



## **In-depth Scrutiny Project**

“Evaluation of the Census result for Southend-on-Sea”  
**Final Report and Recommendations**

10 March 2004

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**Economic Scrutiny Committee**

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council



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# FOREWORD

***Councillors David Ascroft, Chairman of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's Economic Scrutiny Committee and Murray Foster, Vice-Chairman:***

The Economic Scrutiny Committee decided that it should carry out the in-depth scrutiny project evaluating the Census result for Southend-on-Sea. We were driven to undertake the scrutiny as the Council was alarmed about the 2001 result and the revised mid-year population estimates which show that the population of the town has declined between 1991 and 2001, and the projections are that the population continues to decline. This has serious effects on our funding and on the Council's budget.

We felt that the town's population had not declined, and through the scrutiny project we have identified data – our own data and data from our partners – which supports this view and shows that the population of the town has not declined but is continuing to grow.

The Scrutiny Project proved to be both challenging and topical. We were pleased that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) included Southend as one of the areas for review during 2004 and the challenge we have set ONS is for them to complete the review in time for next year's local government financial settlement.

We would like to thank all those who have been involved in the in-depth scrutiny project, those who took the time to attend meetings to give their evidence, and my colleagues on the Committee and the Project Team. We would emphasise that the Council remains committed to pursuing a positive outcome for Southend through an upward revision to the population figure for Southend.

Councillor David Ascroft  
Chairman, Economic Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Murray Foster  
Vice-Chairman, Economic Scrutiny Committee

10<sup>th</sup> March 2004

## 1. SUMMARY

### 1.1 Background and Scope of the Scrutiny

The Economic Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2003 agreed that its 2003/04 scrutiny study should be an 'Evaluation of the Census result for Southend-on-Sea'. It was decided that this should be the topic due to significant concerns over the 2001 Census figures for the town.

The main reasons for not accepting the 2001 Census and post-Census ONS revised mid-year estimates (MYEs) were:

- ◆ they were significantly out of step with ONS's revised estimates prior to 2001 Census, which appeared to more accurately reflected the net migration flows into the Borough;
- ◆ both the 1991 and 2001 Census underestimated the population of many areas (the "missing million" in the 1991 Census of population count which is acknowledged by ONS);
- ◆ they were out of step with the expected pattern of growth based on continuing growth of the net residential building stock of this Borough.

The Project Plan for the in-depth scrutiny project was agreed at a meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2003. At this meeting the composition of the Project Team was agreed and also the arrangements for the witness sessions. The Background Briefing paper considered at the meeting and also the witness sessions, which took place in December 2003, highlighted that local evidence did not support the ONS's revised figures which indicated that the population of Southend had declined over the period 1991–2001.

**The Committee has found that the local data pointed to a minimum population of 170,000 in mid 2002. ONS's projected mid-2002 population estimate was 158,800.**

ONS contacted the Council in November 2003 to advise that Southend had been selected as a priority area for study in 2004. The reasons for selecting Southend were as follows:

- ◆ according to the ONS, it had one of the largest changes in population between 2000 and 2001 with its population being reduced by 16,532 in the revised 2001 mid-year estimates;
- ◆ the number of 'dummy' Household census forms set to 'vacant' for Southend, as a proportion of the total number of households, was significantly above the national average and needed further investigation;
- ◆ higher than the national average multi occupancy (defined as the proportion of occupied household spaces which were in shared dwellings according to 2001 Census);
- ◆ the 2001 school Census data and the 2001 adjusted patient records data - the difference between these sources and the Census. Both differences are significantly higher for Southend than for England and Wales as a whole.

### 1.2 Conclusions/findings of the scrutiny

As part of the in-depth scrutiny, the Committee gathered evidence including local quantitative data. This indicated for example, that there were a number of 'missed dwellings' in the 2001 Census, which counted 70,978 households although Southend-

on-Sea Borough Council's Council Tax records indicated 72,012 properties, meaning at least 1,034 in Southend were not included in the Census.

Local data collected also demonstrated the following:

- In four out of the 17 electoral wards, more adults returned their electoral registration forms than were actually shown to exist in the Census figures.
- Primary Care Trust figures for April 2001<sup>1</sup> showed 167,452 residents registered with a GP, some 7,000 more than included in the Census.
- Planning and Council Tax data showed that 11,120 more dwellings existed in 2002 in the Borough than in 1981, yet the Census said the population was unchanged.

At a meeting of the Economic Scrutiny Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2004, Members considered the **interim** report of the in-depth Scrutiny project.

### **1.3 Conclusions and Recommendations**

- (i) That further work continues with ONS to examine the Census results for Southend and to challenge the subsequent projected mid-year population estimates, which show a supposed further decline in the town's population since the 2001 Census;
- (ii) That work continues in parallel to confirm and refine the Council's own population estimates, based on ONS data and the Council's own factual records of housing completions over the period 1981-2002, and that this work be used to inform and support the ongoing work with ONS;
- (iii) That Officers report back to Members on this further work with ONS;
- (iv) That ONS continue to be urged to complete the study in time for next year's local government financial settlement, and
- (v) That the final Scrutiny Report be agreed by Members at the Economic Scrutiny Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

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<sup>1</sup> Adjusted to allow for slippage

## **2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

**2.1** The Economic Scrutiny Committee agreed the Project Plan at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2003. This meeting formed the first preliminary stage of the project. At the meeting Members also received an information pack and a background research paper. A programme of meetings, following consultation with the proposed 'witnesses' and in discussion with the Chairman, was agreed.

The Project Plan outlined:

- ◆ The parameters of the study. It was agreed that the scrutiny would evaluate the Census result for Southend-on-Sea, looking at the robustness of the 2001 Census result and the robustness of the mid-year estimates for Southend-on-Sea;
- ◆ The objectives and outcomes of the study;
- ◆ Scrutiny arrangements;
- ◆ The time frame for the study and a proposed timetable of meetings.

The guidelines/protocols agreed by Scrutiny Committees and the Council in mid 2003 allowed for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to be involved in some meetings of the Project Team in order to monitor the progress of the study and give guidance as appropriate. In relation to this scrutiny, the Chairman and Committee agreed that the opposition groups each nominate a representative to join the Project Team.

### **2.2 Objectives and Outcomes**

The objectives agreed by the Economic Scrutiny Committee were:

- To examine and evaluate the Census results as they impact on the overall population of Southend-on-Sea.
- To examine how the Census was conducted in Southend-on-Sea.
- To compare ONS data with locally held data.
- To examine the effects of the Census result on Southend (Town & Council).
- To work with other Local Authorities as appropriate.

The outcomes agreed were:

- To make appropriate representations to ONS and ODPM<sup>2</sup> regarding the robustness of population statistics for Southend-on-Sea, and to recommend appropriate improvements.

### **2.3 Methodology/Process**

The scrutiny was undertaken by the Economic Scrutiny Committee, supported by an officer Project Team comprising:

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| • Fiona Abbott       | Principal Committee Officer and Project coordinator                              |
| • Lee Harris         | Assistant Chief Executive  |
| • Terry Bond         | Group Manager, Strategic Planning  |
| • Louise Lowe        | Research & Information Officer (left the authority in December 2003)             |
| • Nikos Antalopoulos | Principal Planner, Research & Information (joined the authority in October 2003) |

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<sup>2</sup> The Council made a submission to the ODPM Select Committee in February 2003.

- Joanna Bates Administrative Support Officer
- The wider Corporate Research and Information Group
- At key stages in the Project, the Chairman Councillor David Ascroft, the Vice-Chairman Councillor Murray Foster and 2 opposition Members, Councillors Nigel Baker and David Norman, also met with the officer Project Team on a number of occasions.

Evidence was taken in public unless local government access to information rules required private consideration of information. The Committee sought to draw on such expertise as already exists.

Two **witness sessions** were held on 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> December 2003. The notes from the witness sessions are attached at **Appendix 1 and 2**. In addition, the Committee also received written evidence from Southend Primary Care Trust.

#### **2.4 Evidence Gathering**

As well as the Background Information report considered at the meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2003, the Committee received evidence from the following individuals representing the organisations indicated, to whom the Council is grateful:-

##### **5<sup>th</sup> December 2003**

Mr A Wallace – Census District Manager and Head of Democratic Services  
 Mr T Row – Assistant Census District Manager  
 Ms A Gellett – Information & Systems Manager, Department of Education & Lifelong Learning

##### **12<sup>th</sup> December 2003**

Mr P Nolan – Assistant Borough Treasurer  
 Ms H Wilson – Superintendent Registrar  
 Apologies for absence were received from Southend PCT.

ONS were invited to give evidence to the Scrutiny, but declined. S. Smallwood attended the second witness session as an observer on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2003.

#### **2.5 Attendance at Scrutiny Committees & the witness sessions**

The following Economic Scrutiny Committee Members attended the Scrutiny Committee meetings on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2003 and 29<sup>th</sup> January 2004 and the witness sessions on 5<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> December 2003:

**5<sup>th</sup> November 2003** – Councillors Ascroft, Foster, Baker, Crystall (substitute), Delaney, J. Garston, George, D. Norman, Mrs. Rayner (substitute), Smith, Terry and Walker. Apologies were received from - Councillors Longley, Houssart, Gorham and R. Weaver.

**29<sup>th</sup> January 2004** – Councillors Ascroft, Foster, Baker, Delaney, J. Garston, George, Gorham, Longley, D. Norman, Smith, Terry, Walker and R. Weaver.

**5<sup>th</sup> December 2003** – Councillors Foster, Delaney, J. Garston, Houssart, Weaver, Terry, George, D. Norman and Baker. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ascroft.

**12<sup>th</sup> December 2003** - Councillors Foster, Delaney, J. Garston, Houssart, Weaver, Terry, George, D. Norman and Baker. Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ascroft.



