

Scottish Census Steering Committee

Minutes of Meeting

21 January 2010

Minutes of the Scottish Census Steering Committee (SCSC) meeting held on Thursday 21 January 2010 in General Register Office for Scotland (GROS), New Register House, Edinburgh.

Present:

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Duncan Macniven | GROS, Registrar General |
| Peter Scrimgeour | GROS, Director of Census |
| Shirley Cameron | GROS, Census Programme Management |
| Sandy Taylor | GROS, Census Outputs Statistician |
| Penni Rocks | GROS, Census Delivery Manager |
| Kirsty MacLean | GROS, Census Questionnaire Design Manager |
| Rona Dunbar | GROS, Census Communications Manager |
| Arlene Chalmers | GROS, Development Centre Manager |
| Prof Ken MacKinnon | Bòrd na Gàidhlig |
| Prof. David Martin | The University of Southampton |
| Prof. Michael Anderson | The University of Edinburgh |
| Ian Lees | Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations |
| Ken Macdonald | Information Commissioner's Office |
| Jennifer Wallace | Consumer Focus Scotland |
| Jon Harris | CoSLA |
| Anne Moises | Scottish Government |
| Ranald Mair | Scottish Care |
| Jenny Boag | RSS Statistics User Forum |

Apologies:

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Ros Micklem | Equalities and Human Rights Commission |
| Alan Dickson | Capability Scotland |
| Bashir Maan | Scottish Council for Muslims |
| Grahame Smith | Scottish Trade Union Congress |
| Dr Eric Baijal | NHS Borders |

1. Welcome and introductions – Duncan Macniven

- 1.1 Duncan welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Jenny Boag, a new member invited to attend to represent the interests of commercial users of census data. Members were thanked for their previous input and for their continued interest.

2. Minutes of the of Meeting - 8 September 2009 – Duncan Macniven

- 2.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate reflection of the discussion and will now be published on the [GROS website](#).

Matters arising from the minutes – Duncan Macniven

- 2.2 Fieldwork (para 4.8) – Enumeration of people in prison would be done in the traditional manner, following legal advice. Enumeration of Communal Establishments generally would be discussed in more detail at the next SCSC meeting.
- 2.3 Questions (para 4.11) – The current status of the 2010 Census Order and Regulations was explained. After the Order was laid before the Scottish Parliament at the end of November 2009, GROS received requests to consider some revisions. The Order was withdrawn from the parliamentary process to allow these requests to be considered and is expected to be resubmitted to Parliament in early February, with an amended set of questions.

3. 2011 Census Equality Impact Assessment (draft) – Arlene Chalmers

3.1 By way of an introduction to the paper, Arlene explained that GROS had felt that the time was right to draw up an assessment of our plans to carry out the census in relation to what was being done for equality issues. The paper details the work being done to make the census more accessible to groups impacted by equality issues. It also details plans being put in place to reach those groups of the population which are traditionally hard to count in a census. The paper suggests that a further impact assessment would be beneficial, after delivery of the 2011 Census outputs, to consider the impact the questions asked in the census have had on response rates, and therefore on the overall quality of the census.

Discussion on items in the paper

- 3.2 The Committee suggested that information included on the users of census data should be expanded to include other public bodies and commercial companies, as use of up-to-date census information is crucial to these groups in their decision making processes.

- 3.3 More information could be included on the consequences and impact on hard to count groups, should the strategy of engagement with these groups to tackle underenumeration not be successful.
- 3.4 The paper would be reviewed in response to the comments received, with the final version being published on the GROS website.

4. **2011 Census Outputs – Consultation – Sandy Taylor**

- 4.1 Sandy explained that a third formal consultation on the 2011 Census is planned to start in February and run for 12 weeks. The main aim of the consultation is to inform the development of final plans on how to disseminate the outputs from the 2011 Census. From previous consultations, GROS has a view of users' requirements at a high level, but this consultation would help to inform the detailed requirements. Dialogue with users will be an ongoing process throughout 2010 and beyond; the findings of the consultation are seen as the first phase in developing agreed detailed specifications of tabular outputs by the end of 2010.
- 4.2 An interactive web-based approach will be taken to the consultation, with a consultation pack being made available on the GROS website. Taking the pre-defined set of 2001 Census tabular outputs as a starting point, users will be asked, among other things, for feedback on table usability and on any comparability issues with 2001. They will also be invited to consider their requirements for tabular outputs from the new questions being included in the 2011 Census.

Discussion on items in the paper

- 4.3 The processes put in place to manage statistical disclosure control and the use of the hypercube methodology was identified as a separate agenda item for a future meeting. The group would be interested in a clear explanation, in lay terms, of the methodology being adopted.
- 4.4 Suitable safeguards should be built in to ensure that the use of hypercubes does not result in the release of disclosive data, or in a reduction of data quality. GROS continues to work closely with Office for National Statistics (ONS) specialist methodologist experts in statistical disclosure control. Plans would be reviewed by external academics and also potentially by an external security reviewer.
- 4.5 Census users who are interested in making comparisons between 2011 and 2001 (or earlier) census results require any changes made over time, for example to data definitions or underlying geographies, to be easily identified and flagged.
- 4.6 All those on the GROS census consultation database, including users who have previously requested census data from GROS Customer Services, will be sent an email alert when the consultation is launched. SCSC members will also be emailed the consultation details.

