

**Decision Maker:** GENERAL PURPOSES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

**Date:** Tuesday 12 February 2019

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

**Title:** EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS - ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

**Contact Officer:** Graham Walton, Democratic Services Manager  
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**Chief Officer:** Mark Bowen, Director of Corporate Services

**Ward:** All

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1. Reason for report

1.1 As part of this Committee's decisions in relation to the Members' Allowances Scheme 2008/09, it was agreed that this Committee should receive an annual report from each of the Executive Assistants outlining the work they have undertaken over the past year in justification of the receipt of their allowance (currently £3,575pa). This decision was reaffirmed by the Committee at subsequent meetings, and is referred to in the Guidance Note: Executive Assistants at Appendix 7 to the Council's constitution. The following Executive Assistants were appointed by the Leader for the 2018/19 Council year -

Adult Care & Health - Cllr Angela Page  
Children, Education & Families - Cllr Nicky Dykes  
Environment & Community Services - Cllr Kira Gabbert  
Renewal, Recreation & Housing - Cllr Hannah Gray  
Resources, Commissioning & Contract Management- Cllr Gary Stevens  
Executive Assistant to the Leader - Cllr Aisha Cuthbert

1.2 Reports have been requested from the current Executive Assistants for 2018/19 and are attached as Appendix A. Any outstanding report will be circulated as soon as it is available.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION**

**The Committee is requested to consider and, if appropriate, comment on the submissions received from the Executive Assistants relating to the work they have undertaken during 2018/19.**

## Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: Not Applicable
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## Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy:
  2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council:
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## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost: £21,450
  2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost: £21,450
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Democratic Representation
  4. Total current budget for this head: £1,067,960
  5. Source of funding: 2018/19 Revenue Budget
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## Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): Not applicable
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Not applicable
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## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None:
  2. Call-in: Not Applicable: This report does not involve an executive decision
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## Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: Not applicable
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## Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Six Councillors were appointed as Executive Assistants for 2018/19.
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## Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not applicable

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children, Policy, Financial, Personnel, Legal, Procurement
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Previous reports to General Purposes & Licensing Committee

Reports from Executive Assistants, 2018/19

**Cllr Angela Page,  
Executive Assistant to the Adult Care & Health Portfolio Holder**

This is my second year in the position of Executive Assistant to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Care & Health, Cllr Diane Smith.

My main focus continues to be the monitoring of the work of the Contract Compliance and Monitoring team. Following the changes that were implemented previously, I have now worked with officers in the development of a Dashboard as a departmental management tool which enables a quick reference to care homes used in the Borough and is used to update the Portfolio Holder on a regular basis. A version of the Dashboard to support the domiciliary care framework monitoring is now in the process of being developed.

At the beginning of each month the Contract Compliance and Monitoring team supply a set of spreadsheets which set out comprehensive details of which monitoring visits have been undertaken and are planned and now also provide a dialogue for each individual provider, an update I asked to be added. These reports cover not just care homes and domiciliary care services but also extra care housing and learning disability & mental health facilities.

The Portfolio Holder previously accompanied contract visits but this has now been delegated to me as part of the overall task of monitoring and working with the department.

Additionally, I receive a weekly report from the CQC setting out which inspection reports are published. If appropriate I follow up with the contracts monitoring team to establish what actions (if any) need to be taken.

I have also taken on the responsibility for monitoring the responses to complaints received directly to the complaints team in respect of Adult Care Services. I receive a weekly update on the outstanding complaints and I also meet with the Head of Service for Customer Engagement and Complaints on a regular basis to discuss individual complaints and get a general overview.

As well as the specific projects mentioned above, each month I also attend at least two of the weekly meetings that the Portfolio Holder has with the Interim Chief Executive and senior departmental officers.

Throughout the year I have attended a number of visits with the Portfolio Holder.

In February we visited two Adult Day Care Centres – The Saxon Centre in Orpington and Bertha James in Bromley. At each we met with members of the boards as well as interacting with the residents visiting the centres.

During the year we have also visited a number of Extra Care Housing providers. In March we visited Apsley Court in St Mary Cray. In August we visited Norton Court and Sutherland Court in Beckenham. In September we visited Regency Court and Crown Meadow Court on Bromley Common. On each of these visits we speak with staff and residents to get feedback on the care being given and received.

I also joined the Portfolio Holder in a walkabout in July in the Adult Care departments where we spent time talking to the staff.

I also took part in the general visits arranged for councillors to the Florence House Nursing Home in Bromley and to Bromley Healthcare where we were all given a presentation on their work as well as meeting staff.

In April, I was invited in my role of Executive Assistant to visit the Beechmore Court Care Home in Bickley to view the facilities on offer and speak with the board.

I have represented the Portfolio Holder at further meetings of Care Home providers in Bromley where representatives are invited to come along to discuss concerns and issues and ideas.

I also attend the Care Services PDS meetings as an observer.