### 3. EVIDENCE/FINDINGS OF THE SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The Background Briefing paper considered at the Committee meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2003 and the witness sessions, which took place in December, highlighted that local evidence did not support ONS figures that indicated that the population of Southend had declined over the period 1991 – 2001.

The **local data** indicated that there were 'missed dwellings'. The 2001 Census counted the number of households in Southend at 70,978 and Southend's records indicate that 72,012 paid Council tax (as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001), suggesting that there were 1,034 properties in Southend not included in the Census.

Local data also indicated that there was under-enumeration at the 2001 Census, particularly in the 'difficult to count areas' and for the 25–34 year age group.

### 3.2 Concerns about Mid-Year Population Estimates and Estimated Population Change during the Intercensal Period 1991-2001

#### 3.2.1 Census and Mid Year Population Estimates

Table 1 below compares the original ONS mid-year population estimates derived from the 1991 census with the estimates released in February 2003, revised in light of the 2001 Census results.

**Table 1: Southend Mid Year Population Estimates**

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>Original Estimates</b> (,000)	162.5	165.1	167.5	169.9	171.2	172.3	175.5	176.0	176.6	176.9
<b>Revised Estimates</b> (,000)	161.2	162.3	163.2	164.1	163.8	163.4	165.1	164.1	163.1	161.7
<b>Difference</b> (,000)	<b>-1.3</b>	<b>-2.8</b>	<b>-4.3</b>	<b>-5.8</b>	<b>-7.4</b>	<b>-8.9</b>	<b>-10.4</b>	<b>-11.9</b>	<b>-13.5</b>	<b>-15.2</b>

It is known to ONS that its mid-year population estimates have a wide variety of uses for central government and local authorities. For local authorities, often "the absolute numbers are of key importance, e.g. in terms of allocating financial resources from central government, planning services and grossing up survey results". This statement makes apparent the implications of a sudden reduction of Southend's estimated population by 15,200 people in 2000.

ONS's procedure of checking the datasets received for production of the estimates against previous years' data to "gauge consistency and completeness of coverage" has clearly not been successful in the case of Southend.

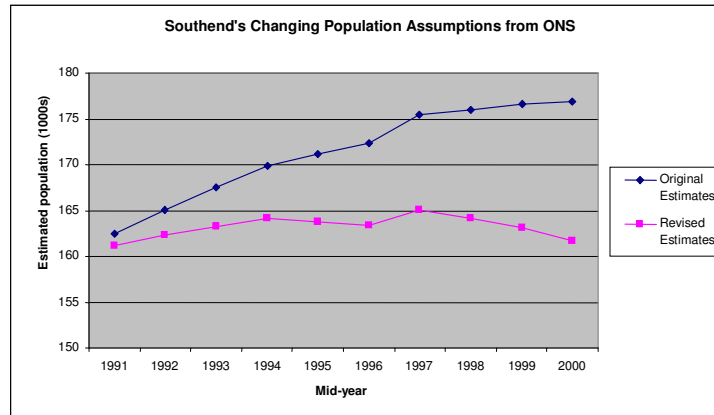
The recently released ONS **mid-2002** estimates further reduce Southend's population by 1,600 people, from the estimated 160,400 in mid-2001 to **158,800**. Considering particularly that 1,500 of these have been lost due to "unattributable population change", the Council maintains that the robustness of the MYEs is questionable.

At the national (England) level, the revised 2001 MYE is around 330,000 lower than the original estimate. This adjustment to the early population figures explains about one third of the intercensal discrepancy as stated by ONS when the first Census results were published in 2002.

Graph 1 illustrates the extent of the revisions made by ONS to the MYEs for Southend between 1991 and 2000. Unlike at the national level, there appears to be no clear correlation between the two sets of values. The relatively minor adjustment made at the start of the accounting period (0.8% reduction to 1991 figures) cannot explain the **discrepancy of 8.6%** by 2000.

A fair amount of this discrepancy must therefore be attributed to factors other than errors made when projecting from the 1991 Census. It is not good enough for ONS to explain this additional discrepancy as “unattributable population change”.

**Graph 1**



In percentage terms, only 8 Local Authorities have an intercensal discrepancy greater than Southend's.

Of these, Oxford's and Cambridge's discrepancies will predominantly be explained by their large student populations; Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Richmond upon Thames and Manchester may all possibly have had their counts affected by their proximity to the mobile populations of large cities. Whilst some of these discrepancies are being disputed by the local authorities concerned, it is difficult even to compare like with like in the case of Southend.

Being a seaside town, its intercensal discrepancy will perhaps be attributed to migration of seasonal workers and people in temporary accommodation. However, when compared with the discrepancies of the seaside towns listed in Table 2, it can be seen that Southend's discrepancy is more than twice that of Brighton and Hove, and that half those listed have been deemed to have experienced growth, even after the estimates had been revised.

**Table 2: Intercensal Discrepancies in Seaside Towns**

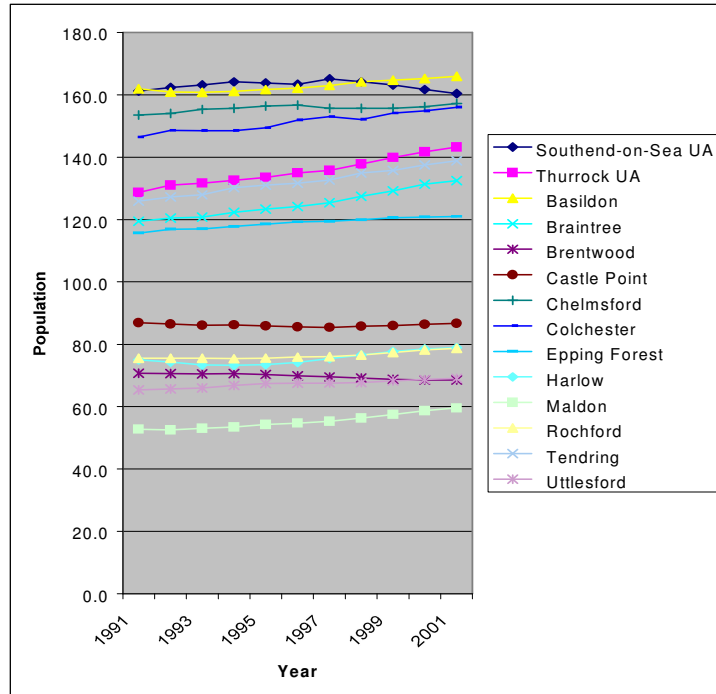
Seaside Towns	1991 Census	1999 MYE	2000 MYE	2001 Census	2001 as % 2000 mid-year estimate	% intercensal discrepancy
Scarborough	109,000	108,700	108,300	106,233	98.09	-1.91
Great Yarmouth	88,900	89,900	90,300	90,813	100.57	0.57
Brighton & Hove	243,900	258,100	259,900	247,820	95.35	-4.65
Eastbourne	84,900	91,600	92,700	89,667	96.73	-3.27
Bournemouth	158,900	162,500	163,400	163,441	100.03	0.03
Torbay	122,600	124,100	126,100	129,702	102.86	2.86
Weymouth	62,600	62,200	62,900	63,665	101.22	1.22
Southend	162,500	172,300	176,900	160,256	90.59	-9.41

Most of the adjustment between the 2000 and the 2001 MYE for Southend occurred to the 25-34 year age group. This would suggest that the “errors” leading to the revision of the original rolled-forward estimates *have* been attributed, by ONS, to migration trends.

The Council is of the opinion that there have been no striking changes to the socio-economic circumstance of any particular group in Southend that would have brought about a sudden trend for out-migration.

### 3.2.2 Estimated Population Change from 1991–2001

Graph 2: 1991–2000 MYEs for Essex Virtual County



Initially, analysis of the MYEs themselves indicate that Southend stands out as an anomaly in relation to other areas in its locality.

- ⇒ With the exception of Brentwood, which is estimated as experiencing continuous population decline since 1991, all other districts in the Essex virtual county have been estimated to have experienced growth over the last 3 years;
- ⇒ Only two other districts in the whole of the East of England (Brentwood, Essex and Forest Heath, Suffolk) have been estimated to have been declining during the last four years;
- ⇒ Out of 354 English local authority districts, only **17** have been estimated to have declined by 2% or more (Southend by 2.8%).

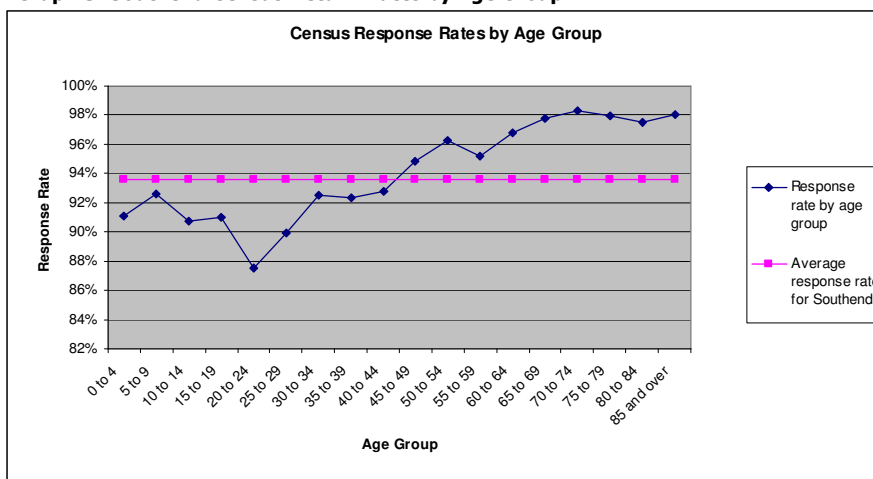
According to the ONS revised MYEs, Southend experienced an increase in population (of 2,600 people) between 1991 and 1995, then a blip in 1996 before reaching a peak of 165,100 in 1997. Between 1997 and 2001, ONS data estimates a reduction of 4,700 in Southend’s population to 160,400, falling below the 1991 MYE. Local evidence presented in the following section contradicts these population trends.

