

General Purposes and Licensing Committee
10th February 2016

Executive Assistants: Annual Report 2015/2016

Councillor Lydia Buttinger
(Executive Assistant to the Environment Portfolio Holder)

This was my first year in this post after having in previous years held the post of Deputy Environment PDS chair. This was a great opportunity to see the action from the other side and I have been shadowing the Portfolio Holder on a number of areas providing comment and support where required.

With the outsourcing of large parts of the service, there have been numerous changes and challenges to grapple with which has made it particularly busy but interesting year! For instance the changes in waste management contract meant daily monitoring of targets such as missed collections was required to ensure that standards were maintained. Fix my street is providing an increasing popular and useful way of residents logging issues as they arise but also involves monitoring to ensure that issues are being dealt with effectively.

There have been a number of areas that I have particularly focused on. I have worked with officers to launch a crackdown on Blue Badge Fraud and we have had a number of successful prosecutions and headlines in local papers. We are working with other Boroughs to generate interest in this area and help to deliver a cross-Borough clamp down on this issue.

I have also been working with officers to looking at street cleaning schedules to identify the areas which would benefit from weekend or evening sweeps. This is particularly important for areas heavily parked around stations or shops during the day and ensures that resources are put to use in the most effective way.

Finally I have been looking at the coordination and management of friends groups in the Borough. These are a vital and highly valued part of the Borough and we have been looking at how to better manage and coordinate the large number of excellent volunteers that we have.

Councillor Will Harmer
(Executive Assistant to the Leader)

(Report to follow)

Councillor Tom Philpott
(Executive Assistant to the Education Portfolio Holder)

Since my appointment as Executive Support Assistant to the Portfolio Holder for Education in May 2015 I have worked on a wide range of specific projects at the request of the Portfolio Holder as well as assisting him with a number of on-going issues and challenges.

Education landscape

One of the key elements of prior knowledge I have been able to bring to this role has been my experience or working within the academies and free schools movement for almost five years. This has allowed me to assist Councillor Fortune in ensuring that Bromley has the right position, approach and contacts to take optimum advantage of the government's education reforms.

In particular I have been able to provide briefings and insight into:

- The implications of the Education Act 2011 (and the subsequent updated Department for Education Guidance published following the 2015 General Election).
- The role of the Regional Schools Commissioner
- The Free Schools application process administered directly by the Department for Education
- The Education Funding Agency

Pupil place planning

I have worked with the Head of Strategic Place Planning Rob Bollen and the council's external consultant Babcock on a major review of projected pupil need into the future. This review has compared data from the Greater London Authority, ONS, birth records, migration data and the school census to attempt to ascertain the likely need for schools places in the borough over the coming years, with further analysis of other data sets such as GP registrations will follow. This piece of work will significantly inform the Portfolio Holder's thinking and decision making in this area and has already influenced our most recent primary and secondary school development plans. It will also be used to keep ward members more widely informed of projected need, and issues in their wards (see below).

Engaging ward members

Upon appointment it became clear that the scale of school expansion (both existing schools and new schools) would require a renewed emphasis on communications with both the public and ward members.

To this end I have been working with key officers to develop Ward Profile documents (proposed to go live shortly) that will give a real-time update on the place planning issues and proposals within wards.

It is hoped that these will give members an easy to read, up to date and relevant snap-shot of the challenges in this area and where plans to address them have gotten to.

Supporting ward members

Upon coming to office Councillor Fortune conducted a review of specific local issues (beyond school place planning) that were of concern to local members and I worked with him to monitor and track this feedback and move ahead with follow up actions where appropriate. I have continued to act as 'point person' on smaller ward specific issues such as minor improvements to relevant sites, as and when requested by Councillor Fortune.

Primary performance

More recently, as mentioned by Councillor Fortune at the most recent Education PDS committee, I have been asked to conduct and have begun an analysis of Bromley primary school performance. We have started to compare our performance with both London and national averages as well as our neighbouring boroughs and county using metrics including:

- Key Stage 2 performance
- performance of pupils qualifying for free schools meals vs those who do not
- Ofsted grade, against our nearest neighbouring boroughs.

Our aim is to ensure that the borough can best support and work in partnership with all of our schools, including the many academies and help make certain that our strong secondary school performance is mirrored at primary.

Issues

In addition to these specific projects I have also been able, again using my prior professional experience, to support the Portfolio Holder in managing a number of issues. For instance, helping to draft information for members and the public on the recent proposals to change the Adult Education Service and by speaking for Councillor Fortune at the Planning Committee deciding the Harris Beckenham application.

In addition to the work outlined above I have also served as a member of two Executive Working Groups (one on Child Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting and one on Special Educational Needs). I have also represented Councillor Fortune at various sub-committees and working groups of the Education PDS.

Councillor Diane Smith

(Executive Assistant to the Portfolio Holder for Care Services)

This has been my fifth year in post as Executive Assistant to the Portfolio Holder for Care Services, a year which has been particularly challenging when taking into account the difficult funding situation of the Local Authority and a forecast of several years ahead of strong financial restraint.

With this in mind, much of my work over the last 12 months has been focussed on supporting the Portfolio Holder to deliver a balanced budget, manage Portfolio cost pressures and deliver a range of budget saving options.

In this respect I have continued to attend weekly meetings with Associate Directors of key service areas, the Director of Public Health and other senior operational personnel, scrutinising the quality of services, reviewing budget lines and looking at transforming the way in which services are delivered to ensure that the Local Authority continues to provide quality services to the most vulnerable residents within our community.

I have also attended Cabinet on occasions to contribute to the wider discussion with other Councillor colleagues relating to the Care Services Portfolio and health agendas as well as other aspects of Council business.

Work with partner organisations, key stakeholders and service providers has continued over the last year with visits being undertaken to older peoples' day centres, supported living accommodation for learning disability service users, and extra care housing facilities.

The last 12 months have also included specific meetings with health colleagues, the CCG, Kings Healthcare, and community health providers as work to progress the agenda to integrate health and social care by 2020 gathers pace. As in previous years I have welcomed these opportunities to use my clinical and managerial experience gained by working in the NHS locally at senior level, to contribute to these discussions. Looking ahead this particular work stream will continue to be at the forefront of future Portfolio plans in order to ensure that services for our residents work together to give person centred and co-ordinated care, and deliver better outcomes.

In my role as Executive Assistant I have continued to deputise for the Portfolio Holder in times of his absence, ensuring that there is continuity and timely resolution of issues raised by residents across the Borough.

I have also continued to assist Ward Councillors and individuals who have contacted me with blue badge and freedom pass applications and queries, and also other more general requests for help with social/ health issues relating to our residents.

In the Spring I attended the Adult Services Stakeholder conference which focussed on the Borough wide priority of moving Bromley towards recognised dementia friendly community status, and also represented the Portfolio Holder in the reconvened Care Homes Reference Group, overseeing the relocation of service users from Lubbock House in Orpington to other extra care housing facilities within the Borough.

In the Autumn, on behalf of the Portfolio Holder, I attended a London Councils meeting regarding the regionalisation of adoption services, a meeting which was particularly relevant with my on-going work as a member of the Adoption Panel and Executive Working Party on Child Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting.