



SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE C

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the meeting of SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE C held on MONDAY MARCH 23 2009 at 7.00 P.M. at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Toby Eckersley (Chair)
Councillor Jane Salmon
Councillor Mackie Sheik

OFFICER SUPPORT: Duncan Whitfield – Director of Finance
Fran Biggs – Electoral Services Manager
Ian Farrow – Communications and Public Affairs Consultant
Dan Gilby – Corporate Policy Officer
Neil Wilcox – London Government Futures
Kwabena Owusu-Agyemang – Analytical Hub Manager
Sally Masson – Scrutiny Project Manager

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anood Al-Samerai (Vice-Chair) and Dora Dixon-Fyle.

NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMED URGENT

The Chair accepted supplemental agenda 1 as late and urgent.

DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the open section of the meeting held on January 26th 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

1. Planning Enforcement.

1.1 The Chair took the short item of planning enforcement first. The Chair thanked Councillor Nardell for his concise and helpful notes on the issue. It was decided that with the consent of the OSC that this item is taken on next year's work programme. The committee agreed.

2. CENSUS AND MIGRATION

2.1 The meeting discussed the financial impact on Southwark and the basis for the 3 year settlement. There needs to be focus on certain aspects of undercounting and what happens between the local count and the initial stages of recording. Consideration also needs to be given to Southwark's role in the preparations for the census and what we want to achieve. The sub-committee would like to make crisp recommendations regarding any improvements that can be made to enhance funding for the borough and it's unique population.

2.2 Members felt that it was important to get the counting right for the census by using other important data sources, such as GP surgeries. The challenge for all is how to bring the strands of work together and develop a coordinated approach.

2.3 Neil Wilcox from Local Government Futures gave a presentation to the sub-committee on the main issues facing Southwark. (See appendix 1)

2.4 The presentation aimed to set out what the problems are, what has been happening so far and what the financial impact on Southwark will be.

2.5 In respect of migration, current census counting is based on the passenger surveys and will incorporate the labour force survey. Both of these elements are acknowledged as an inaccurate method of counting. It was reported that ONS are making efforts to improve their systems.

2.6 There are problems getting an accurate picture of who is in the borough especially in places where there is communal housing and densely packed environments where there is a more transient population. The passenger and workforce surveys were not designed to capture social groups in these situations and therefore these groups easily miss the count. There was some doubt as to how reliable the workforce survey data was.

2.7 There was evidence to suggest that when challenged, those coming into the country may not necessarily know where they might be staying and so give unclear/inaccurate information to the authorities which is not followed up or monitored in any way.

2.8 There seemed to be an array of different methods of counting from varying sources in an uncoordinated way. For instance, it was thought that the Department for Work and Pensions possibly has the best statistics to work with but to incorporate this information into anything meaningful for census purposes is still underdeveloped.

- 2.9 There are still issues around:
- Lack of information on emigration as apposed to immigration
 - Passenger surveys were not designed for population monitoring and so the process lacks robustness.
 - To obtain visas, individuals have to state where they intend to reside but this is not followed up.
 - Depopulation should also be looked at.
- 2.10 It was acknowledged that the labourforce data was not ideal but in view of the fact that there are no alternatives, this is all ONS have to work with at the current time. ONS are also aware that they are not actively involving all community groups in their recording processes.
- 2.11 Officers detailed the implications for funding on Southwark. The additional grant based on realistic population was £5 million per financial year from 2002 to 2006. The additional grant based on realistic population per financial year from 2006 – was £4 million and £5 million in 2007/8.
- 2.12 Future revisions include:
- Immigration/emigration modelling
 - Port survey review
 - Short term migration (those individuals who have been here between 3 – 12 months)
 - Integrated household survey – although it was not known what the survey is expected to ask. ONS have not given any details of their proposals or if they will be working more closely with local councils. It is expected that the survey will be brought in during the summer 2009.
- 2.13 It is unclear how ONS are recording the increase in sample sizes or what questions they are proposing to ask. It was thought that we needed to support ONS wherever possible.
- 2.14 Obtaining cooperation from communities in answering the census questions is difficult. People can feel afraid of divulging any/too much information which could lead them to become more visible to the authorities. It was thought that recording refusals to answer, might be useful.
- 2.15 In December 2009, the new models of working will be up and running, including a new immigration model which will make use of administrative data from sources such as the National Insurance and GP registrations.
- 2.16 It was thought that local governments should recommend to ONS that they place experts on panels who influence the 'sense checking' remit. This starts in June. It was thought that there should be alternative data to be mobilised to sense check that will carry weight. It was thought that it would be of very little value after the event and the question is how do we mobilise the sense check in advance. There is a push for the early release of modelling methodology and a lobby for change if it is needed. There have been problems collecting electoral returns and there is a need to get indicative examples to try to drill down to more detail. Southwark are landlords and could legitimately go into areas where there is large social housing.