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**Cllr Nicky Dykes**  
**Executive Assistant to the Children, Education & Families Portfolio Holder**

It's been a busy nine months since taking on the Executive Assistant role to Cllr Peter Fortune, Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families. A lot has been done but there is still more to do. In summary here is an outline of the work undertaken so far and what I will be focussing on over the coming months.

**Activity Undertaken**

1. I have been keen to get to know the department well and have spent time meeting key teams on a one to one basis covering SEN provision, Early Years, strategy and education. These are the areas that are of interest to me and where I felt I could make a difference.
2. The department does great work and part of my role is to help shine a light on this and help the council programmes and initiatives reach more Bromley families. A good example of this is the Mayor of London's Healthy Early Years London programme. The initiative aims to encourage early years' and childminders to focus on health and wellbeing to support the achievement and education of young children. Bromley is outperforming the rest of London in both uptake and awards of bronze, silver and gold. I was delighted to attend the award ceremony last year with the acting Chief Executive which was covered in the local paper - <https://www.newshopper.co.uk/news/17188722.healthy-early-years-programme-gets-off-to-a-flying-start-in-bromley/>. We are now discussing how we push this further and get even more providers on board.
3. I have been delighted to join the SEN Governance Board and am looking at how members can help promote the Local Offer.
4. An initiative I have been very passionate about is involving families in policy development and improving communication. I have therefore been very excited to join forces with Cllr Aisha Cuthbert in launching a new playgroup - Talk, Tots and Tumble. It is held on a Saturday every other month in the free soft play area at The Glades. The purpose of hosting this on a weekend and in a child friendly environment is to make it more convenient for parents and carers to attend.

The sessions are advertised on social media, including on the Glades Twitter account and website as well as posters in Central Library and in our Children and Family Centres. We were pleased that our first session was covered in the Bromley Times. You can find out more on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/talktotstumble/>.

Education



Cllr Aisha Cuthbert and Cllr Nicky Dykes have launched Talk, Tots and Tumble. Picture: AISHA CUTHBERT

**Two Bromley councillors have launched a new playgroup to help parents engage in Bromley's family policy and development services.**

Mum of three Cllr Nicky Dykes and mum-to-be Cllr Aisha Cuthbert initiated Talk, Tots and

Tumble.

The playgroup will be held on the last Saturday morning of every other month from 10am – 11.30am at the soft play area of the Glades.

The first session was held by the councillors, who represent Bromley Town and Shortlands wards, on Saturday

October 27 and received positive reviews.

Cllr Dykes explained: "It seemed necessary to create a new forum to make family information services available at a time and location that will be convenient for parents and carers as well as being fun for children."

They have been well attended with areas of interest being childcare funding and healthcare services. We have created information packs to hand out at the sessions which have been popular, with residents very much appreciating the opportunity to discuss issues of importance to them and their families.

5. Attending the Children, Education and Families Select committee to support Cllr Fortune and the Budget Sub Committee.

**Areas of Focus Going Forward**

Whilst much of the work outlined above will of course continue I have identified with the Portfolio Holder and officers the areas I would like to focus on next.

1. Working with Rachel Dunley we will be investigating how the services provided at our children centres can be promoted and communicated to reach even more of the families in the Borough. Clearly setting out the journey from birth through to key parenting milestones and the support services available. This is likely to include social media as well.
2. School places – the school places planning group will be meeting soon, and I am currently in discussions about how this can evolve to incorporate a greater parent voice and community involvement.
3. Early years sufficiency report – the Borough is required to provide secure and sufficient child care places and a report setting out how this is achieved. I have recently met with the new early years manager to discuss this and shaping the content. This will be worked on over the coming months.

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**Cllr Kira Gabbert  
Executive Assistant to the Environment & Community Services Portfolio Holder**

Having been appointed by Cllr William Huntington-Thresher in May 2018, this is my first year in the position of an Executive Assistant. Environment portfolio covers a vast range of issues and I am grateful for the opportunity to learn about its' various aspects.

The Portfolio Holder asked me to continually monitor Fix My Street (“FMS”) as it was felt that the communications aspect of this extremely useful tool could be improved. I am monitoring FMS threads for different Wards on a weekly basis, following up with the service leads when it is felt that an intervention might be required. I also receive fortnightly RAG reports to help me with this task.

As part of the FMS initiative, I have recently attended a meeting with the Street Lighting Project Board, to discuss how we can work together with our service provider to ensure continuous improvements in handling of FMS inquiries. I have requested for the changes in frequency of FMS updates to be implemented in order to improve the communications aspect of FMS for our residents.

At the request of the Portfolio Holder, I have been liaising with Lorraine McQuillan, Town Centres & BID (Business Improvement District) Development Manager. Our aim is to closely engage with the BID managers to ensure the BIDs’ needs are being met in the context of an agreed framework. The next meeting with the BID Managers is scheduled to take place in the second half of February. At this meeting the new Environment contract can be outlined and there will also be an opportunity for the Managers to raise any other specific issues. Going forward we will look to have a meeting every 3 months with all the BID Managers and the relevant officers from the Council.

