

Report title: **Census 2011**
Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
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Date: 07 June 2011
Wards affected: All

1. Purpose

This paper provides a concluding report to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee relating to the delivery of the Census 2011 project in Slough.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider the contents of this paper and:

- (a) Note the planning, preparation, execution and partnership working in the project
- (b) Comment on the ONS input and consider what formal response, if any, should be relayed to the ONS at this stage and whether to call-back the ONS to a future meeting to be questioned about future provision
- (c) Comment on the perceived impact locally of the project and make any observations of lessons learnt to include in the planned wash up and report
- (d) Note that the QA phase is critical to our overall success and consider how best to ensure our inputs and challenge ensure the best outcome

3. Delivering the project

Considerable preparation was undertaken with the setting-up of a Project Board in July 2010. Officers were called to O&S to answer questions and explain about the project plan. Similarly, the Director and other representatives from the ONS were called to explain national preparations and to confirm to O&S about any special measures being put in place so the problems encountered 10 years previously were not prevalent on this occasion.

The operational delivery commenced in early February 2011 with the project being managed wholly through the Chief Executive's directorate. Day-to-day executive responsibility was undertaken by Andrew Millard (Interim Special Projects Manager) supported by Naveed Mohammed (LSP manager), Noreen Mian (communities and cohesion support), Sam Daynes (media, communications and engagement), Russ Bourner (quality assurance) and Theresa Carter (administration).

The overall Project Board comprised representation from all the LSP partners including

- Fire and Rescue Service – Paul Jacques and Kuldeep Kuner

- PCT – John Pullin
- Thames Valley Police – Andy Shearwood
- Slough BC – Ruth Bagley, Andrew Millard, Sam Daynes, Naveed Mohammed
- Slough CVS – Ramesh Kukar

The project itself was divided into four phases.

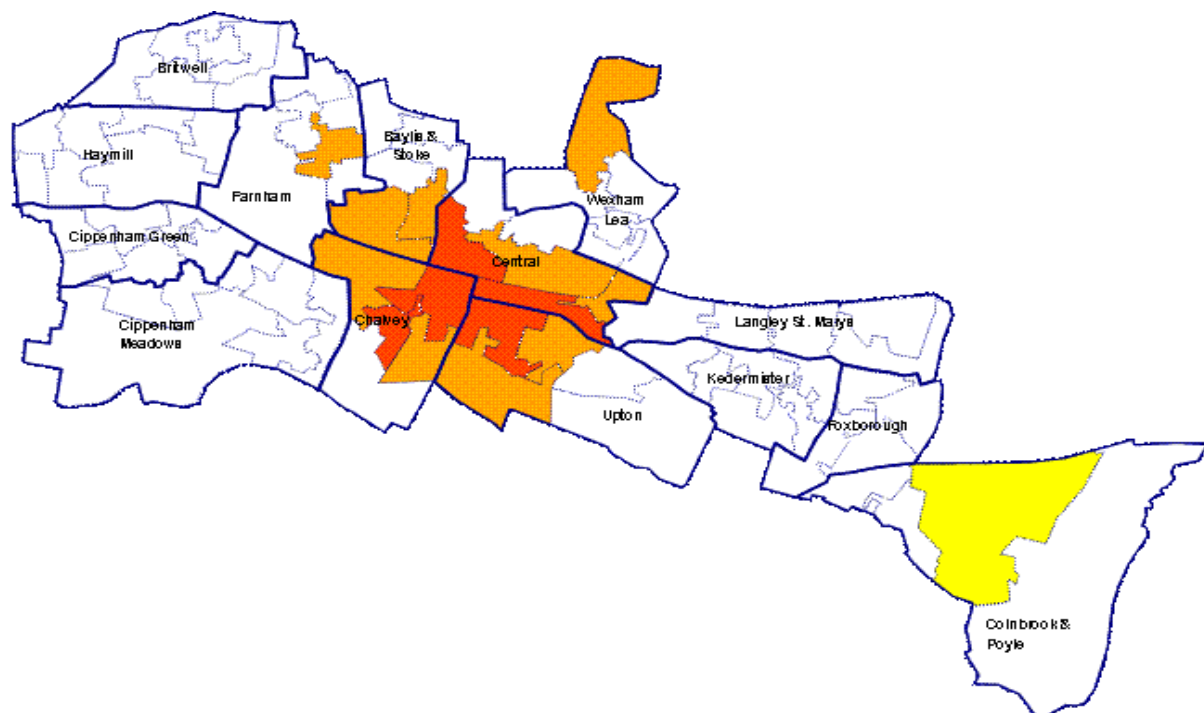
- Preparation – comprising research and development of a delivery plan
- Operational Phase 1 - publicity and roll-out of completion and assistance centres
- Operational Phase 2 – Follow Up and targeted work
- Quality Assurance

Details of the first two phases have been covered in previous reports (March 2011). Details of the work relating to Operational Phase 2 and the Quality Assurance report are contained within.