- 2.17 It was recommended in the Task Force revisions document: 'That the council monitor, engage and where appropriate lobby against any short term revisions to population projections that are likely to adversely affect the borough's population estimates.' It was not thought that there was anything suspicious in this process, although it was thought that if there was more in-depth investigation into urban decay areas in particular, the figures would most likely be skewed.
- 2.18 With regards to improvements it was stated that the changes to migration estimates will be retrospective and alter the council's population figures as far back as 2002. There was no inference on settlement figures and the Council needed to be alert to that.
- 2.19 The Chair noted the following actions for Southwark, taken from the Task Force document:
1. London attracts a considerable amount of short term migration. The council should consider if Southwark also attracts migration of this nature and lobby for the inclusion of these in any future funding settlement.
 2. The council needs further information concerning migration indicators
 3. What quality assurance measures will be used to sense check estimates?
- 2.20 The International Passenger Survey is conducted at a number of ports of entry and samples only 0.2% of what is believed to be all passengers arriving in the UK. Officers commented that there are 125 million arrivals and a proportion of that are not always going to be forthcoming about where they are staying.
- 2.21 Re page 3 of the Task Force document: 'The numbers of port entries are then apportioned to local authority level using formula based analysis using the 2001 census data on migrants'. The sub-committee wanted to know what questions were being asked such as 'where were you the year before?' There should be a similar proportionate method for labour force methodology. There seems to be some discrepancy in the current information based on the IMPS answers.
- 2.22 It was thought that it could be problematic seeing the minutes of the Migration Statistics Improvement Programme although it is possible that they could be sought under the freedom of information act.
- 2.23 Members felt that the e-Boarders system which will cover 60% of passenger numbers by the end of 2009, could be very valuable; indeed the answer to the tracking of migration.
- 2.24 Households underrepresented in the Labour Force Survey are:
- Households in London
 - Those rented from Housing Association or with job
 - Those in converted or shared accommodation
 - Households with three or more cars or vans
 - Those comprising only 1 adult, aged 16-19
 - Those with head of household aged 16-24
 - Those with only single head of household
 - Those with the head born in New Commonwealth country.

- 2.25 It was felt that Southwark ticked almost all of the boxes for extra funding however, Members wanted to know to what degree is Southwark different from the National average? It was felt that ONS needed to pin point just how difficult it is to count populations in the borough.
- 2.26 Local Authority Studies: Analysis of data and evidence for Southwark. The 2004 figures had been under-estimated and more fundamental work was needed to look at issues such as unprocessed forms and forms that were not returned. The Chair thought that a basic guide to the key methods of imputing was needed, this might also set out what the actual census process is in Southwark.
- 2.27 Officers informed the committee that future work based on the Camden test, will include ONS using Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) data sets. There are still discrepancies which Southwark itself needs to improve. There will be a sharing of data which has been sought from hard to reach areas, although it was thought that there will be a significant under response. There will be a relationship between ONS and Southwark enumerators who will work together to capture multiple occupation households. There will also be awareness raising amongst the local population to the benefits of the census exercise. There is still work to be done to find out how to get communities and their 'gate keepers' involved.
- 2.28 Members wanted to know what happened at ONS when 25% of all forms are not returned?
- 2.29 The Chair thought it would be useful if there was a document to outline how a census was run.
- 2.30 It was said that the potential impact on grants was significant because the formula is so out of sync at the moment. It was thought that a workshop should be set up to look at how to maximise returns and to gain a clear understanding as to where there are current short falls.
- 2.31 There is a need to find out where there are gaps in process and it was mentioned that every borough will have similar problems. It was important to know which areas need to be targeted in an attempt to join up all strands of work.
- 2.32 It was thought that schools needed to be looked at more closely with the possibility of incorporating data generated by them to gain greater detail.
- 2.33 Dulwich and Aylesbury are very different places with a varying set of needs. Southwark didn't know how much ONS are willing to give more detail as to how they will vary/tailor their work to suit these individual areas.
- 2.34 It was thought that the LGA and London Councils could support Southwark more closely but Southwark was not sure how to strengthen engagement with both agencies in a more effective way.
- 2.35 It was agreed that Duncan Whitfield should set up a workshop looking at how a census is run and how the data is imputed. The second part of the work by Officers and Members will outline the awareness campaign which will include exercises such as publicising the work locally and with groups such as the tenants council.

- 2.36 Officers said that they were also looking at Newham with a view to asking ONS what came out of the rehearsal process.
- 2.37 Officers were also considering working with CIDU and neighbourhoods with a view to maximising the impact of publicity.
- 2.38 It was thought that HMOs should be discussed at the workshop to try to use the licensing requirements to help with census returns, as each household should receive a census form.
- 2.39 There was good sample work done in Slough and Officers agreed that they would keep an eye on how things were working there. Officers also agreed that they would include work on post census activity
- 2.40 Work should continue to be strengthened in the community with an attempt to change behaviour towards the census, perhaps involving community councils and more work in schools.
- 2.41 It was thought that there are inconsistencies in the nature of the adjustments in GP counting. There were numbers still on the books who may now be deceased. Or there could be people listed who have now moved. Cross checking between GPs and PCTs could help to inform a more accurate picture of what was happening borough wide. It maybe that there could be pressure brought on PCTs to find out what kind of data they collect and how it could be used in conjunction with the census count.
- 2.42 Kwabena Owusu-Agyemang to provide the Southwark Neighbourhood Analytical Project (SNAP) summary to the committee.

The meeting concluded at 10pm.