

Meeting of the Cabinet – 30th June, 2010

Report of the Chief Executive

Delivering the 2011 Census

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Cabinet of the 2011 Census process; the actions that the Council is being asked to perform to support the census; why these actions are necessary and how they will be delivered.

Background

2. The next decennial Census will take place on 27 March 2011. The aim of the Census is to achieve an accurate count of the population and their characteristics. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for the census in England and Wales.
3. Although it is a legal requirement to return the census form, in 2001 response rates across local authorities and from certain population groups were disappointing and affected the accuracy of results. Following lessons learnt from the experiences of 2001, ONS are working much more closely with organisations that can provide information and operational support to help deliver a high overall response rate and a population count that is as accurate as possible. Local Authorities are a key partner in realising this, and are being asked to contribute to the 2011 Census process.
4. The Census provides invaluable data on a wide range of subject areas including population structure, health, housing, employment, transport, ethnic group and citizenship, and all at a small area level. This enables local authorities to plan and target services to the specific needs of their population, acts as a basis for monitoring and evaluating performance, supports policy and strategy development and provides an evidence base for funding applications.
5. Crucially, the Census is also used as the basis for allocating local authority funding. The allocation formula, which takes account of the demand for services, is heavily dependent on census-based population estimates and projections, as well as the number of people in particular population groups such as the elderly and children.

6. Although the allocation formula is more complex than a monetary amount per head of population (for example, it takes levels of deprivation into account), the £126.6 million allocated to Dudley M.B.C. for 2010/11 is essentially equivalent to £412 per borough resident. Based on these figures, an under count of just 1% in the 2011 Census would translate in to a misallocation of £12.7 million over the ten years until the next Census.
7. Notwithstanding mechanisms used by ONS to adjust for under-response, the best way to get an accurate population count is to encourage actual responses, as this reduces the possibility of any under count in the population that would in turn result in the Council being under-funded relative to its true population.
8. In the 2001 Census Dudley Borough achieved a 98.0% response rate, the highest of any Metropolitan District. However, over recent years there has been a trend towards lower response rates in both national and local surveys. By assisting the Census process the Council can help to maximise the response rate and therefore minimise any associated impact on the future amount of central government funding.

The Process – Delivering the 2011 Census

9. In January 2009 ONS asked each local authority to nominate an executive level officer as Census Liaison Manager (CLM), and an operational level officer as Assistant Census Liaison Manager (ACLM), to be the key people responsible for coordinating census activity in a local authority and engaging with the ONS. Geoff Thomas (CLM) and Neil Langford (ACLM) have agreed to fulfil these functions (see Appendix A for a description of these roles).
10. Local authorities can decide how to organise their Census activities and the extent of officer involvement based on the resources available. ONS is not able to supply any funding to local authorities to resource this, so working in an efficient and proportionate manner will be key in providing support to ONS alongside officers existing work programmes.
11. The approach to 2011 Census support being adopted in Dudley is that the ACLM coordinates Census activities and is the main ONS contact, supported by a core of officers based in the Chief Executive's Directorate.
12. Work is underway to identify and meet with key officers from the Council, its partners and the community and voluntary sector to inform them about the 2011 Census, why it is important and how they can help achieve the best possible Census results for Dudley Borough. Officers across these organisations will be able to play a major role in informing the public about the upcoming Census, particularly where they regularly engage with the public and have contact with hard to enumerate groups.

13. The public will be informed about the 2011 Census through a variety of channels, with all promotional materials being in line with ONS national marketing campaign. 2011 Census web pages have been created on the Dudley site, and in conjunction with Marketing and Communications articles on the census will go out in magazines such as Dudley Together and other public literature. We will also be using ONS materials specifically designed to appeal to different community groups. These will be located in areas and facilities utilised by these groups, based on data and intelligence we have gathered as part of Census preparations.
14. ONS, through its recruitment partner Capita Resourcing, will be recruiting for a variety of other roles to deliver the 2011 Census nationwide (see Appendix A), which the authority will help promote to local people. The key individual who will run the Census locally will be the Census Area Managers (CAMs). They will oversee Census delivery in a group of local authorities - the group that Dudley belongs to also includes Bromsgrove and Redditch - and will be operating full time from August 2010 to June 2011. Once in post the CAM will take lead responsibilities for certain census processes, particularly around public engagement, but will require regular contact with the ACLM to exchange information and coordinate activities through an agreed local action plan.
15. ONS are producing a 2011 Census Councillor Handbook which is expected shortly. The handbook is expected to detail:
 - Why we are having a Census
 - What has changed for the 2011 Census
 - The link between census estimates and public service funding
 - How local councils can support the Census
 - How councillors can help the 2011 CensusElected members can play a number of key roles in the 2011 Census. Their detailed knowledge of local communities and how best to engage with them could be of use to the CAM and other officers working on census promotion. Elected members can also help to reinforce the importance of filling in the Census form, and reassure people that their data will be held confidentially by ONS and not passed to other government departments or the council. More information on the census will be made available to all Elected Members once the handbook has been issued.
16. The activities the authority will assist ONS with fall in to seven major “strands” that will contribute to maximising response rates and checking the validity of census results. An outline of each strand and how it will be delivered is detailed in Appendix B, but in brief they are:
 - Developing an address register
 - Developing enumeration intelligence
 - Developing community liaison contacts
 - Promoting the Census
 - Recruiting local Census field staff
 - Supporting local Census field operations
 - Providing data for quality assurance

Finance

17. The aim will be to deliver Census activities utilising existing resources. Funds may be required for the printing (but not design) of promotional materials such as posters and leaflets.

Equality Impact

18. The Census provides the most comprehensive data available for measuring the representativeness of plans, strategies and activities against the actual characteristics of borough residents.

Recommendation

19. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the approach being adopted to coordinate and deliver 2011 Census activities in Dudley Borough.

John Polychronakis

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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List of Background Papers

Appendix A: Census Roles and Responsibilities
Appendix B: The Seven Strands of Local Authority Census Activity