### 3.3 Revised MYEs and Census 2001 Results as compared with Local Sources of Population Data

This section aims to present a series of evidence, which, when taken together, indicates where and with whom the disparity between ONS and locally-held data may have arisen.

#### 3.3.1 Census Returns

**Graph 3: Southend Census Return Rates by Age Group**



As a base for investigating where in Southend the population may have been undercounted, it is useful to look at the Census form return rates across the Borough and across the population. Unfortunately, return rates are currently unavailable below the district level, although ward level rates are expected at a later date. The timescale for this is not currently known. When these are released, it may be possible to single out certain wards with low return rates for further investigation.

However, certain patterns can be deduced from the district level results alone. Overall, Southend had a Census return rate of 94%. On Graph 3 above, this average rate is drawn as a constant. We can see that below the 45–49 year age group, the return rate is below average for all age groups. The lowest rate is observed in the 20–24 year age group (88%). The average is not attained again until the 45–49 year age group is reached.

This is significant when considered in light of the fact mentioned earlier, that most of the reductions in the MYE revisions occurred to the 25–34 year age group. This strongly suggests that these young people may have been undercounted by Census 2001, either due to non-return or non-delivery of forms. The Council has anecdotal evidence that low returns and/or non-delivery of forms was of particular concern in areas with high levels of bedsit accommodation.

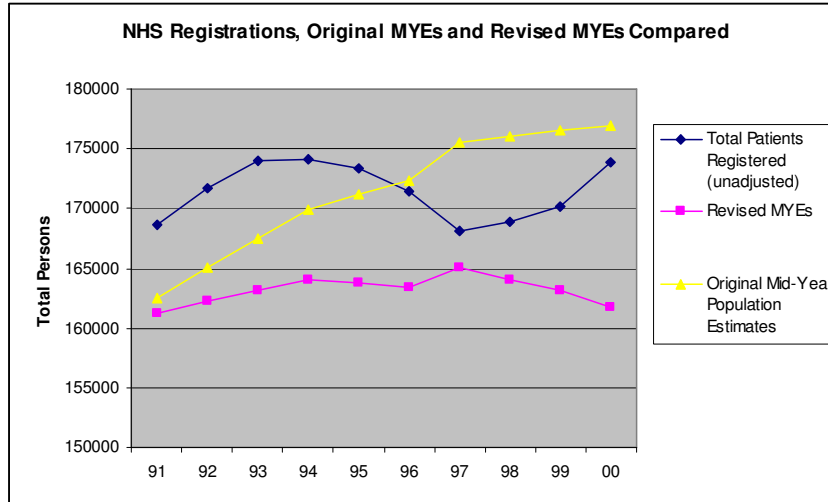
The Scrutiny received evidence on local data sources, which showed the 2001 Census and the MYEs are an underestimation of population. At the witness session, the Census District Manager reported:

- ◆ There was a 94% return of Census forms across the Borough, but the Scrutiny Committee had concern about the reliance on postal return of the Household form (the 'H' form), which meant that it was difficult to check locally that they had been returned. There was also concern at the number of 'dummy' forms

completed where there was no way of knowing how many had ultimately been married up by ONS with an actual 'H' form. Members also expressed concern about the compressed timescale for the Census.

### 3.3.2 NHS Patient Register Data

Graph 4



Southend Primary Care Trust (PCT) provided information about the number of people registered with an NHS doctor within Southend's boundaries. Graph 4 compares the total number of people registered (unadjusted for where they reside) as of April 1<sup>st</sup> from 1991–2000 with the ONS original and revised MYEs.

There is a degree of correlation between the PCT registration figures and the original MYEs. Both show an increase in population from 1991 – 1994, at a similar rate of change. From 1995–1997, the relationship breaks down as the PCT-registered population falls while the original MYE continues to rise.

However, the Council has been advised by Southend PCT that variations in the registered population do occur as a result of list closures and transfers as GPs retire or leave practice in the area.

From 1997–2000, both datasets indicate a continuous rise in Southend's population. The final figures reached by 2000 were similar, being only 3,010 apart, *not* allowing for adjustment to remove people registered in Southend but living outside the borough. These people would not be recorded by the Census as resident in Southend, accounting for some of the inflation in the NHS registration data.

Consideration of the revised MYEs does not reveal such a correlation. On the contrary, the trend revealed by the revised MYEs is the **opposite** of that indicated by the PCT registration data. As the PCT-registered population fell to a trough in 1997, the MYEs, which indicate an almost continuous population increase, reached a peak. From 1997–2000, as the PCT-registered population recovered to indicate continuous growth, the MYEs indicated continuous decline - a trend ONS maintains to be true to 2002. Conversely, the PCT data continues to indicate growth to 2002, when it reaches a maximum figure to date of 177,190.

The trends described above suggest that ONS's original MYEs provide a more accurate representation of the changes to Southend's population during the period 1991–2002 than do the revised MYEs. Assuming that only people who exist, or who have recently

existed, will register with a GP, the PCT data must be accepted to provide a practicably reliable proxy for the population. The original MYEs are not only closer to these figures in absolute terms: the trends apparent are more relational.

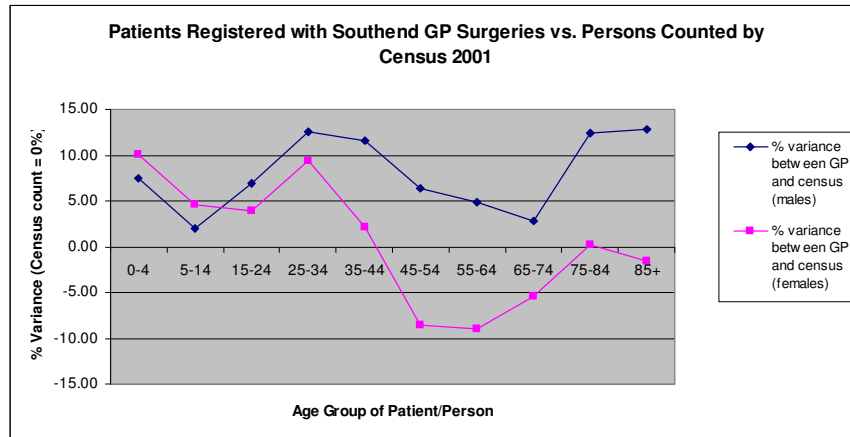
The Council believes that recorded PCT evidence provides a better estimate for the population than one based on "unattributable population change". There appears to be no correlation between the PCT data and the migration data provided by ONS in its MYEs. The previous document submitted to the ODPM contained the PCT data for October 2002, broken down by age and gender and adjusted for cross-boundary registrations and list inflation<sup>3</sup>. Table 3 contains the same information, but for April 2001, thus allowing direct comparison with the 2001 Census.

**Table 3: Adjusted Age and Gender Profile (1<sup>st</sup> April 2001)**

	Unadjusted Registered Pop			List Inflation Factor		Adjusted for List Inflation		
	Male	Female	Total	Males	Females	Males	Females	Persons
0-4	5294	5028	10322	3.3	3.4	5469	5199	10668
5-14	10967	10574	21541	-2.1	-1.6	10737	10405	21142
15-24	9638	9353	18991	-4.5	-3.8	9204	8998	18202
25-34	12946	12526	25472	-5.2	-2	12273	12275	24548
35-44	13829	12485	26314	-5.5	-4.5	13068	11923	24992
45-54	11594	10800	22394	-6.9	-12.2	10794	9482	20276
55-64	8871	8736	17607	-4.7	-9.8	8454	7880	16334
65-74	6958	8157	15115	-3.6	-8.6	6708	7455	14163
75-84	4726	7473	12199	4.8	-4.1	4953	7167	12119
85+	1559	3863	5422	-3.5	-9.3	1504	3504	5008
<b>Total</b>	<b>86382</b>	<b>88995</b>	<b>175377</b>			<b>83164</b>	<b>84288</b>	<b>167452</b>

**Southend PCT**

**Graph 5**



Graph 5, which plots the percentage variance of the PCT data from the Census count data, highlights some interesting pointers towards which groups may have been under-enumerated in the Census.

The male-line plot is greater than 0% variation for all age groups, suggesting that more males of all ages may be present in Southend than were captured by the Census. The variation is greatest in the 25–34 year group, one of the same groups to which the Census return-rate data pointed out a possible undercount. The pattern is similar for females, with the same age group recording the greatest variation from the Census.

<sup>3</sup> List inflation – the figure of 5.7% is listed as the average inflation factor for PCTs by the National Primary Care Databases ([www.primary-care-db.org.uk](http://www.primary-care-db.org.uk))

This would suggest that enumerating younger adults in Southend has been a general problem that is worse amongst males.

