

General Purposes and Licensing Committee - 5th April 2022

10. Reports from Executive Assistants

Cllr Will Rowlands, Executive Assistant to the Environment and Community Services Portfolio Holder

This is my third year of holding the position as assistant to Cllr Huntington-Thresher. Last year, I commented on the impact the Coronavirus had had on the department and the ways in which we altered some of the methods used to serve the people of Bromley. This year, we have still had to face some of the challenges Coronavirus caused last year, as well as learning to accommodate some of the new challenges it has brought.

Before I go into any further detail, I would like to thank all the officers within the department who have, under tremendous pressure which at times would have felt mountainous, gone about their work to serve Bromley and it's residents with the upmost professionalism throughout. Most importantly however, I believe that the residents of this fantastic Borough deserve an enormous thanks for their patience, consideration and understanding during the short periods over the past two years where Covid consequences directly impacted on the services they receive.

This year, some of the responsibilities I held remained the same, with some new responsibilities undertaken. I will now go through what I have been working on over the past twelve months.

Fly tipping

This particular subject is a pet hate of mine and I'm sure this also applies to anyone who cares for where they live. Fly tipping leaves a dirty stain on our environment which can leave substantial and damaging consequences on our communities with an impact potentially lasting for years. Although we have seen levels of inconsiderate individuals fly tipping continually drop since it's peak in the early half of 2020, in my view, one incident is too many.

Following a meeting with myself, Jim Cowen, fellow officers and residents of the Gefferys Estate, the estate is to become a case study of fly tipping and general recycling habits. I am also in discussions with Clarion Housing Group who are the estate landlord and also suffer the consequences of this vile crime about striking up a partnership where we can use some more of their estates for case study.

Fly tipping still occurs throughout the Borough in urban, suburban and rural areas. This is why we are also talking with other local authorities to find out how they tackle this menace and what we can learn to improve. We are also finding out the punishments our colleagues in other Council's give so we can in turn look at taking tougher action.

Recycling

This is a project which was put on hold due to social distancing measures and the overall impact of Coronavirus last year. As a result of this, it has given the opportunity to slightly alter the way in which to measure how recycling is conducted in flats and merge this

project into the fly tipping project - performing a general case study of how wider estates, as opposed to a compact group of properties recycle. This will then provide a more visible analysis with more reliable data to ensure future recycling targets can become more accurate.

Fix My Street

Arguably the most important task I'm assigned, Fix My Street is arguably the core of the Environment departments operations. It helps the council to maintain the high standards it prides itself on while also allowing the council to identify patterns emerging in cases such as fly tipping or if we have an underperforming contractor. This is a service which identifies more than any other how the council is performing in general.

Where I acknowledge that there have been cases of resident or Councillor frustration over the past year and a view that the service isn't running as efficiently as they would like, the Council does have to prioritise reports which are the most serious. I'm pleased to say that the vast majority of people remain satisfied with the action taken, and the speed which it is taken at. It is down to the effective work carried out by Jonathan Richards that Bromley Council is recognised as providing one of the best Fix My Street services in the Country, and subsequently, there is no surprise that we are nominated and win plenty of awards for our service as a result.

Snow Friends

With the threat of a hard winter looming, Cllr Huntington-Thresher decided to reignite the flames of the Snow Friends project to free the Borough in case we all got snowed in.

This was advertised with a presentation streamed live via YouTube. While, on the hottest day of the year in blistering sun, I boasted that Council Gritters protect a road infrastructure spreading as far and wide as the equivalent of from the Civic Centre to the Blackpool Tower, our live stream wasn't as far reaching as expected. On the positive side, we did however manage to get through to new recruits who were clearly won over by the prospect of being armed with a brand new snow shovel!

Thankfully, we didn't have the winter of discontent first feared but rest assured that this Borough is ready to fight the snow when it does decide to attack in future.

Electric Charging Points

A project which began in the wake of Coronavirus and having nothing else to do. This year we continued to find partners who we could launch a charging scheme with which would, not only help the motorists of Bromley have more opportunity to have greener cars in the wake of the Mayor of London's discriminatory tax on hard working families and businesses, but also provide the Council with income to reinvest in the Borough.

I had been in discussions with Connected Kerb and while they presented a very good proposal, we didn't feel it was right for Bromley. We are still talking with other companies.

**Cllr Kieran Terry,
Executive Assistant to the Children, Education and Families Portfolio Holder**

This was my second year holding the position of Executive Assistant to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Families.

The update below to the General Purposes and Licensing Committee summarises my main areas of focus during the year.

During the year, I have been involved with School Places Planning, which continued to highlight a particular focus for an increase in provision locally for children with SEN. It is pleasing to see the continued drive within the Council to provide additional school places for children with special educational needs, both as a way of improving education for these children by providing local high quality school places and also from a budgetary perspective for the portfolio. I have also attended the Council's Budget Sub-Committee during the year, which highlighted some of the budgetary challenges the department has in forthcoming years.

During the past year the Children, Education and Families Portfolio has continued to react with great resilience and dynamism to the continued challenges presented to it, thanks to the hard work of Council staff and other related parties. I have really enjoyed being involved with this and seeing first-hand the work performed to ensure services continue to operate despite the challenges the ongoing pandemic has brought.

I have represented the London Borough of Bromley at a number of London-wide meetings. In particular I have found it very interesting to witness some of the issues raised by other councils, in particular how well Bromley's Children's Services are performing and how we continue to be at the forefront in the field.

It has also been interesting attending the Council's Corporate Parenting meetings in particular seeing the great care Bromley Council's staff are taking in this area. I have also joined Marjorie McClure School in Chislehurst as the Local Authority Governor and it has been a great opportunity to contribute directly to the education of disabled children. Lastly I have also continued to build relationships with key community groups in the borough. I have continued my appointment as a trustee at Bromley Y, a local organisation that works with schools and other key agencies to promote the wellbeing and mental health of children and families.