



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dr Carolyn Wilkins
Chief Executive
Oldham Council
Level 3, Civic Centre
West Street
OLDHAM
OL1 1UG

Our Ref: KHM/PARK02002/02162079

28 September 2016

Dear Dr Wilkins

Thank you for your letters regarding full Council resolutions at meetings on 13th July and 7th September, received on 9th August and 27th September respectively. I apologise for the delay in sending a response to the July resolutions, which is due to the sheer volume of constituents' correspondence I have recently received.

I share the Council's concerns regarding guidelines from the DCLG on ethical investments. I agree with the Council that the proposed measures will undermine local authorities' ability to implement ethical procurement and pensions investments and goes against the Government's stated commitment to localism. This issue was raised in a Westminster Hall debate on 15th March 2016. I note that you have already written to the Secretary of State on this issue. If there are any actions you would like me to pursue following his response, please let me know.

On "super rats" I agree with you that rats are a danger to the health and well being of residents and reports of immunity to standard poisons is worrying. I have made representations to the appropriate Minister on behalf of the Council on this issue and will be in touch again when I receive a substantive response.

I commend the Council on the End Hunger Campaign, with its aim to ensure we build a town in which everyone has access to good food and no one goes to bed hungry. As Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions I know only too well how the Government's changes to the social security system, including waiting periods in Universal Credit, the recent Concentrix tax credits debacle, the effects of the Bedroom Tax, incorrect Work Capability Assessments and punitive sanctions (among others) are pushing low income families deep into poverty.

Our social security system at present is unfit for purpose and I will continue to do what I can to hold the Government to account in Parliament, as well as supporting local initiatives such as Oldham Foodbank and the Alt Café Breakfast Club. As ever, do let me know if there's anything else I can do to help support the campaign.

Debbie Abrahams MP is proud to represent the people of
Alexandra, Lees, Saddleworth, Shaw & Crompton, St Mary's, St James' and Waterhead

Website: www.debbieabrahams.org.uk Twitter: @debbie_abrahams

I appreciate you taking the time to contact me regarding the Royal British Legion's "Count Them In" campaign which calls for the inclusion of questions about the Armed Forces community in the next national census to ensure the needs of the Armed Forces community are fully met.

I made representations on this issue to the Cabinet Office, the Department responsible for statistics, including the census, on 22nd June 2016. The correspondence was transferred to the UK Statistics Authority and I enclose a copy of the response I received.

As you can see, the Office for National Statistics currently considers that other information sources could be used, separate from the census, to collect data on veterans and their families. However, work is ongoing with the Ministry of Defence to look at a range of options to best meet users' needs.

Thank you again for taking the time to make me aware of the Council's recent resolutions.

Yours sincerely



DEBBIE ABRAHAMS MP
Oldham East and Saddleworth

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Website: www.debbieabrahams.org.uk Twitter: @debbie_abrahams



**UK Statistics
Authority**

UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
SW1V 1QQ

Tel: 020 7592 8620
E-mail: national.statistician@statistics.gov.uk
www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/about-the-national-statistician/

John Pullinger CB CStat | National Statistician

Debbie Abrahams MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

15 AUG 2016

11 August 2016

Dear Ms Abrahams,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am replying to your correspondence concerning enquiries received from constituents about requirements for information on the armed forces and the importance of including a question in the 2021 Census.

On 23 May the Office for National Statistics published their current view on the topics proposed for inclusion in the 2021 Census; this includes a specific report outlining their view on requirements for information on armed forces. Our current position follows a public consultation seeking evidence on the information needs for the 2021 Census which generated nearly 1,100 responses. The report may be accessed from the attached link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/census/censustransformationprogramme/consultations/the2021censusinitialviewoncontentforenglandandwales/topicreport07armedforces.pdf>

The Office for National Statistics recognises that there is a clear need for information on the armed forces. The issue is how that information should be produced. In this case there might be administrative data sources, such as service and pension records collected by the armed forces and the Ministry of Defence, which could be used to identify former service men and women. We therefore currently consider that it would be better to make use of existing administrative data rather than ask a question of all 26 million households in England and Wales in 2021.

The Office for National Statistics is responsible for the census in England and Wales. In Scotland and Northern Ireland these responsibilities are carried out by National Records for Scotland and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. We are working cooperatively with colleagues in the devolved administrations, with the Ministry of Defence and other interested parties to consider a range of options to best meet users' needs.

Yours sincerely

John Pullinger