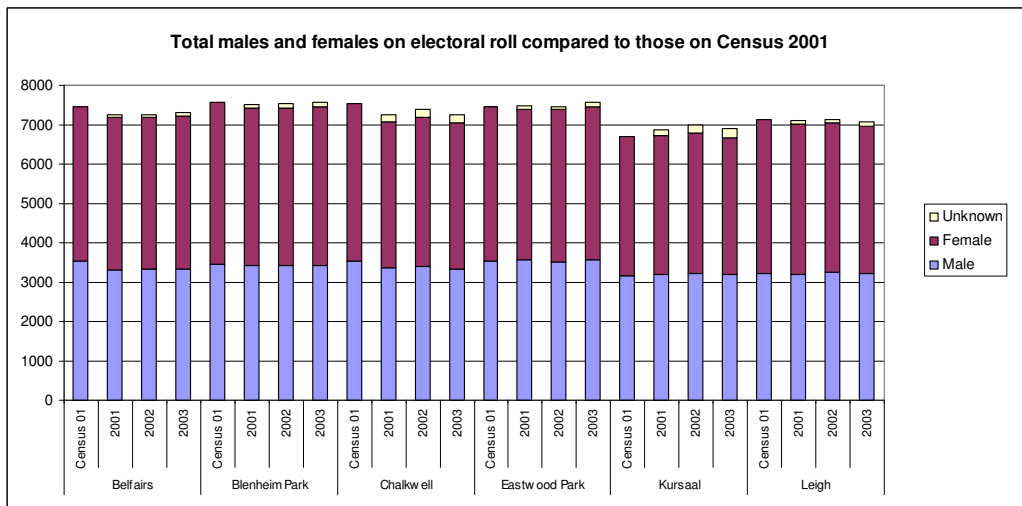
In the previous submission to the ODPM, it was reported that the April 2001 NHS registration figures are high for 0-4 year olds. This again supports the assertion that this data source provides an accurate estimate of the population, as this age group is both most likely to be registered with a GP and experience least delay in registering when moving between PCT areas. That there appear to be fewer women over the age of 45 registered than are on the Census is likely explained by the large negative inflation adjustment factor applied in Table 3.

**Local data:**

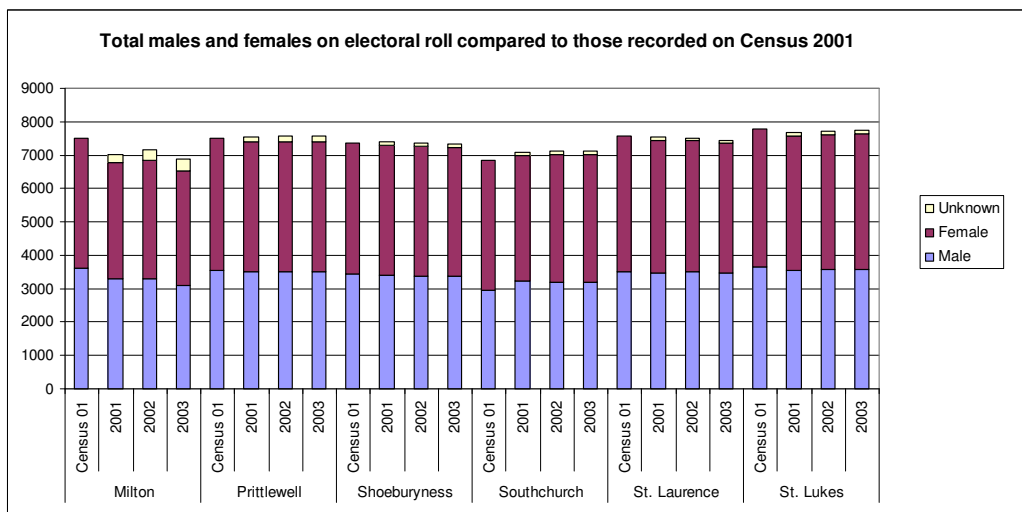
- ◆ The adjusted Southend PCT figures for April 2001 show that there are 167,452 people registered with a GP which is some 7,000 more than the Census figure.

**3.3.3 Electoral Register**

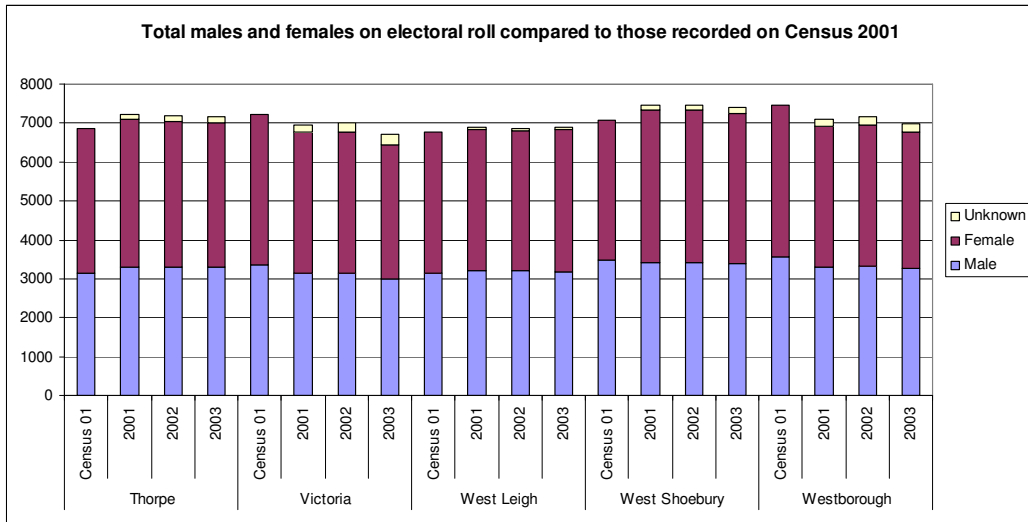
**Graph 6 (a)**



**Graph 6 (b)**



**Graph 6 (c)**



Key: to graphs 6 (a), (b) and (c) for each Ward-  
 Column 1: Census 2001  
 Column 2: Electoral Roll 2001  
 Column 3: Electoral Roll 2002  
 Column 4: Electoral Roll 2003

Graphs 6 (a), (b) and (c) above compares, by ward, the number of males and females over the age of 18 years (i.e. those eligible to vote) counted by Census 2001, with the number of males and females registered on the Electoral Roll for Southend from 2001–2003 (the years for which the new ward boundaries are comparable). The register is separated into male and female by first name; those categorised as 'unknown' are so because their first name is gender neutral (for example the name 'Sam').

The voluntary nature of the Electoral Roll makes it unlikely that the absolute number of people registered on it will be directly comparable to the number recorded by the Census.

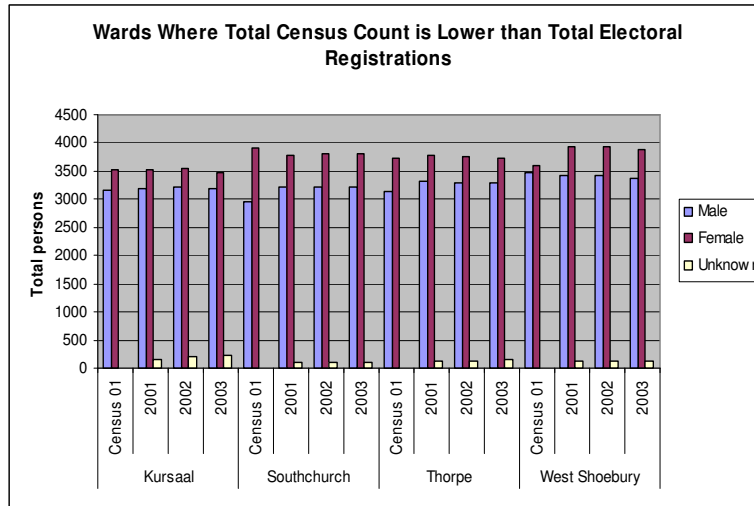
However, the graph can be constructively used to investigate where there are any significant disparities between the gender balance indicated by the Census count and that indicated by the Electoral Roll.

The Electoral Roll is now more robust in that names can now be added/removed during the year and if a registration form is not returned, in accordance with legislation, after 1 year the name (s) on the register are automatically deleted.

In most wards, despite some variation in extent, the bar for the Census count shows a higher total number of people than the bars for the Electoral Roll counts in any years. This is the expected pattern, because Electoral Roll Registration is voluntary, as explained above. However, the opposite is true in some wards, most apparently in **Kursaal, Southchurch, Thorpe** and **West Shoebury**. Graph 7 below shows the gender balance for these wards in more detail.



Graph 7



Key: for each Ward-  
 Column 1: Census 2001  
 Column 2: Electoral Roll 2001  
 Column 3: Electoral Roll 2002  
 Column 4: Electoral Roll 2003

In Kursaal, Southchurch and Thorpe wards, it can be seen that the bars representing the number of females are of similar height for the Census count and the Electoral Roll figures for the three years. However, the bars for males are higher for the electoral roll than for the Census. This would indicate that the male population may have been undercounted in these wards by the Census as more men appear to be registered to vote than are present according to ONS. The opposite male/female trend is true in West Shoebury, where it appears that the undercounting problem has occurred with the female population.

Whilst perhaps the most inconclusive evidence yet presented, when taken in conjunction with the trends gleaned from the other local sources, the electoral roll again indicates a possible undercount in the male population in general and singles out four wards for further general investigation.

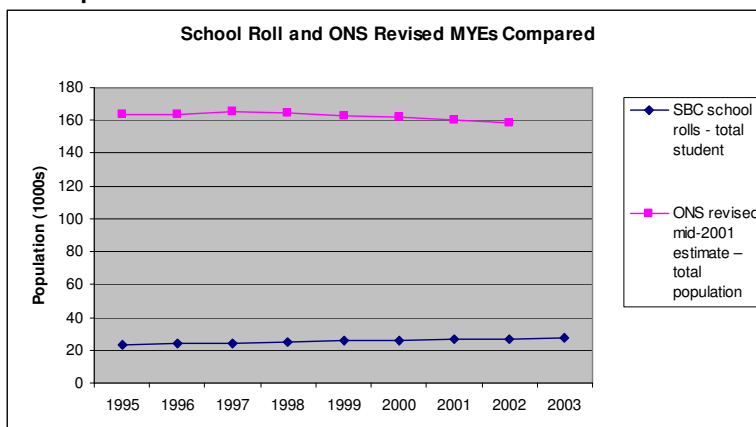
**Local data:**

- ◆ The evidence concerning electoral registration indicated that 4 out of 17 electoral wards in the borough show more adults returning their electoral registration forms than were actually shown to exist in the Census figures.