3.1 Operational Phase 2

Operational Phase 2 coincided with the release of provisional data from the ONS detailing the 15 neighbourhoods in Slough where return rates were lower than expected. These 'Cold Spots' were grouped in three levels with level one being the 'coldest' (lowest return) and level 3 being areas of less concern.

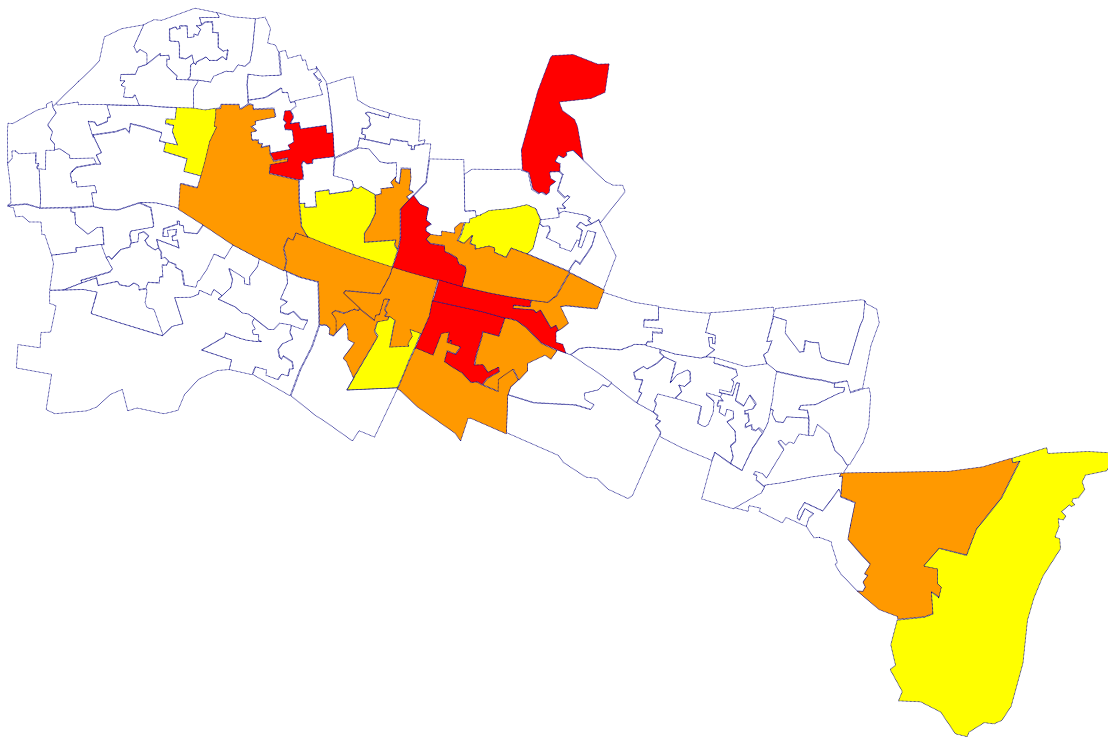
The map below details the 'cold spots' as identified in the first release of data on 11 April 2011 with the red/darker areas being level one, the orange/lighter grey being the next level and the yellow/lightest grey being the final area(s) of concern. Those in white/not marked were performing to plan.



