

Census Advisory Group (CAG)

Minutes of meeting held in McAuley House

Monday 20th December 2010.

Present: Mr R Beatty Census Office, NISRA – Chair
Mr B Green Census Office, NISRA
Dr I Shuttleworth School of Geosciences, QUB
Mr D McKinstry Equality Commission for NI
Dr T Dignan Economic Research and Evaluation
Dr Dermot O'Reilly School of Epidemiology & Public Health, QUB
Prof D Martin (**audio link**) University of Southampton

Also present Dr E Montgomery Geography, NISRA

Apologies: Dr A Marshall Queens University, Belfast (QUB)
Mr J Frey Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)
Mr J Power NI Assembly
Mr C McIlheney Price Waterhouse Cooper
Mr S Bloomer NI Council for Voluntary Action
Ms J McCarley Electoral Office NI
Ms S Watson Belfast City Council
Mr N Rogers Independent Consultant

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr Beatty welcomed members, thanked those present for braving the wintry conditions, and recorded apologies for other members.

2. Minutes from Previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted. There had been no actions.

3. Census Update

The meeting was structured around a presentation by Mr Beatty that brought members up to date on preparations as the Census moved into operational mode ahead of Census Day, 27 March 2011. He noted that there was inadequate accommodation at McAuley House and that additional accommodation had been acquired from summer 2010 to summer 2011 in Carleton House. This use of two locations was not ideal, but could be made to work. The field operations were being run from Carleton House with business systems and statistics being run from McAuley House. Recruitment of the temporary field staff was going to schedule, and all the necessary questionnaires and other Census documents had been printed.

Mr Green provided an update on geographic issues including the development of a Census Address Register. Census Office estimates that there are 765,000 domestic properties in Northern Ireland and individually-addressed questionnaires will be delivered to each these addresses. As discussed at previous meetings, a post-out model will be used for all domestic properties other than those in rural parts of Fermanagh, while enumerators will deal with communal establishments. Dr O'Reilly suggested that the RQIA (contact Phelim Quinn) would be a useful source of information on communals in the care home sector. Mr Green undertook to check if the RQIA had already been contacted, and to contact them if required.

Action Mr Green

Mr Beatty then described the internet data capture system. This had been successfully tested in the 2009 rehearsal. The complete data capture system would be subjected to Operational Readiness Testing in January and it is anticipated that, as part of this, members will be able to see the internet data capture system. All members expressed an interest in seeing this.

Action Mr Beatty

Mr Beatty moved on to publicity. He noted the branding, employed as part of the presentation, and described ongoing community liaison work. Members were shown the information film that has been used at various meetings to present a consistent background message about the Census. Professor Martin confirmed that he had been able to view the film over the internet while the DVD copy was being shown to members present in Belfast. The film was well received by members.

Mr Beatty outlined the publicity campaign that was being developed in conjunction with Navigator Blue. The campaign will encompass TV, radio, press, posters, transport ('bus hugs') and the internet. The Census website has recently been revamped, and Census has a presence on NIDirect. Mr Beatty noted that Facebook had been used as part of the recruitment for field staff and that a surge of enquiries had followed its Facebook launch. Mr Beatty also advised members of the Census at School initiative, with CCEA developing a series of lessons to be delivered to Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils in March.

Moving onto outputs, Mr Beatty noted that a further round of consultation would follow in early 2011. The statistical methodology for the 2011 Census would broadly replicate that of 2001, with the derivation of a 'complete' database involving imputation of both missing persons and missing items within persons. A large scale (about 15,000 households) Census Coverage Survey will provide the main evidence for assessing and adjusting population coverage. On statistical disclosure control, it was noted that, as in 2001, record swapping would be the main technique employed. However, unlike 2001, the swapping would be targeted on key population groups (such as ethnic minorities) and the swapping rate would vary in inverse proportion to imputation rates. In 2001, Small Cell Adjustment was applied over and above record swapping; while the final decision had still to be taken, it was anticipated that no such additional measures would be applied in 2011. This potential removal of Small Cell Adjustment was welcomed by members.

Mr Beatty updated members on plans for dissemination of 2011 outputs, and described the intention to have a new version of NINIS in place during 2011 in advance of its use to disseminate 2011 Census outputs in 2012.

Dr Montgomery then updated members on the geographic base for Census outputs. He described the current hierarchical geographic structure with OAs nesting within SOAs within wards within LGDS / Assembly constituencies. He noted that the Review of Public Administration had suggested that – prior to the 2011 Census - Northern Ireland would have a completely new geographic structure for local government with a reduced number of LGDs and wards that bore little resemblance to the current spatial units. Accordingly, Census output planning had been based on the expectation of a new spatial geography for the 2011 Census. It had recently been announced however that the introduction of the new spatial units for local government had been postponed until at least 2015. The 2011 Census will thus be reported on the basis of the current 26 LGDs and 582 wards. Below that level of geography however, the 890 SOAs and 5,022 OAs are purely statistical units – the key question is should these also be retained from 2001 (to provide consistency over time) or should they be revised (to use the best spatial units relating to 2011)? Dr Montgomery discussed the pros and cons of the various options with members. Dr Montgomery concluded by noting that a consultation paper on this subject will be part of the output consultation exercise in the New Year. Dr Dignan indicated that he and other users would find a greater variety of postcode level data useful to act as building blocks for different geographical areas. In terms of the 2011 Output Areas, discussions centred on the need to strike the proper balance between consistency over time and what represents the best picture at this time.

Mr Beatty noted the importance of Information Assurance to the Census, and he outlined Census work in this area. Mr Beatty concluded the update by reminding members of key dates for the Census from the pre-delivery card in w/c 7 March to the completion of field follow-up in early May.

AOB

There were no items of other business. Mr Beatty closed the meeting and thanked members for their attendance. Census Office would be in touch in early 2011 regarding members seeing the internet data capture system and the outputs consultation. It was anticipated that the next CAG meeting would be in mid 2011 when an initial feedback on the Census would be provided.

NISRA
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