**3.3.4 School Roll Data**

This data is particularly useful for supplementing the Electoral Roll data as it captures the section of the population not represented in the former, due to their age. Additionally, school registers are likely to provide more robust evidence for a time-series trend than a voluntary register such as the electoral roll. As stated above, people not captured by the Census are likely to be the same people who do not register as electors. School roll data does not suffer from this weakness.

**Graph 8**

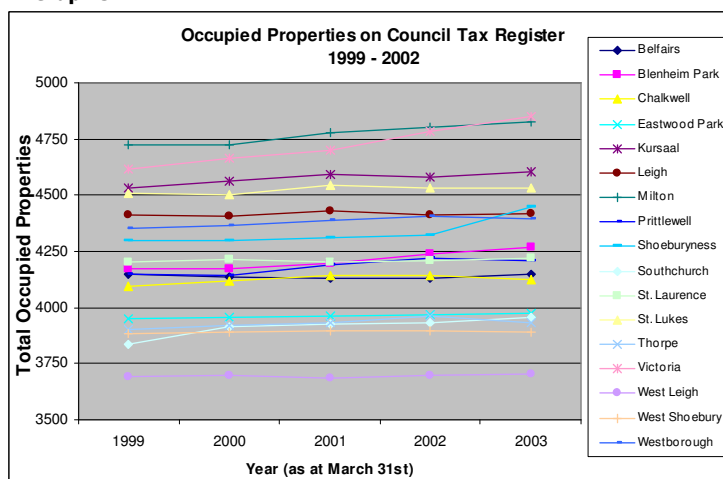


Graph 8 showing the provisional data from the school rolls for Southend demonstrates that the number of students on the school roll has been steadily increasing. Between 1995 and 2001 the student numbers increased by 3,257 in contrast to the population trends indicated by the revised MYEs. The contrast between the two sets of data are even more prominent for the 1997 to 2001 period, with school rolls recording an increase of 2,124 students in sharp contrast with a reduction of 4,700 people estimated by the ONS. Again, the trend apparent from the revised MYEs completely opposes the local evidence available. Like the PCT registration data, school roll records must be viewed as an accurate estimate for the total population in that age group.

There does need to be some caution about cross-boundary movement, as the assumption cannot be made that all pupils are residents from Southend.

### 3.3.5 Council Tax Data

**Graph 9**



The 2001 Census counted the number of households in Southend at 70,978. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001, Southend's records indicate that 72,012 households (i.e. occupied properties) paid Council Tax, suggesting that there were 1,034 properties/households in Southend not included in the Census.

The Committee is confident that the Council Tax records provide an accurate estimation of the number of occupied properties in the borough, as the properties on

the register are matched to that held by the Valuation Office twice per month. Graph 9 indicates that the general trend in number of households has been upwards in nearly all wards since 1999.

According to the Council’s records, the number of properties (including vacancies) in the Borough has been above 75,000 since November 1999 and was 75,231 at March 31st 2001. This is 921 higher than the Census count for household spaces (household spaces with residents (70,978), vacant household spaces (3,127) and second homes (205)).

**Table 4: Properties – Census and Council Tax**

<b>March 31st 2001</b>			
	<b>Council Tax</b>	<b>Census 2001</b>	<b>Council Tax - Census Difference</b>
Properties with Residents	72012	70978	<b>1034</b>
Vacant properties and second homes	3066	3332	<b>-266</b>
Total H/H spaces	75231	74310	<b>921</b>

It is important to note how the steady increase in the number of properties on the Council Tax register contrasts with the declining population trends assumed by the ONS revised MYEs for the recent years. The Council Tax figures correlate more closely to the 2,900 new dwellings that were completed in the period 1991-2001.

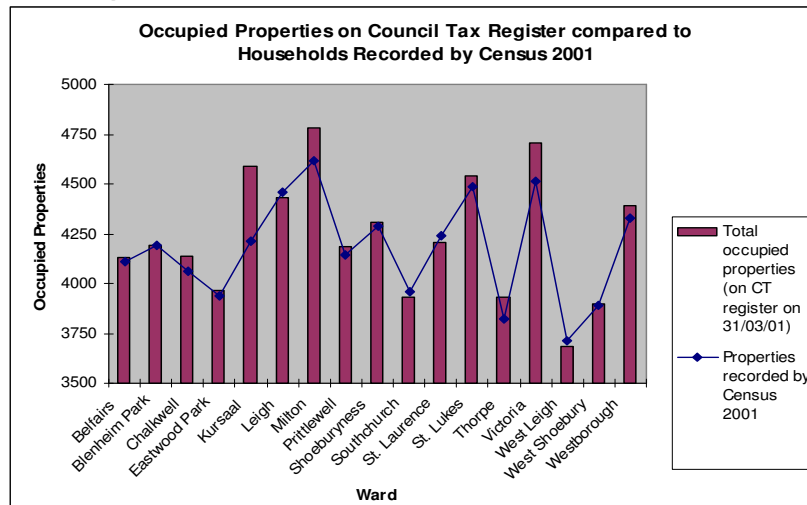
**Table 5: Council Tax Properties and ONS MYEs**

<b>Year as at 31 March</b>	<b>SBC Council Tax Properties (Including vacant properties)*1</b>	<b>ONS revised MYE Population ('000)*2</b>
1999	74,836	163.1
2000	75,094	161.7
2001	75,231	160.4
2002	75,335	158.8
2003	75,655	-

Source: \*1 SBC Council Tax records  
\*2 ONS

Graph 10 provides some indication of where these extra properties may be located.

**Graph 10**



Graph 10 indicates that in several wards, the number of properties recorded by the Census is considerably lower than the number paying Council Tax as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001. This is most apparent in **Kursaal, Milton, Thorpe** and **Victoria** wards. Significantly, all these wards adjoin and Kursaal, Milton and Victoria are town centre wards, indicating perhaps that this area proved difficult to enumerate. It is interesting that Kursaal and Thorpe stand out here as well as in the Electoral Roll evidence.

Considering Graph 10 and Table 6 below, we can see that in March 2001, Kursaal, Milton and Victoria wards had a particularly high number of properties with households claiming 25% 'single occupancy' discount according to Council Tax records. When compared to the households recorded in the census that would be eligible to claim the discount, this evidence would indicate that not all adults in a large number of households were recorded on the Census form.

**Table 6: Single occupants**

<b>Total number of one person households receiving 25% discount as one person occupants as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001</b>	<b>28567</b>
Compare with 2001 Census*	
One person pensioners	12335
Other	12672
Lone parent with dependent children	4904
Lone parent with non-dependent children	2079
<b>Sum of the above equivalent to total number of households eligible for single occupancy 25% CT discount</b>	<b>31990</b>
<b>Difference: 28567 – 31990</b>	<b>-3423</b>

\* source Key statistics Southend-on-Sea total (Table KS20: Household composition)

**Local data:**

- ◆ About 3,500 more households identified by the Census 2001 as eligible for the 'single person' discount than are actually claiming, indicating that not all adults in Council Tax households were included in the Census.

**3.4 The Committee's Assessment of Southend's Population**

During the Scrutiny process, the Committee examined various population scenarios. Information has been shared with ONS and is part of the on-going work with ONS.

Even with a low estimate of 11,252 additional (net) household spaces built 1981-2002 and the low 2001 Census based average household size estimate of 2.22 persons per household, Southend's mid-2002 population estimate for the town is 12,400 more than the current ONS MYE of 158,800.

Planning and Council Tax data shows an additional 11,120 dwellings were built in the Borough between 1981–2002. Significant work has been undertaken within the Council to prepare robust population estimates as at 2002, based on this level of additional dwellings, together with relevant data from ONS itself. The outcome of this work provides a population estimate significantly above the census/revised ONS mid-year estimates, and one which is supported by the various other local sources of population data outlined above.

### **3.5 Conclusions from the Evidence**

The Scrutiny received local evidence which showed a projected increase in population, where ONS project a declining population:

- ◆ PCT data sees no indication of any decrease in population in any age range, based on the continuous growth in the need for health services across the borough;
- ◆ Number of Council Tax dwellings has increased and is projected to increase;
- ◆ Number of net dwellings has increased and is set to increase;
- ◆ School roll data indicates continuing growth in school age population over the next 10 years;
- ◆ The Council's own population estimates, using locally derived and relevant ONS data, point to a steady increase in births over deaths - an estimated annual figure of 3,000+ births and deaths each year. The births are at the top end of the scale nearer 4,000 and the deaths are at the lower end, nearer 3,000. However, ONS shows a higher proportion of deaths than births;
- ◆ The university campus development, which comes on stream later in the year, will have impact on future population trends, with more students staying in Southend or moving to Southend to study.
- ◆ The Council's own population estimates using housing development and relevant ONS data are supported by this local evidence.

It should be stressed that no evidence has emerged regarding the number of asylum seekers.

The Best Value Review Social Inclusion Report considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2004 gave an indication that the review found the profile of the borough has changed in the last decade and social inclusion is an issue for Southend. There is extensive evidence of social exclusion in Southend, and reduction of resources arising from the Census makes it more difficult for the Council to address the issues.

### **3.6 Progress with ONS**

The Officer Project Team met with ONS on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2004 and discussed the following:

- ◆ Selection of local authorities for studies – review the reasons for Southend's inclusion. Southend has been chosen as one of the 8 areas subject to review during 2004.
- ◆ Local issues for Southend – Review analysis to establish areas of concern.
- ◆ Future work – Discuss options for further investigation of Southend's population estimates, the Authority's concerns and how we can work together.
- ◆ Next Steps – Discuss the next stage of the investigations.

