, commenced from 5 March 2011. Initially, these are classed as **assistance centres** to help residents filling-in and completing their questionnaires. The Centres are manned by a team of volunteers from across our stakeholders.

Assistance Centres have the following aims:

- Raising awareness of the census by distributing leaflets and associated merchandise
- To act as an information point for those who have questions or queries
- To act as a help point where residents need support and guidance about completing their questionnaire

5.9 From 21 March 2011 onwards, a number of the Assistance Centres in key locations become **completion centres**. These continue to be manned by Slough volunteers who are joined by ONS staff. Initially, two Completion Centres will be operational (the MyCouncil offices in Landmark Place and at the Slough Central Library).

Completion Centres have the following aims:

- The ability (with ONS present) to accept completed questionnaires from residents (something that volunteers are unable to do as a result of confidentiality issues)
- Issue replacement questionnaires for those who have lost, damaged or advise they have not received their questionnaire and/or issue extension forms for those households with more than 6 people

5.10 Assistance and Completion Centres form the backbone of the operational period and take place between 5 March 2011 and 5 April 2011. Activity increases during the final weeks with additional centres being held across the town, in all wards, from week commencing 28 March 2011 through to 5 April 2011.

5.11 In addition, from 5 April 2011, ONS staff will visit addresses where census questionnaires have not been returned. Unfortunately, Slough volunteers are not permitted to assist with this exercise – it is solely the remit of ONS staff.

5.12 Overall feedback received so far is positive suggesting the Assistance Centres are having the desired impact. The level of enquires is expected to increase substantially during the lead up to and immediately after 27 March 2011 (census count day).

## Quality Assurance

5.11 The crucial part of the whole census project is to ensure accuracy and that the data provided and collated is fit for purpose. The final element of this is the Quality Assurance exercise with the ONS allowing each area to submit a dossier of local evidence concerning population numbers. This might include, for example, data on the number of patients on GP registers, information held by the local authority about council tax, pupil numbers at school, birth rates, etc. – data, that whilst not directly related to total population numbers, provides strong supporting evidence or indicates trends. In addition, data that supports population numbers of particular communities can also be submitted which should be of great value here in Slough given the exponential rise in the number of Eastern Europeans settling in the borough, many of whom have not been counted in official estimates. Finally, the area is entitled to

submit evidence of correspondence between ONS and local stakeholders where disputes or concerns raised and how these have been addressed.

- 5.12 SBC is working with our partners to compile the relevant data and supporting dossier. This needs to be submitted by end May 2011.

## **6 Challenges and concerns**

- 6.1 Through the Census 2011 Project Board, active progress has been made with local partners working together well to ensure the best outcome. However, an important issue still remains around ONS resources and support.
- 6.2 The date from which ONS staff are available to support at completion centres has changed on several occasions. However, ONS has now confirmed that staff will be available at *some* centres (so far for MyCouncil and Slough Central Library only and after exerted pressure by the Council). At the decision of the Census Area Manager, ONS staff have been assigned to schools. However, doubts remain regarding the effectiveness of this approach and representations are being made to try and divert resources to busier centres in other parts of the town.
- 6.3 Slough has been allocated two Community Advisors. However, they are only part-time and, at the time of drafting this paper, one is on holiday. Representations are being made.
- 6.4 Slough has been allocated five Area co-ordinators. They are onsite already and are actively chasing returns from Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and from Sheds. We are hopeful they will be allowed to work borough wide, if required and should the need arise, as opposed to just being confined to their own allocated areas.
- 6.5 Whilst our own local publicity and awareness is well underway, it is felt success is being hampered by the lack of ONS complementary publicity both locally and at a national level. The former is limited to a few billboards. It would appear the national campaign has been poor with limited television advertising. It is felt that without the active Slough campaign, few in the town would be aware of Census 2011 and what they have to do. In addition, the initial leaflet templates provided by ONS did not contain the national telephone helpline number. SBC is adding this on subsequent print-runs.
- 6.3 There has been a greater degree of apathy amongst some sections of the community (for instance Polish and certain elements of the White British community). More effort will also need to be made to reach smaller hard to reach communities such as the Romanian community.

## **7 Assistance from Elected Members**

- 7.1 The continued support of councillors is vital to ensure a successful census outcome. Elected members are encouraged to keep spreading a positive the message about Census 2011, placating residents' concerns and acting as census ambassadors.

Additional suggestions include

- Promoting the census in your area by asking local groups if they are actively involved. If not, please contact us so we can get involved - it is not too late.

- Use canvassing for the local elections as an opportunity to mention the census, convey the key messages to local residents and provide support and guidance, where required.
- Direct any resident with a concern or query to either of the two key local Completion Centres (list attached).
- Inform the SBC census team about any Sheds or Houses of Multiple Occupation so we may check them against our list and update, as required.
- Soon after 5 April 2011, ONS is due to provide information about Slough “cold spot” (i.e. the place within the borough that has the least return of questionnaires per household). Whilst we would like to receive a more detailed breakdown within that cold spot (and also wider information relating to several cold spot areas across the borough), we might need to use the help and support of councillors in that area/those areas to mobilise support to improve responses.

## **8 Conclusion**

The intervention of the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee last year made a marked difference in the way ONS supplied resource to and now responds to Slough Borough Council. However, there is more to be done and the support of the Committee and elected members generally is welcomed to ensure as accurate an outcome as possible.

## **9 Background Papers**

Appendix- List of Assistance and Completion Centres