- 4.7 A general point was made about the importance of strengthening the link between the census data made available to users and the associated metadata.
- 4.8 A request was made to hold “roadshow” events during the consultation period, rather than at the end. These events would allow GROS to explain the complexities involved to users, who would then be better placed to provide informed comments and suggestions.
5. Overview of Scotland’s 2011 Census Security Plans – Penni Rocks
- 5.1 Penni explained that the paper gives a flavour of the security aspects which have to be built into all the processes required for the 2011 Census. An impact assessment of the public privacy of Scotland’s Census, currently a draft, would provide more detail and was available for members to read. Penni invited members to provide comments.
- 5.2 GROS recognises that security affects every part of the census operation and has put in place a census security team of four security experts to provide advice and assurance. GROS also contract with Logica who provide expert security consultants to review the security measures put in place and to carry out specific security testing. This provides GROS with external assurance that GROS are adhering to the relevant Government security guidance. The GROS Census Security Assurance Group, which includes representatives from key operational areas across Census Division and from the contractors, oversees progress and provides information security direction to the programme, making key security decisions at a strategic level as required.

Discussion on items in the paper

- 5.3 The policy of long term storage and disposal of census questionnaires and personal information could be of concern to the public. One way to mitigate this concern would be to include, in publicity messages for the census where it is relevant, information on how storage and disposal would be managed. GROS has included information on privacy and confidentiality on the Scotland’s Census website.
- 5.4 One member asked if there was the potential for a breach of personal data from a legitimate source, such as the Freedom of Information Act. Duncan explained that personal census information was protected from disclosure, under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act, for a period of 100 years. The potential of breaches due to disclosure control issues was an area of greater concern to GROS and where detailed work was being carried out.
- 5.5 The policy of destruction and recycling of census questionnaires was questioned in relation to the security of personal information. Duncan explained that the policy is expected to be the same as the one successfully deployed in the 2001 Census, where questionnaires were destroyed in a secure manner. This had worked well.

5.6 The potential to receive a request by official security agencies to obtain the disclosure of personal and confidential census information was of concern to the group. Duncan reiterated the [Government Statement \(para 6.19\)](#) which details the undertaking he has given as Registrar General to protect personal census data against such requests.

5.7 The Committee discussed the perceived weaknesses in areas of the census programme where there was the potential for a breach of security, notably in the areas not involving technology. The privacy impact assessment document would address these areas and would be published on the GROS website when finalised.

6. **2011 Census Questionnaire – update and changes – Kirsty MacLean**

6.1 Since the publication of the draft 2011 Census household questionnaire with the Government Statement in December 2008, there have been changes made to the proposed questionnaire.

6.2 Work has progressed with the aim of fine tuning and designing a questionnaire that GROS are confident meets user needs. Testing of the questionnaire has included its first use in the 2009 Census Rehearsal, and cognitive testing involving the questions specifically identified as requiring some fine tuning:

- the long-term health conditions question;
- language questions; and
- the household income question.

The flow of the whole questionnaire was also tested to see how this worked for people. The result of the testing and the information gathered from the 2009 rehearsal has helped to inform the current questionnaire. The design of the front and instructions pages has been made simpler to give prominence to certain points, for example the internet completion option and the help available for people.

6.3 Population definitions for 2011 were agreed in mid-2009, harmonised across the whole of the UK.

Comments and discussion

6.4 A point was raised regarding the voluntary nature of the religion question which was highlighted in the introductory text of the questionnaire, but not at the actual question. Duncan explained that this format was taken from the 2001 Census questionnaire which had not been challenged at the time, but agreed to consider this issue again.

6.5 The inclusion of the British Sign Language, Scots and Gaelic options in the language question (question number 16) was commended. Prof. Ken Mackinnon asked for the process that Bòrd na Gàidhlig could use to request

a change to question 17 - to include similar options for Gaelic and Scots as given for English. Duncan explained that the questionnaire was mainly agreed with only small changes as a result of the parliamentary process at this stage. GROS were fairly content that the questions being asked on language (an increase to three from the one asked in 2001) provides the best solution available within the space restrictions on the questionnaire.

6.6 It was questioned if a way could be found to highlight the requirement to complete visitor questions, as one member found that, when completing the 2009 rehearsal questionnaire, he had almost forgotten the visitor section as there was no prompt to remember to complete it. GROS would consider this.

7. **2011 Census Publicity Strategy – Rona Dunbar**

7.1 Rona explained that the census has a publicity strategy and it is being reviewed following the 2009 Census Rehearsal evaluation. Communications and community liaison teams will work closer together to explain the benefits of the census and reduce the threat of under-enumeration by developing better engagement with communities.

7.2 All local authorities had identified Census Community Liaison officers; this is earlier than in 2001, with the benefit that they are involved in census activity from a much earlier date.

8. **Date of the next meeting**

8.1 The main topics for discussion at the next meeting will be:

- Community Engagement; and
- Communal Establishments & Vulnerable People.

8.2 Topics to be held over for subsequent meetings include:

- Outputs; and
- Statistical Disclosure Control

8.3 The next meeting is expected to be in early April and members will be canvassed for their availability.

General Register Office for Scotland

February 2010