

Joint Consultative Committee With Ethnic Minority Organisations

Date: 19 October 2010

Agenda item: 5

Subject: 2011 Census

Lead officer: Chris Lee

Lead member: Councillor Mark Allison

Forward Plan reference number: NA

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Recommendations:

1. Partner organisations to include key messages in relation to the Census in communications with the public and employees from January-June 2011
 2. Partner organisations to identify contact they have with target communities and liaise with the Council and ONS staff to reach these communities
 3. Partner organisations to promote Census job opportunities to those with a relevant local knowledge
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the background to the 2011 Census and its importance to Merton. The report also details the options for acting to improve the response rate to the Census in Merton.

2. DETAILS

- 2.1 Census day is 27 March 2011, less than 6 months away. The Census is the only national survey of every household and aims to capture a true snapshot of the population as it stands on census day.
- 2.2 The implications for both government funding to Merton and future service planning should not be underestimated. Under the previous funding formulae the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated that an error of 1000 people results in £500,000 less in annual funding for a local authority.
- 2.3 The accuracy of census data will impact on a wide range of service planning activities including school places, health care provision, development control, and policing.

- 2.4 In 2001 the response rate for the Census in Merton was at 88%, well below the national average of 94% and below most outer London boroughs.
- 2.5 ONS have targeted improving the response rate in the worst performing areas, in particular in London. This is despite national evidence of a decline in response rates to government surveys over the last decade.
- 2.6 A census rehearsal took place in November 2009 and included Newham. The response rate was significantly lower than a decade ago and has prompted ONS to increase the level of resources they plan to commit nationally and to London in particular.
- 2.7 ONS has approached local authorities to ask for support in delivering the 2011 Census across seven main areas:
 - i. Establishing an accurate address database
 - ii. Use of communication channels to promote the census
 - iii. Intelligence about challenging issues for enumeration
 - iv. Identifying and accessing communities least likely to respond
 - v. Support for recruiting ONS staff
 - vi. Providing logistical support to ONS staff
 - vii. Providing additional data from local sources for use in quality assurance
- 2.8 ONS appointed Keith Richmond as Area Manager for Sutton and Merton in August 2010. Keith has developed a partnership agreement with the Council that establishes the roles and responsibilities of two parties in supporting the delivery of the census.
- 2.9 A census-working group, chaired by the Director of Environment and Regeneration, has been meeting since July 2009 to develop plans for supporting the Census in Merton. ONS regards Merton as amongst the most advanced boroughs in planning for the Census and has included Merton in national consultation activities.

Communications

- 2.10 ONS have provided a communications toolkit for local authorities and have developed a network of communication contacts in each borough.
- 2.11 The 2011 Census will be one of our key communication campaigns for 2010/11. This will include features in My Merton, posters, web content, press coverage and information in council venues. Officers will work with ONS to identify how additional local marketing materials can be produced to promote the Census. A budget provision has been made to support marketing activities.

- 2.12 ONS have produced a handbook for Councillors which has been distributed and is available online.
- 2.13 Officers have also been promoting the job opportunities available to local people. This has included a link on the Merton Council website, features in My Merton, and Merton Connected, as well as targeted promotion to groups including the canvassing staff used by electoral services.

Targeting communities at risk

- 2.14 A critical part of improving response rate is reaching communities that have traditionally not responded to the census. This includes those from ethnic minorities, gypsies and travellers, those in short-term accommodation, students, migrant workers and those needing support to complete the form.
- 2.15 ONS is working with Merton Voluntary Service Council and others to identify voluntary and community organisations that work with target groups. In addition the council has made a budget provision to support activities delivered by the community groups that will encourage individuals to respond to the census. these activities.
- 2.16 For the first time the 2011 Census will include an option to complete the form online. It is proposed to work with libraries, children's centres, schools and other venues with ITC facilities to encourage households to complete the census on-line.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The council is under no legal obligation to support the delivery of the census but the implications of failing to do so are likely to be significant.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1 Discussions have taken place with MVSC and a presentation was delivered to INVOLVE in July 2010.
- 4.2 Discussions have also taken place with Registered Social Landlords through MERHAG. A report was sent to the Merton Partnership Executive Board and the Interfaith Forum in September. Meetings have also been arranged with the two Members of Parliament.

5. TIMETABLE

5.1

| Date | Census Milestones |
|--------------------------------|---|
| February to June 2010 | Development of address register |
| August 2010 | Area Manager Commences |
| September 2010 to January 2010 | Recruitment of Census operational staff |
| February 2011 | Launch of national publicity campaign |
| 27 March 2011 | Census Day |
| June 2011 | End of Census collection |
| From April 2012 | Census data made available |

6. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The council has made limited budget provision to support work on the census in addition to officer time.

7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 ONS have a statutory obligation to deliver the Census in England and Wales but local support for the census is not a statutory requirement.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 An inaccurate census count is more likely to under-estimate ethnic minority communities, gypsies and travellers and temporary economic migrants than other communities. This will undermine service planning for the next decade.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Police funding formulae and service planning rely on census figures. An inaccurate count would impact on resources available in Merton

10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None

11. APPENDICES – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2011 Census Councillor Handbook available from ONS at http://2011.census.gov.uk/files/pdf/1207-Councilor_Handbook.pdf