ONS agreed to provide details from the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2004. This information is attached at **Appendix 3**. This also provides a summary of the work that will be done at the next stage of the study. ONS has asked for a named officer to be the contact during the project, who will be Fiona Abbott. Consideration will then be given to agreeing a methodology for calculating and projecting Southend's population. This work will be undertaken by the Corporate Research & Information Officer Group.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (i) That further work continues with ONS to examine the Census results for Southend and to challenge the subsequent projected mid-year population estimates, which show a supposed further decline in the town's population since the 2001 Census;
- (ii) That work continues in parallel to confirm and refine the Council's own population estimates, based on ONS data and the Council's factual records of housing completions over the period 1981-2002, and that this work be used to inform and support the ongoing work with ONS;
- (iii) That Officers report back to Members on this further work with ONS;
- (iv) That ONS continue to be urged to complete the study in time for next year's local government financial settlement, and
- (v) That the final Scrutiny Report be agreed by Members at the Economic Scrutiny Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

The Council is due to meet with ONS later in March 2004, and there are a number of issues which we and ONS need to follow up. For example, we need to investigate further student data information.

Initial contact has already been made with the other areas included in the review which ONS are carrying out during 2004.

**SOUTHEND ON SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL  
ECONOMIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY**

**EVALUATION OF THE CENSUS RESULT FOR SOUTHEND-ON-SEA**

**WITNESS SESSION NO.1  
5<sup>TH</sup> December 2003**

**Attendees**

Mr A Wallace – Census District Manager and Head of Democratic Services  
Mr T Row – Assistant Census District Manager  
Ms A Gellert – Information & Systems Manager, Education & Lifelong Learning

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Members of the In-Depth Scrutiny Committee had previously been circulated with a briefing document which followed up the submission by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Select Committee in February 2003, querying the likely undercounting of Southend's population in the 2001 Census.
- 1.2 The aim of the document was to illustrate that the Census 2001 results do not provide an accurate representation of Southend's population over the last decade.
- 1.3 The conclusions of the first submission were maintained, but enhanced and added to in the light of new information available and possible questions for witnesses were identified.

**2. RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS**

**2.1 QUESTIONS TO CENSUS DISTRICT MANAGER**

Mr Andrew Wallace, Census District Manager, responded as follows to the questions previously submitted on behalf of the Committee:-  
(Note: before doing so he advised the Committee that whilst he was no longer employed by ONS he was still bound by the Census Act and could not disclose information made confidential by that Act.)

**Question 1**

Describe how the census was conducted locally.

**Answer**

Mr Wallace gave a summary of how the census had been conducted. He explained that the organisation of fieldwork was carried out in three layers. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) first appointed Area Managers, each of whom was responsible for a large area of the country. The Area Managers then appointed District Managers, of whom Mr Wallace was one, who were responsible for ensuring the enumeration of a discrete area. The District Managers then appointed assistants and a number of Census Enumerators, each of whom had 200-300 households. Detailed large-scale maps were issued to the District Managers, whose first responsibility was to check both the area boundaries and the details within each Enumerator's map. Enumerators were issued with workbooks, within which they were required to report road by road, house by house, identifying any new properties or any mistakes, which were then put into the system. The next stage was for the Enumerators to deliver the household forms, wherever possible making contact with the householder when doing so. In some cases individual forms were also delivered,

for people who did not wish their details to be seen by the householder. After completion, the forms were returned by post. Assistants working for the District Manager sorted the returned forms into packs for return to the ONS, and started to chase up non-returns. Mr Wallace explained that there had been a very tight timetable, and after the stipulated cut-off date – at which time there were 2 million household forms outstanding nationally - he had been required to send all the returned forms to the ONS, the ONS had arranged to receive all outstanding forms direct from the Royal Mail, and his responsibility had ended. The forms were all processed nationally, and Mr Wallace had no figures for the number of householders' forms returned by householders.

### **Question 2**

Explain 'dummy forms'.

### **Answer**

Mr Wallace explained that in numerous cases, when the Enumerators returned to households to chase up outstanding forms, they were told that the forms were 'in the post'. In such instances, the Assistant District Manager filled in a 'dummy form' comprising simply a single sheet with an address, and whether the property was a house, a bungalow or a flat. Such a form would have been counted as an average household. The 'dummy form' should have been replaced by the actual form when it was received subsequently by the ONS.

### **Question 3**

How were non-returns dealt with?

### **Answer**

Enumerators were required to report back on anyone who actually refused to return their form. Generally, however, when Enumerators started to chase non-returns, they were told that they were 'in the post'. A dummy form was then completed (see Question 2) in expectation of the actual form arriving, and the Enumerator could then do no more.

### **Question 4**

Anecdotal evidence for different areas of Southend.

### **Answer**

Mr Wallace told the Committee that anecdotal evidence from different areas of Southend suggested that the wards with the greatest number of non-returns were those with the largest number of HMOs and people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, which had critical implications for the final count. Anecdotal evidence also suggested that householders were claiming that completed forms were 'in the post' when enumerators believed they had not been returned.

### **Question 5**

How is it determined what the 100% return rate is? Is it based on the MYEs?

### **Answer**

Mr Wallace had not seen a definition of a 100% return rate from the ONS. He confirmed that he would expect it to be based on the number of dwellings, and he was confident that the number of dwellings was correct as the survey for mapping purposes had been very thorough.

### **Question 6**

What address base was used? Was the postcode directory used?



**Answer**

Mr Wallace confirmed that the postcode directory was used, as were appropriate sources of information. He emphasised again that he was confident the maps prepared by the ONS were accurate, especially after they had been checked on the ground by both himself and the Enumerators.

**Question 7**

How did you deal with people usually resident, but not there on census night?

**Answer**

Mr Wallace told the Committee that the form asked for details of everyone who was normally at the address, irrespective of where they were on census night. This made allowance for people with second homes, people who worked away from home during the week, etc.

**Question 8**

Have there been any changes in methodology/sources of data used since 1991?

**Answer**

Mr Wallace drew attention to several changes in the methodology used since 1991:

- The biggest change was that completed forms were returned by post instead of being collected by the Enumerators, thus making it much more difficult to chase up non-returns.
- The timescale was much tighter than previously, with only a week allowed for chasing non-returns, where previously there had been 3 weeks.
- The census this time was not, as previously, a snapshot of who was actually in the house on a given date, but rather a snapshot of who was normally there.

**Question 9**

What constitutes a household in census terms? Has there been any change as to 'household criteria'?

**Answer**

A household in census terms is a dwelling where a communal facility, such as a kitchen, is shared. Individual forms for different members of the household were used when requested.

**Question 10**

Need to establish **ALL** the reasons why individuals may not have filled in the Census, this should be thought of in local and national terms. (There may well be statistical analysis already available on this). There could be a number of reasons such as:

- Language
- Deception/illegal activities such as social services fraud and fear of loss of entitlement
- Transient population
- Fear of establishment (especially with asylum seekers)
- Apathy
- Deliberate non-conformity
- Time
- Availability

Need to prove that Southend fits within the criteria and is greatly affected with regards to the above.

### Answer

Mr Wallace agreed with the suggested reasons why forms had not been returned. In particular, he reminded the Committee that many of the occupants of HMOs were immigrants from brutal police states with a natural fear of the establishment, who were very nervous at filling in this kind of form. It was, in any case, very difficult to convince people that information given for census purposes would not be used for any other purpose, and there seemed to be a general change in the attitude of a section of the population to providing information of this type. He agreed that for a census to be successful it must enjoy widespread public support, and he did not feel that level of support was present in the central wards of Southend.

### Additional points:-

- Members expressed concerns about checks that all forms had been delivered to all households. Mr Wallace confirmed that there had been frequent random checks. He was confident that very few properties had been missed in the initial checking exercise, and that the Enumerators had been very thorough.
- Members were concerned about the clarity of the census form itself (the 'H' form), but Mr Wallace did not feel that had been an issue. He confirmed that the form had been available in extensive translations, and had been rigorously checked by plain English standards. He did not believe it had been open to misinterpretation. Interpreters were available to visit people for whom English was not their mother tongue. (A copy of the 'H' form was later circulated to the Committee, together with 'This is Your Census' leaflet.)
- Members were dubious as to the accuracy of the 'dummy forms', as the Enumerators confirmed that they were most often issued for households known to be HMOs (households of multiple occupancy), but they were being counted as an average household, which was very much smaller.
- Members drew attention to the fact that the census was conducted around the time of the local elections, and expressed concerns that householders could have been overloaded with post and circulars around that time and could consequently have disregarded much of it.
- Attention was also drawn to the poor level of service locally from the Royal Mail at this time. Mr Wallace confirmed that the Royal Mail had contracted to give priority to returning census forms, but acknowledged that the contractual requirements had not been met, and large numbers of forms were still in the system after the cut-off date. He provided a copy of an e-mail which had been sent to CAMs by ONS confirming that at 24<sup>th</sup> May 2 million household forms were outstanding, but setting a date of 28<sup>th</sup> May when the enumeration must be completed. This meant 'chase-up' was curtailed and there was no means of confirming householders' claims that 'forms were in the post'.
- It is normally expected that a census should show a higher number of adults than the electoral register, since there are significant numbers of adults who cannot register. The Committee was therefore concerned to learn **that in the case of 4 wards (Kursaal, Southchurch, Thorpe and West Shoebury) the electoral register showed that there were more people registered to vote than were actually present, according to ONS.** Mr Wallace confirmed that in his view the census figures for those wards in particular were incorrect. People who do not complete an electoral register return for more than one year are automatically deleted from the register, so the level of accuracy of the register as far as the names recorded on it are concerned is likely to be high.

