

## **COUNCIL MEETING 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **Report Of Councillor Gwyneth Bryant - Communications**

I mentioned in my last report, that we began work in May of this year to produce a Communications Strategy for the Community Services Directorate to pilot the methodology and subsequently roll it out corporately. However, it became clear that key elements of the strategy had corporate implications. It was therefore decided to move straight to the production of a Corporate Communications Strategy. The work on the strategy has been divided into six key areas:

- Consultation
- Public Relations
- Media Relations
- E-Communications
- Corporate Branding and Image
- Internal Communications

We held an informal discussion on Communications for members at the Review Board meeting in November. On January 6 2004 we are holding a *workshop* for all members so you can raise any issues and appraise what we do well and what we can do to improve communications both internally and externally – between members, staff, the public and other stakeholders. I would encourage as many as possible to join in and express your views. The draft strategy will then go to the Review Board for comment at the end of January.

Communications is playing a vital role in telling Council Tenants about the **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Stock Options Appraisal Project**. This project is one of the biggest exercises that Taunton Deane Borough Council will face with its communication and consultation challenges. Because of the complexities of the Stock Options Appraisal a dedicated **Communications & Consultation Strategy** was launched during October. This strategy helps explain the key elements of communication that run through project and complete with detailed work plans.

**Vision for Taunton** – we formed a joint PR team with Somerset County Council and the RDA and an exhibition on the Vision at the Brewhouse Theatre was launched last month. To help engage even more people in the project and increase awareness we have extended the exhibition period. Further displays have been held at Taunton Library, in reception here at Deane House and it will be on show at the Old Market Centre on 15 – 18 December.

**Wellsprings** – it is exciting to report that we are now preparing details for a successful launch to open this centre during the first weekend in January. It should be a fun weekend and offers the opportunity for all to try out the

facilities free and experience what a wonderful venue this will be for local residents.

**Deane Dispatch** – the December issue is about to drop on to the doorsteps of homes across Taunton Deane. This issue covers many of the major stories that have been highlighted in the press over recent months and many that haven't made the headlines but are equally interesting.

**The Media** – we have attracted wide media coverage this past two months with articles in the press covering much of the Council's work with the community. Areas covered include the Litter Hotline, Crisp and Clean, Recycling, The Vision for Taunton, Station Road Junction, Housing grants, the Local Plan, Wellington pavilion, and the Cornhill. We are told the better informed our public is about the work the Council does, the better the levels of satisfaction they express. Both officers and members have been proactive. Not just in the press, but on the radio and TV too. My thanks go to everyone who has contributed in such a positive manner.

**Councillor Gwyneth Bryant**