

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda  
Item No.

Report of Chief Executive

To

Cabinet

On

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## Census 2021 Preparations for Southend

Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s): Policy and Resources

Cabinet Member: Councillor Ian Gilbert

Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

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### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To update Cabinet on Southend-on-Sea's preparations for the national 2021 Census. The census is due to take place in England and Wales on 21 March 2021 (Scotland's census has been put back a year until March 2022).

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That Cabinet note the work that the council is doing to ensure a robust and accurate census for Southend-on-Sea and help promote the benefits of the 2021 Census throughout the council and the borough.

### 3. Background

- 3.1. The census is a once-in-a-decade survey. It provides the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales. The census asks questions about people, their household and their home. The census will give us the most accurate, up to date snapshot of Southend-on-Sea and the needs of our residents.
- 3.2. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for delivering the census in England and Wales.
- 3.3. The 2021 Census will be a 'digital-first' census. The ONS want as many people as possible to fill their questionnaire in online in 2021. Filling the census out online will provide the ONS with better quality data and quicker outputs. It will also be easier for people to complete. People will be able to complete it anywhere on any device.

- 3.4. The last census took place in 2011. The 2011 census population estimate for Southend-on-Sea was 173,600. Southend-on-Sea achieved a headline household return rate of 91 per cent in 2011. The England household return rate was 94 per cent. The ONS also produces mid-year estimates of the resident population of England and Wales every June. The estimates roll forward the population found by the previous census, one year at a time by accounting for births, deaths, international migration and internal migration. These mid-year population estimates are broken down by local authority, sex and age. The 2019 mid-year population estimate for Southend-on-Sea was 183,100.
- 3.5. The next census is planned for Sunday, 21 March 2021.
- 3.6. The ONS aims to produce the census first release within the first year after Census Day and all other data within two years of Census Day.
- 3.7. It is important residents take part in the census. The information it gives has the power to make a real impact on our day-to-day lives. The population count in each local area helps the Government to calculate the size of grants it allocates each local authority.
- 3.8. Information from the census will help the council to develop policies, plan and run services and decide how to allocate funds. Charities also use census data to get information about the communities they are working in and help them get funding. Businesses can use it to understand their customers.
- 3.9. Academics and students can use census data to support research they are working on. Genealogists use old census records for researching family and local history. Census records are released to the public 100 years after the census took place.

#### **4. Southend Census 2021**

- 4.1. The Cabinet lead for the census is Councillor Ian Gilbert, Leader of the Council. All councillors will have a role promoting the census with residents. The ONS is due to provide a Councillor Handbook on the census for distribution in October 2020.
- 4.2. The council has appointed Joanna Ruffle as Census Liaison Manager (CLM) and Simon La Roche as Assistant Census Liaison Manager (ACLM). The CLM and ACLM are responsible for coordinating census activities within the council. A group has been established with CLMs and ACLMs from neighbouring authorities to help plan for the census.
- 4.3. A census strategy document and action plan have been put in place in Southend, covering preparing for the census, partnership working, community engagement, communications and use of census. The target is to deliver a 90 per cent response rate to the 2021 Census in Southend-on-Sea. The ONS is aiming for response rate targets of 94 per cent nationally and 80 per cent locally to support quality levels.
- 4.4. The council has signed a data sharing agreement with the ONS to supply council tax data. The council is supplying council tax data monthly. This information will be used by the ONS to prepare for and subsequently quality assure the 2021 Census.

- 4.5. Accurate addressing is vital to ensuring everyone is invited to take part in the census. The work that the council's LA Land and Property Gazetteer custodian regularly and routinely undertakes is an essential part of ensuring address records for Southend-on-Sea are up to date. This work continues as normal. The final date for inclusion in the ONS' address index is January 2021.
- 4.6. The ONS' address-based design for the 2021 Census does not cover those who do not have a permanent address. Homeless people will be able to complete the census through an individual paper questionnaire. These will be available through day/night centres. Rough sleepers will be counted at day/night centres and hostels for the homeless.
- 4.7. The ONS is appointing census engagement managers to help deliver the census. This includes hiring a census engagement manager to cover the areas of Southend-on-Sea, Rochford and Maldon. They will start October 2020. The census engagement manager will work with the council to identify local challenges and engage with community leaders to promote the benefit of the census. Because of COVID-19, a lot of face-to-face community contact will not be possible. The ONS is having to adapt plans accordingly. Census field staff will be in place from January to May 2021.
- 4.8. The ONS want 75 per cent of households to fill their questionnaire in online. The majority of addresses will get a letter with a unique access code on it through the post. All people need to do is enter the code into the website and fill in the questionnaire.
- 4.9. Addresses in areas where ONS expect people to be less likely to complete online will be sent paper questionnaires. Paper questionnaires will also have access codes on to enable online response. Although online response is encouraged, everyone will have the option to complete a paper form if they wish.
- 4.10. Census 2021 paper questionnaires are available to view online at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/questiondevelopment/census2021paperquestionnaires>
- 4.11. Census support centres will be set up by the ONS to help people complete their form online if they wish to do so but need support. In Southend-on-Sea, Southend Adult Community College will be a census support centre.
- 4.12. Census education programmes are being promoted with local schools by the ONS and the council. The ONS has developed 'Let's Count!' for primary schools and 'This Matters to Us' for secondary schools to teach students about the census.
- 4.13. The national census communications campaign started late September. It will run until May 2021. The campaign will target harder to reach audiences. A local communications and community engagement campaign will run in Southend-on-Sea alongside the national campaign. Information about the census is up on the council's external website and intranet. Because of COVID-19, community engagement activity will be focused on online engagement.