## 2.2 **QUESTIONS TO ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER**

Mr Andrew Wallace, Head of Democratic Services, responded as follows to the questions previously submitted on behalf of the Committee:-

### **Question 1**

Describe how the register of electors is compiled.

### **Answer**

Mr Wallace explained to the Committee that there is an annual canvass when electoral registration forms are delivered to every household, for return by post. Through a process of rolling registration the register is also updated monthly throughout the year to include people who have "claimed" to go on, and any additions or deletions are advertised.

### **Question 2**

What controls are exercised over returns?

### **Answer**

The statutory purpose of the electoral register is to compile a list of people who can vote, and a list from which jurors are drawn. The list is also used by credit reference agencies. Misuse of the list is a criminal offence, and is heavily penalised.

### **Question 3**

How does the ERO chase non-returns?

### **Answer**

If the initial form is not returned, a chase-up letter is sent by mail, and if the form is still not returned canvassers then make door-to-door visits.

### **Question 4**

What action do you take if people don't register?

### **Answer**

It is a legal requirement to complete the form, and every effort is made to ensure it is returned. Occasionally, prosecutions are carried out for non-return, but generally such action is neither cost-effective nor worthwhile.

### **Question 5**

Who can't register?

### **Answer**

Mr Wallace gave details of those people who cannot register:-

- anyone who is not a citizen of the UK, the EU or the Commonwealth;
- anyone who has been detained in an institution under the Mental Health Act;
- convicted felons.

### **Question 6**

How do we know the register is accurate – level of accuracy in scale of 1 – 10?  
Explain trends/ward patterns.

### **Answer**

Mr Wallace told the Committee that in Southend there is an average return of 90%, which rises to 98% in certain wards, but falls to 60% in wards such as Milton, where there is the highest proportion of people ineligible to register, and there is resistance to completing official forms anyway.

## 2.3 **QUESTIONS TO DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING**

Ms Alison Gellett, Information & Systems Manager in the Department of Education & Lifelong Learning, responded as follows to the questions previously submitted on behalf of the Committee:-

### **Question 1**

Describe how information on school roll data is collected. Do you have a 'head' count of the 5 – 11 (primary) school population?

### **Answer**

Ms Gellett explained to the Committee that since January 2002 there has been a national annual school census (Pupil Level Annual School Census – PLASC) in all LEA-maintained schools. This information is collected directly from schools' management information systems. Extensive data-checking processes are in place nationally to ensure that this data is accurate and up to date. Schools' funding is based on this data, and it is audited. Each pupil has a unique identifier which is given on first arrival in the English education system and continues with that pupil throughout their schooling. These identifiers are crosschecked as part of this process to ensure that pupils are not double-counted. The information on pupils is collected in the form of an electronic file on each pupil at the school which contains a Common Basic Data Set (nationally defined). This includes: name, dob, address, parental information, special needs information, ethnicity, as well as many other fields.

This information is sent to the DfES electronically and a National Pupil Database is compiled which is used for statistical purposes and also to aid transfer of pupil data across the country.

### **Question 2**

Discuss the trends apparent in the school roll data.

### **Answer**

Ms Gellett circulated a table showing roll figures over the last 10 years. She explained that prior to PLASC there had been a summary collection each year called Form 7, which had similarly been used for schools' funding, and which had been audited in the same way as PLASC. From the table it was apparent that there was a rising trend in the school roll of approximately 5000 pupils over the 10 years. The table clearly showed that there was a marked rise in each age group over this period, crossing both genders.

Ms Gellett was confident that the figures from both PLASC and Form 7 were 100% accurate. Because they were used as the basis for schools' funding their accuracy was vital, and was extensively checked. She suggested that the only children missing from these figures were the small number of those who were never registered in school.

### **Question 3**

How do you deal with cross-boundary issues? How do you gather information on pupil numbers locally (how do you establish Southend pupils)?

### **Answer**

Ms Gellett explained to the Committee that PLASC and the previous Form 7 both related to pupils in Southend schools, and not to Southend residents. Although there is significant cross-border transfer at secondary level, there is minimal cross-border transfer at primary level. School Places Planning (SPP) contact Essex LEA to ask for forecasts of all Essex school numbers. Using Essex's School Organisation Plan (SOP)

they are able to quantify how many pupils in Essex schools live in Essex, and by contacting Essex secondary schools they can establish the true picture. From PLASC it is possible to identify exactly where a pupil lives, and so the number of Essex pupils attending Southend schools can be quantified precisely. Ms Gellett circulated a chart showing a summary of migration out of, and into, Southend schools.

**Question 4**

How do you square findings on future school rolls with the projected school places vacancies (as in the Report to recent Cabinet)?

**Answer**

Ms Gellett explained that the Southend area comes under the SPP team. They provide a forecast for each school for the five years ahead which includes % surplus in relation to the accommodation available. The surplus currently is very low – 6% of primary schools and 5% of secondary schools. The forecast for 2008 is 12% for primaries and 2% for secondaries. The cabinet report highlighted specific schools where there will be surplus places in the future (2008), but this is not representative of all schools. The forecast shows that primary rolls should start to fall in 2006/7, while the secondary intake is still rising and will continue to rise beyond this 5-year period.

**Question 5**

Do you have details/statistics on the private school population (and 'Southend' figures)?

**Answer**

Ms Gellett told the Committee that private schools are not included in PLASC, and that they have no obligation to provide any information. However, it is possible to collect a certain amount of information as they do sometimes publish their results where national exams are taken. She suggested that in Southend, where there are relatively few private schools, they only represent 4-5% of the school population in Southend, a figure that remains quite stable. Primary reception numbers make up 95% of the birth numbers cohort. The difference is made up of private pupils and those pupils who do go to schools outside Southend.

**Additional points:-**

A copy of extracts from the School Organisation Plan (2003) and January number-on-roll figures (LEA-maintained schools) was later circulated to the Committee.

**SOUTHEND ON SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL  
ECONOMIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - IN-DEPTH SCRUTINY**

**EVALUATION OF THE CENSUS RESULT FOR SOUTHEND-ON-SEA**

**WITNESS SESSION NO.2  
12<sup>th</sup> December 2003**

**Attendees**

Mr P Nolan – Assistant Borough Treasurer  
Ms H Wilson – Superintendent Registrar  
Apologies for absence were received from Southend PCT.

**3. RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS**

**1.1 QUESTIONS TO SOUTHEND PRIMARY CARE TRUST**

The Committee had previously submitted questions to Southend PCT, who had responded in writing. The Committee considered these responses:-

**Question 1**

Give information on how the patient data is collated.

**Answer**

Information on the registered population is collected when patients register with a GP practice. Once a patient is registered with a practice, this information is collected by the Exeter system operated by Contractor Services in Clacton. This holds the details of every patient registered in Essex.

**Question 2**

How confident do the PCT feel about the data?

**Answer**

GP lists fluctuate on a day-to-day basis as people move from one practice to another. This is normally due to people moving area, and is particularly affected when students move to universities. It is not possible to totally rely on the information, but it is generally accepted that the list size is normally 'inflated' by about 5.7%.

**Question 3**

Information on the 'inflation' factor

**Answer**

Information on the list inflation factor was taken from a national research paper. This was used to get a rough idea on how the Southend PCT population would be reduced taking this into account.

**Question 4**

Is the 'weighting' national or local?

**Answer**

The weighting for this is based on a national position.

### **Question 5**

How does Southend compare – are we the 'norm'?

### **Answer**

The level of list inflation across PCTs is unlikely to be consistent, and therefore there is probably not a 'norm' as such.

### **Question 6**

How do the PCT deal with cross-boundary registration, e.g. Southend residents registered – Rochford and Castle Point PCT practices?

### **Answer**

A member of the public is entitled to register with any practice that will accept them, though practices would normally only accept a patient should their residential address fall within their catchment area. Therefore practices near the borders of PCT areas are likely to have a number of patients registered with a different PCT and vice versa. The PCT uses the number of patients registered with practices that are within their boundaries.

### **Question 7**

What is the impact of the Census figures and MYEs for funding? How are the PCT dealing with the situation – service planning issue?

### **Answer**

The PCT bases its service planning on a combination of health needs assessment data and historic activity data. Current data on service usage across all areas shows continuous growth of all areas of healthcare activity. This growth has been consistent over a three-year period, and activity modelling for the next ten years predicts a continued increase in all areas except emergency admissions to hospital. This activity growth must be funded from our baseline that is now under-estimated, based on Census data.

**There is no indication of any decrease in the population in any age range based on the continuous growth in need for health services.**

### **Additional points:-**

- Members queried the inflation figure of 5.7%, as the national figure is estimated as 5%, and Mr Harris will check this with the PCT.
- Members expressed a general perception that there is a section of the population in Southend that does not register with a GP, but turns to the Accident and Emergency services when a need arises. As the PCT figures only covered the element of the population that had registered with a GP, it was difficult to make meaningful comparisons with the Census figures.
- It was felt that the issues concerning cross-boundary registration needed further clarification.
- Members noted that the PCT figures, like those submitted by the Education department in the first witness session, showed a trend of steady growth across all areas, which is inconsistent with the Census & MYEs findings.
- Members recognised that the PCT are in a difficult position financially, since any under-count by the Census affects their funding.
- Members considered the possibility of running an exercise with the PCT over three months to try and determine a more accurate population figure, and Mr Harris will explore this with the PCT.

**Response from PCT to additional points: -**

1. Query on the inflation figure of 5.7%, as the national figure is estimated as 5%.

The figure of 5.7% is listed as the average inflation factor for PCTs by the National Primary Care Database (web link <http://www.primary-care-db.org.uk/indexmenu/popnedesc.html>).