I am working with the Neighbourhood Management Team with a view to introduce a street care plan and eventually present this to the Environment PDS for their consideration and approval. As a separate initiative, I am continuing discussions with the officers aimed at reducing the use of pesticides in the Borough’s parks and green spaces through collaboration with IdVerde and looking into possibilities to trial and employ eco-friendly weed-control methods such as hot-foam technology.

I very much enjoyed representing the Portfolio Holder and LBB at the opening of FC Elmstead new clubhouse at Chislehurst Recreation Ground, and at a recent launch of a crowdfunding campaign by Friends of Kings Meadow community group. These had been very positive experiences, as I was able to see what real difference community groups could make with the right support from the Council.

I have attended meetings with the Portfolio Holder as and when required as well as the Environment PDS meetings.

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**Cllr Hannah Gray,  
Executive Assistant to the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Portfolio Holder**

I have been delighted to continue as Executive Assistant to Cllr Morgan since being invited to the post in 2017.

In my role, I have attended monthly meetings with Cllr Morgan and on occasions when requested the weekly meeting between himself, Colin Brand, and his team which covered a varied and wide range of issues that are dealt with within the Portfolio.

My initial project has been to develop a strategy to ensure that Bromley has the best coverage possible for both Broadband and Mobile. In order to progress this project I have met with Kevin Munnely and other professionals and specialists in this sphere; researched the current situation and providers that would be able to offer a better service and will continue to negotiate with potential providers. I have previously had meetings with Steve Barnes (deputy chair of Downe

residents association and former Senior BT Executive in this field) who successfully increased the coverage in the Downe area and whose knowledge has been invaluable and will be very useful going forward. I have also met with local Tier 1 providers who are keen to be involved once we have the final completed information back that we have commissioned, which is unfortunately taking longer than anticipated.

I have attended Bromley Economic Partnership meetings and increased the awareness of the meeting by inviting additional influential businesses. Cllr Morgan has identified the benefits that can be had from creating an open networking session in conjunction with the Bromley Economic Partnership meetings. Cllr Morgan is aware of my extensive networking experience with small and medium size business and has therefore tasked me with expanding his idea. I have developed this in order for local businesses to strengthen their relationship, communication, mutual support and provide an environment for off agenda discussions.

I will continue to work closely and promote LBB with small to medium size business in Bromley at the many networking events I attend throughout the Borough to ensure businesses are aware of, and participating in, the support Bromley Council facilitates.

I have deputised for Cllr Morgan at the Bromley BID meetings and liaised with the BID teams to offer assistance on projects and surveys.

I have also attended Night Tsar meetings representing Bromley during discussions at City Hall re London's night time economy and the part Bromley plays.

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**Cllr Gary Stevens,  
Executive Assistant to the Resources, Commissioning & Contract Management Portfolio  
Holder**

(Report to follow)

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**Cllr Aisha Cuthbert,  
Executive Assistant to the Executive Assistant to the Leader - Portfolio Holder**

I was appointed Executive Assistant to the Leader, Cllr Colin Smith in May 2018. This is my first year as an EA and I have enjoyed getting to know various different departments and working with Cllr Smith on tackling some of the challenges we're facing as a borough.

In November, I had the opportunity to speak at the Executive, Resources and Contracts Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee about my role and some of things I have achieved so far. I highlighted some of the work I've been focusing on in relation to housing given that there are significant resource and financial pressures on temporary accommodation in the borough. I also highlighted a new project I started with Cllr Dykes to reach out to Bromley's busy families about the various programmes and resources available for families and children.

I've been working with the housing department to ascertain policies that can help reduce our temporary accommodation costs and other challenges that relate to the housing crisis. Some of the areas that I have looked at include:

- Working with the portfolio holder for housing and officers on potential projects and programmes that will address the financial pressures associated with homelessness.

- Looking at our relationship with housing associations and investigate potential regeneration sites that could increase the number of social homes in the borough, helping to reduce our reliance on TA.
- Research other housing policies that will help the “stretched middle” in Bromley – those that are earning too much money to qualify for social rent, but who struggle to afford market rent.
- Looking at keyworker accommodation and the types of professions we need to attract to the borough like social workers and healthcare professionals.

As the EA to the Leader, it was important for me to look at other areas that I could support and it was clear that although Bromley offers some fantastic resources and programmes to families and children, reaching out and getting the message to parents and carers is challenging. Cllr Nicola Dykes and I started a new initiative which seeks to address the communication gap, called "Talk, Tots and Tumble". The programme brings information to Bromley's young families at the soft play area in The Glades. Our aim is to bring a new policy topic to every event we host to showcase the fantastic services that LBB offers. At the time of writing, we have hosted two events, the first was on family policies and the second held at the end of January was on health. We intend to hold a third in the spring on housing and related services.

I have enjoyed my time so far as EA to the Leader and I look forward to continuing to work with, and, support Cllr Colin Smith.