- 4.14. The census is a key part of the Active and Involved theme of Southend 2050 and giving everyone the best chance possible to take part in the census.
- 4.15. Census statistics could be part of the data collection work that is being undertaken for the potential review of local government. The population figures could be a key component of any evidence gathering for proposed new unitary authorities.
- 4.16. Cabinet can expect to receive updates on the 2021 Census on a rolling basis until May 2021.

## **5. Other Options**

- 5.1. The council could choose not to locally support the delivery of the census. The potential implication of this would be that we do not get the necessary local support for it and the population count is not accurate and does not meet our needs. This would affect confidence in results.

## **6. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 6.1. To ensure the council supports the ONS to deliver an accurate population count for Southend-on-Sea in 2021.

## **7. Corporate Implications**

### **7.1. Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map**

The census will provide a detailed snapshot of Southend-on-Sea and its people. The census is vital to the council for understanding and meeting the needs of our population and economy. Information from the census will help the council to plan and fund local services. This includes services such as education, doctors' surgeries and roads.

### **7.2. Financial Implications**

A budget of £1,200 has been requested for local census communications. This is to cover the cost of social media adverts, digital bus stop screens, posters and vinyl banners. Communications activity will be coordinated by the Assistant Census Liaison Manager overseen by the council's communications team.

- 7.3. **Legal Implications** – No specific implications.

- 7.4. **People Implications** – There are no specific people implications related to this report.

- 7.5. **Property Implications** – There are no property implications as part of this report.

### **7.6. Consultation**

The ONS launched a public consultation in 2015 asking census users for their views on the topics that the 2021 Census in England and Wales might cover. The response was published in 2016 and can be found at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales>

## 7.7. **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

The census asks the same questions and records information in the same way throughout England and Wales. Information the census collects includes:

- Data showing how many people work in different occupations and industries.
- Information on housing and its occupants which measures inadequate accommodation and information about the way we live as households.
- Ethnic group data which helps to identify the extent and nature of disadvantage in the UK.
- Data on the age and socio-economic make-up of the population; general health, long-term illness and carers.
- Information collected on travel to and from work, and on the availability of cars.

When the ONS publish statistics from the census they are completely anonymous. No personal information is published. Census records are kept secure for 100 years. The ONS' security regime follows government standards. This includes physical and IT security measures to protect people's data.

The council has signed a data sharing agreement with the ONS for the monthly supply of council tax data. A Data Protection Impact Assessment has also been produced by the council's Information Governance team for the data extraction process the ONS will be using to export the data.

The ONS produced an Equality Impact Assessment in 2018 for the 2021 Census. It is an analysis of the proposed operation and content of the 2021 Census in England and Wales, with an evaluation of the impact on equality. The Equality Impact Assessment for the 2021 Census can be found at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/763638/Equality\\_Impact\\_Assessment\\_for\\_the\\_2021\\_Census.pdf#:~:text=This%20Equality%20Impact%20Assessment%20is%20based%20on%20the,it%20very%20nature%20is%20designed%20to%20include%20everyone.](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/763638/Equality_Impact_Assessment_for_the_2021_Census.pdf#:~:text=This%20Equality%20Impact%20Assessment%20is%20based%20on%20the,it%20very%20nature%20is%20designed%20to%20include%20everyone.)

7.8. **Risk Assessment** – No specific implications.

7.9. **Value for Money** – No specific implications.

7.10. **Community Safety Implications** – No specific implications.

7.11. **Environmental Impact** – No specific implications.

## 8. **Background Papers**

8.1. Census Strategy and Action Plan

## 9. **Appendices**

9.1. There are no appendices.