2. Follow up on issues concerning cross-boundary registration and the need for further clarification.

Southend PCT covers 39 GP practices. Each of these practices has a registered patient population. However, a GP practice near the PCT boundary will cover an area of population where patients come under different PCTs. For example, a practice in Leigh may have some patients registered with them who live in Hadleigh, and Hadleigh is covered by Castle Point and Rochford PCT, whereas Leigh is covered by Southend PCT. For Southend PCT, 3.6% of patients live in the area covered by Castle Point and Rochford PCT. However, Castle Point and Rochford PCT also has 3.3% of patients that live in Southend.

3. The proposal for a three month exercise to try and determine a more accurate population figure.

With the limited resources available, the PCT would find it extremely difficult to run such an exercise. The PCT however is exploring the possibilities.



## 1.2 **QUESTIONS TO BOROUGH TREASURER**

Mr Patrick Nolan, Assistant Borough Treasurer, responded as follows to the questions previously submitted on behalf of the Committee:-

### **Question 1**

How is the property database/number of households established?

### **Answer**

The council tax property database is a mirror of the Valuation List maintained by the Valuation Office Agency, which is part of the Inland Revenue, and is updated twice each month to reflect construction, conversion and demolition of dwellings. The Agency relies on information from the Council, particularly the Planning, Building Control and Council Tax sections, as well as from the public and Land Registry to ensure the list remains accurate.

Information about the persons liable to pay council tax for each dwelling and entitlement to discounts and exemptions is maintained by the Borough Treasurer's Council Tax section. Information is obtained from council taxpayers, letting agents, solicitors and other local authorities. Discounts and exemptions are reviewed regularly and Inspectors visit empty properties on a regular basis. Records are updated continuously as information is received.

### **Question 2**

How is the number of occupiers in a property established?

### **Answer**

Mr Nolan explained that for the purposes of collecting council tax the number of residents and their relationship is not relevant, unless a discount or exemption is being claimed on the basis that there is only one adult resident in the dwelling, or all but one resident is 'disregarded', or the dwelling is empty. Where a single-person discount is claimed, written confirmation of single occupancy is required, and this is reviewed annually. Where a discount is awarded on the basis of some or all residents being disregarded, evidence is required - e.g. student certificate or doctor's certification of mental impairment, and this is also reviewed as appropriate. Empty properties are subject to periodic inspection to confirm that they are still empty. Generally, however, unless a discount is applied for, it is not necessary to collect information on the number of residents in a dwelling, and in any event the number of residents under 18 is not relevant for council tax purposes.

### **Question 3**

How frequently is the information updated?

### **Answer**

The council tax property database is reconciled to information received from the Valuation Office Agency twice monthly. The Council Tax section updates information about liable individuals, discounts and exemptions every day as information is received.

### **Question 4**

What constitutes a household in council tax terms?

### **Answer**

Mr Nolan explained that the concept of a household is not relevant to council tax administration. What is relevant is the concept of a dwelling, essentially a self-

contained domestic property. The liable person or persons must then pay council tax in respect of that dwelling. The council tax bill is based on the assumption that there are two or more residents aged 18 or over in the dwelling. The bill will not increase if there are more than two, but will be reduced if there are fewer.

**Question 5**

Do your records provide information on 'transient' population – the 'churn' of tenants?

**Answer**

Council tax records are only concerned with the persons liable to pay council tax for each dwelling, and normally record the owner as the liable person. The records do not reflect the movements of people living in Houses in Multiple Occupation; the Palace Hotel, for example, is regarded as a single dwelling.

**Question 6**

What is your knowledge on the amount of property in the private rented sector overall?

**Answer**

Council tax records do not distinguish between rented and owner-occupied dwellings. From housing benefit records, the Council Tax section is aware of approximately 7,100 persons living in private rented accommodation and claiming housing benefit, but they have no knowledge of those not claiming benefit.

**Question 7**

Would you expect the Census to show more households eligible to claim 25% Council Tax discount than actually claim the discount?

**Answer**

Mr Nolan was confident that, as there is a clear financial incentive for a person living alone to claim the discount, he would not expect the Census to show a significant number who had not done so.

**Additional Points:-**

- Mr Nolan acknowledged that it is difficult to vouch for the complete accuracy of the figures showing the number of properties occupied by a single adult, since they rely on the integrity of the householder, who is required to fill in a discount claim form annually. Where a claim is found to be made fraudulently, the Council Tax section does not prosecute, but rather removes the discount and endeavours to recover the money owed.
- Mr Harris drew the Committee's attention to the fact that while the Census recorded the number of households in Southend at 70,978, Southend's records indicate that, at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001, 72,012 households paid Council Tax. **Kursaal, Milton, Thorpe and Victoria wards, in particular, all show a higher number of properties paying Council Tax than are recorded in the Census.**
- The Committee conceded that it was difficult to make a full comparison between the Census figures and Council Tax figures as it was not comparing like with like – a household in Census terms is a dwelling where a communal facility, such as a kitchen, is shared, while a household in Council Tax terms is a self-contained domestic property.
- Mr. Nolan stated that it would be expected that there should be more households than dwellings, but that the Council Tax figures cannot quantify that.
- Mr Nolan was asked to provide details of the last Domestic Rating List. [Mr. Nolan later advised that the Council does not have a copy of the last Domestic Rating list but is trying to obtain a copy from the Valuation Office.

Records do show that at 31<sup>st</sup> March 1990 (the end of Domestic rate) there were 69,510 domestic properties and 712 shops with private dwelling accommodation shown on the rating list, a total of 70,222 domestic properties].

### 1.3 **QUESTIONS TO SUPERINTENDENT REGISTRAR**

Ms Helen Wilson, Superintendent Registrar for Births, Deaths and Marriages, responded as follows to the questions previously submitted on behalf of the Committee:-

#### **Question 1**

How do you collect data for births and deaths in Southend? What controls are there for gathering information?

#### **Answer**

Ms Wilson told the Committee that all births and deaths have to be registered, by law, in the Borough in which the birth or death takes place. When registering a birth/death a number of details are registered, amongst them are the date, place address. In the case of an unmarried mother, if the father accompanies her to register the birth his name and address can also be registered, but it is not a statutory requirement. Copies of the registration entries are then sent to ONS, together with other statistical information not included in the entry (e.g. postcode) and ONS then collate the numbers. Ms Wilson explained that it was not the Registrar's role to check the validity of the information given, such as the addresses.

#### **Question 2**

How do you know it is accurate?

#### **Answer**

Ms Wilson cautioned that the figures relate to births and deaths that take place in the Borough, and so are registered in the Borough, but do not necessarily relate to people actually living in the Borough. Many births, for example, take place at Southend Hospital, but the mothers are often from outside the Borough. She also drew attention to the fact she is the Superintendent for Southend-on-Sea and also the Superintendent for Castle Point and Rochford. Births which occur in Southend have to be registered here, births in Castle Point and Rochford have to be registered there. However it would appear that ONS then further divide the statistics based on the postcode of residence.

#### **Additional points:-**

- Ms Wilson was confident that there had been a steady increase of births over deaths for some time. She gave an estimated annual figure of 3,000+ births and deaths each year. The births are at the top end of the scale nearer 4,000 and the deaths are at the lower end, nearer 3,000.
- Ms Wilson told the Committee that she had visited the ONS's website that day, and had been surprised to learn that the ONS showed a higher proportion of deaths than births, which did not agree with her figures. She pointed out that the ONS uses postcodes to collate their figures, and it was agreed that it should be established exactly which postcodes were included by ONS in the Southend area.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Minutes of first meeting between representatives from Southend Council and ONS 12<sup>th</sup> January 2004 11.00/13.10**

#### **PRESENT:**

Jil Matheson, Joy Dobbs, Amanda Blunden, Tom Bradley - ONS  
Lee Harris, Fiona Abbott and Nikos Antalopoulos – Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

#### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Jil Matheson opened the meeting by making introductions, it was agreed that the meeting would follow the prepared agenda.

Jil explained that ONS had selected a number of local authorities for study in 2004, including Southend, to improve understanding of the difficulties in accurately estimating the population for some sections of the population and some areas of the country.

Lee stressed that Southend BC felt they have found evidence of an underestimation of population in the Census 2001 and in the Mid Year Estimates and that the town's population was no longer declining. The impact of this on the town is considerable in terms of lost Government Grant. Lee mentioned that an in-depth Scrutiny project had been undertaken and stressed the need for this study to be progressed in time for the MYE for 2002 and the local government financial settlement.

#### **SELECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOR STUDIES**

Joy outlined the specific criteria in which Southend appeared unusual, which are as follows:

- 2000-2001 Population change
- Vacant Properties (set by One Number Census)
- Multi-Occupancy
- Administrative Sources, where , School Census data and, Adjusted Patient record data were particularly high in comparison with Census data.)

#### **LOCAL ISSUES FOR SOUTHEND**

After detailed discussion, Jil Matheson summarised key points that she felt warranted further investigation.

- Population trends need to be looked at in order to understand the difference between ONS figures and the figures from local authority admin sources over the period 1981-2001.
- Southend's Council Tax data and the number of people claiming single persons occupancy discount.
- The number and trend of dwellings in the Southend.
- The Census Coverage Survey (CCS) areas can be looked at to see if the CCS sample was representative for Southend.
- The issue of 'usually resident', the Census only counts people who say they are usually resident in a particular area. This could be an issue in Southend because there may be a large number of seasonal workers, second homes and students who leave the area to go to university.

#### **NEXT STEPS -**

It was agreed that Tom Bradley would be the ONS contact for future discussion, and that Southend would provide a contact in the near future. Joy Dobbs will produce a program of work when she has met with all the local authorities, with some common themes to reflect implications for the whole country. We will then arrange another meeting with Southend, probably for some time in March.

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