

Scrutiny sub-committee C - Population and migration review scoping

Two elements of population and migration will be considered:

1. the financial impact of incorrect population figures on the Council's resources
2. the greater than normal degree to which Southwark is affected by population churn

The sub-committee proposes to look at these issues in depth at their next meeting on 23 March and then develop a series of recommendations to the Executive for further action in this area. Useful documents on these subjects will be examined and relevant officers from across the Council will be asked to give evidence to the committee. If appropriate, experts from other local authorities and organisations will be asked to present evidence to the committee.

A draft report will then will be presented to a meeting of the committee in April with a view to completing this review by the Constitutional Council in May.

Financial impact of incorrect population figures

Southwark is a hyper-diverse inner London borough with a large mobile population including international and national migration.

It is accepted by the Office for National Statistics that the measurement of migration is one of the hardest facets of population to assess accurately. Members of Parliament, Ministers, three Select Committees, the Local Government Association, London Councils, the Bank of England and a number of individual councils have all raised the issue of the accuracy of migration estimates as one that is in need of urgent attention.

With the advent of fixed multi-year settlements, from 2006/07 onwards, the Government sought to replace the use of mid-year estimates, within the local government funding system, with population projection data. Consequently, the 2006/07 and 2007/08 funding allocations were based on 2003 sub-national population projections (2003 SNPP); and the 2008/09 to 2010/11 Finance Settlements are based on revised 2004 subnational population projections (2004 SNPP (R)).

These 2004 based projections differ from the Office for National Statistics' own 2007 mid year estimates for Southwark by some 9,300 people.

ONS population data is the primary driver of Central Government funding allocations to local authorities each year. It is the main component within the local government funding formulae. As such, under-estimated population data will have a direct detrimental impact on an individual local authority's level of funding. It is therefore crucial that the ONS population data is robust.

There are two main areas of work being undertaken by the Office for National Statistics that will affect Southwark's population estimates in the future:

1. The 2011 census preparations

2. The Improvements to Migration Population Estimates (IMPS) work programme. (This includes the work being undertaken by the Interdepartmental Task Force)

The Census

The 2001 Census on which estimates are based was known to be flawed, and work is now underway by ONS to prepare for the 2011 Census. It is therefore vital that Southwark engages with and influences this preparatory work and takes action to prepare itself internally for the next Census.

Key questions for the review to consider include:

- 1) What can be learned from other local authorities involved in piloting the 2011 Census?
- 2) What does the council need to do in order to prepare for the census and ensure it receives the most accurate population count possible?

IMPS work programme

In 2007 the ONS revised how it measures and distributes migration around the country. This change saw London's predicted population growth reduce by 60,000 people in one year.

Following pressure from councils the government made available an extra £12million to help improve migration estimates. More 'improvements' are timetabled to inform 2008 based population projections on which the next three year local government grant settlements will be based from 2010/11.

It will be essential that the council understands how these revisions will affect the next spending round, be in a position to quality assess them against local administrative data sources and work with the ONS and CLG to make sure the council is funded appropriately.

Key questions for the review to consider include:

- 3) What are the revisions being brought forward by the ONS and how will they effect Southwark's population projections?
- 4) How can the council effectively quality assess the revisions being brought forward by the ONS?

Population churn

We are aware that Southwark has a highly mobile and constantly changing population and understand some of the impact that this has on our services. However, a number of assumptions about churn remain untested and need further consideration. For example, the extent to which regeneration programmes reduce the level of churn could be explored, or the impact that it has on educational attainment or health outcomes might need further examination. More generally, evidence-based policy making and service design and commissioning will benefit from a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of Southwark's population and its movements.

We know that Southwark Council is constantly dealing with the impact of churn on its services, but understand that more can be done to uncover the impact this has and consider how we can manage this. We can then start to answer some of the more fundamental questions about how we can build and maintain stable communities in area such as Southwark which experiences high-levels of population churn.

Key questions for the review to consider include:

- 5) What are the facts of Southwark's population churn and how does that compare with other authorities?
- 6) What do we know about the impact of that churn?
- 7) What should we do next to add to our understanding of churn and manage the impact it has?

Key Documents

Suggested initial reading for the committee:

Counting the population, House of Commons Treasury Committee, May 2008

Analysis of ONS Population Data for the London Borough of Southwark Local Government Futures Ltd. June 2008

Census White Paper - Helping to shape tomorrow The 2011 Census of Population and Housing in England and Wales, Cabinet Office

Preparing for the 2011 census – Interim Report, Statistics Commission, Feb 2007

Census advisory group Advisory Group Paper (08)01 2007 Census Test Evaluation – Key Lessons Learned, ONS

Census Local Authority Liaison Action Plan – 2009 Rehearsal, ONS,

Counting Southwark's 'uncountable population', Analytical Hub, December 2007

Southwark Neighbourhood Analytical Project (SNAP): Southwark summary population baseline analysis, Analytical Hub, July 2007

Westminster Population Research 2007, A final report to Westminster Council, SWQ Consulting, August 2007

Population Mobility and Service Provision: A report for London Councils, Tony Travers, Rebecca Tunstall and Christine Whitehead with Segolene Pruvot, LSE London, February 2007

One London Change and cohesion in three London boroughs, Ippr, March 2008

Breaking Point – examining the disruption caused by pupil mobility, ALG, June 2005

Building Sustainable Urban Communities, URBACT, December 2005