

COUNCIL MEETING 22 APRIL 2003

REPORT OF COUNCILOR RICHARD LEES - COMMUNICATIONS

For us all now some projects are drawing to a close while some work remains constant. For example in my brief for improved and early information I am pleased to note that the new Council tax booklet has proved a particular success for at least one part of our community.

As a result of the clear and straightforward explanation of Council Tax benefit in the booklet accompanying each council tax bill at the end of March, a great many extra telephone calls have been received. Staff in the Benefits section have been able to help new claimants to improve their financial circumstances as a direct result of our investment in an easily understandable guide. I know Members will welcome as I do this opportunity to develop the quality of life for residents in this way.

As an aside, meeting people in my Ward over the last few days has shown me the benefit of sending out postal vote forms with the Council tax details - people are telling me that they are going to use these.

The drive to improve our communications remains constant however and I am pleased to note that a pilot communications strategy is being shaped in the Community Services Directorate that when completed later this year will be of benefit as a model across the Council.

In these reports I always like to mention that this year is designated as the European Year of the Disabled. You will be pleased to hear that the Council has developments underway in a number of areas to improve access to our buildings, literature and website.

Richard Lees