Following the receipt of this data, the Census project team, working closely with the local ONS team, targeted the areas of concern through:

- Targeted leafleting
- Additional assistance centres held in Chalvey and Baylis and Stoke
- Attendance at community events including SADSAD
- Hosting National Census Bus on 18th April 2011 targeting central wards
- Targeted work on multi-storey dwellings – Centrika development and developments on the Bath Road

Following this intervention and extra support received from ONS, the profile of 'Cold Spots' as of 30 April 2011 changed to:



The above clearly shows that the additional targeted work addressed a number of the 'RED' areas. This was particularly so in Chalvey and some parts of Central. Meanwhile there was a small number of areas where response rates remained static and consequently these became the 'coldest spots' in the borough, notably Wexham Lea, Colnbrook and Poyle, and some parts of Farnham. Although this is disappointing to see, informal feedback suggests that response rates across the borough have been universally better than in 2001.

ONS and partnership effort on response rates ceased at the end of April. The ONS have now moved into the enforcement phase.

3.2 Quality Assurance

Raising our response rates is critical to securing a good base figure. The next phase is to build on work already undertaken last year to ensure that projections from that

base are accurate and maximise our population projection. It is critical to ensure that the data provided to the ONS is fit-for-purpose. 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 locally, 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.

SBC is working with our partners to compile the relevant data and supporting dossier. The internal date we set for production of the first draft is 31 May 2011. There will then be a period of proofing and consultation before we seek final submission in June.

Additional advice received from the ONS over the last few months is that there is no formal deadline for submission of information and data. As such, where additional data is received/produced which would be considered to be of value, Slough will continue to submit this on an as-and-when basis. For example any new evidence on sheds and HMOs will be to our advantage.

3.3 The impact of the 2011 Census Project overall

Official but provisional figures released by the ONS on 31 March 2011 showed that the initial response level for the Census for the South East was 72%. We believe Slough's performance compared relatively well to the regional figure and considerably better than its performance, at the same stage, in 2001.

Since then, the ONS has decided not to release further information although sources indicate we have performed extremely well, comfortably exceeding our outturn in 2001 of 84%. In assessing how the various activities undertaken since February 2011 have been received and the impact they have had on communities, the indications are positive. Awareness of the Census has been much greater including awareness of the impacts on the town and the sanctions for non-completion. Engagement with a broad range of communities has been positive and we were able to secure commitment from both established communities (Pakistani, Indian) and more importantly, newly arrived communities including Somali, Polish, Roma and others.

We nevertheless need to maintain the evidence and pressure to secure a sound projection and overall high figure.

4. Key Lessons

- Whilst the ONS has played an important part in delivering the overall 2011 Census in Slough, the operational input has been patchy. Thus whilst during the 2nd operational phase, the ONS devoted much higher levels of resource and responded more positively to overtures than in the past, the initial commitment and level of resource was not what was expected. The partnerships inputs have been vital to securing a high response rate and we are led to believe that the impact of Slough's investment is visible in the overall performance against comparable communities.
- Whilst engagement with communities was good overall, translating this into better response levels was not always as easy. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Roma and parts of the recently arrived Polish communities in particular were more resistant to actually completing and returning forms. This was despite targeted work and close collaboration with the Polish Church, Roma Church and the YMCA.
- Whilst the project had success in identifying and targeting HMOs – we are still unsure how successful we have been in capturing multi-occupancy households and we will continue the work of identifying, registering and reporting these to the ONS.
- The setting-up and active management of a team within the Council has helped drive the project and allowed considered focus. The limited sums invested will, it is believed be recovered in the form of additional government grant money.
- The project has considerably improved our experience of achieving intensive community engagement beyond the usual methods, community organisations and leadership. This is likely to be a valuable by-product of the project and a wash up workshop is being organised to capture learning for the partners in future.

5. Conclusion

The Census 2011 project so far can be deemed overall to have been a success in increasing the response rate. Given the size of the challenge in delivering a successful Census in Slough – from linguistic issues within key communities and a young and highly mobile population through to the number of HMOs and highly diverse nature of the town – capturing an accurate population profile was always going to be challenging. The achievement of a higher response rate against a more complex population profile is admirable. The investment in the QA process should reinforce a higher population figure.

The project has had success in engaging key communities. In addition, the profile has been raised within the Council and partner organisations. A number of the activities have had notable impacts including the 100+ assistance centres and the publicity/awareness drive. The close partnership working between the LSP members was also a key positive. Finally the commitment of staff across the Partnership has been exemplary as has the contribution made by Voluntary sector colleagues.

However there are a number of lessons to be drawn and which would be useful to note if and when Slough embarks on a similar project. It is recommended that a detailed lessons learnt report be commissioned which would capture the learning.