
ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the draft Annual Report for Members' consideration. The Annual Report is based on the vision and objectives in place for the 2014/15 municipal year.

2 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

- 2.1 The Annual Report includes summarised financial information for the financial year 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. The Financial Statements for the year are signed off by the Assistant Director - Resources Services, as the Responsible Officer, in line with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011. The Financial Statements will be presented to Members after they have been audited by the External Auditors, at the Audit Committee on 15 September 2015, together with the External Auditor's report on its audit work. In the meantime, a copy of the draft Financial Statements will be placed in the Members' Library and published on the Council's website. Further copies of the Financial Statements are available on request from the Assistant Director – Resources Services. The Annual Report will be published on the website, with hard copies available on request.
- 2.2 A copy of the information presented in the Annual Report will be included in the autumn edition of the Council's newspaper, Rochford District Matters, in order to give it as wide an audience as possible amongst our residents.
- 2.3 Hard copies of the Annual Report will be available on request and provided to the local libraries, the media and both Council reception areas.

3 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Failure to report on performance means that the Council is missing the opportunity to let residents and interested organisations know what has been delivered and achieved during the year.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 By restricting production of the Annual Report to the website and Rochford District Matters, with hard copies available in public areas and on request, costs will be kept to a minimum. The main cost is in officer time in compiling the report.

5 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES**

- (1) That, subject to Member comments and changes resulting from the audit of the accounts, the Annual Report is agreed for publication.

- (2) That the audited Financial Statements for 2014/15 be presented to September's Audit Committee meeting for approval with the External Auditor's report.



Joseph Raveendran

Assistant Director – Resources Services

Background Papers:-

None.

For further information please contact Joseph Raveendran on:-

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If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

Annual Report 2014-15



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1 Introduction

We are pleased to introduce this report which will provide an overview of the Council's performance, spending and financial position for 2014/15 and aim to show what has been achieved in terms of service delivery and outcomes for our residents.

2014/15 was another challenging year with further changes in Government funding. The Council again had some tough decisions to take to balance the budget. The delivery of the achievements highlighted in this report during a time of unprecedented changes in Local Government, with maintenance of a good level of performance across the Council, demonstrates the Council's ability to cope with these tough times.

The Council has adopted a 'vision' that will inspire the organisation to continue to deliver its services to the high standards that have been set. To achieve this vision we will focus on three key themes: Place, Homes and Economic Growth. We continue to strive to create an environment that is vibrant, safe, sustainable and modern. We cannot do this on our own and we have been working hard to develop networks through the public, private and community sectors within the District, ensuring that this Council is seen as a proactive partner to deliver for the community.

We hope you find the content of this Annual Report useful and informative and we look forward to another successful year.



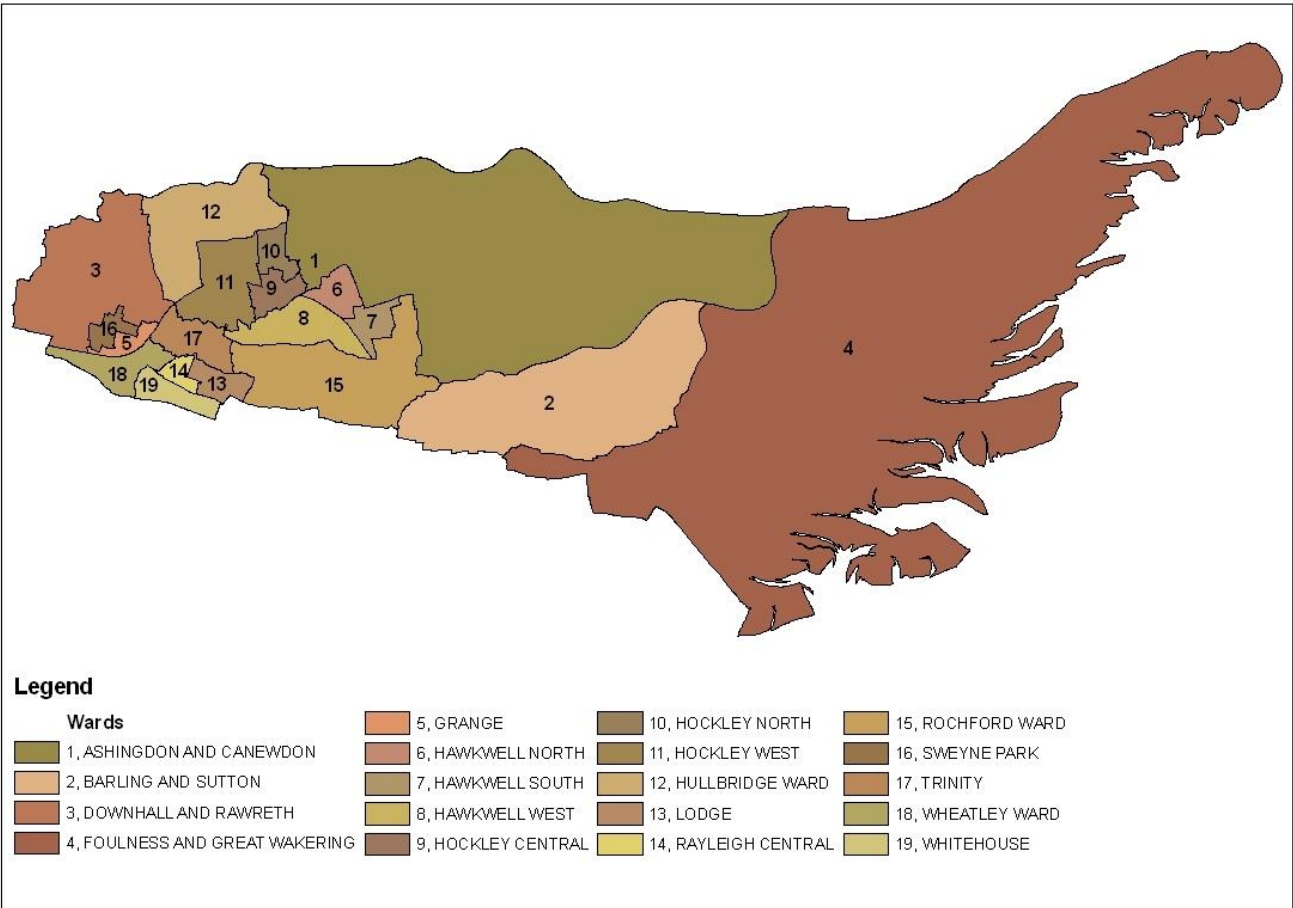
Terry Cutmore
Leader of the Council



Amar Dave
Chief Executive

2 Facts and Figures about Rochford District Council

- The 2011 Census showed that Rochford District had a population of 83,287, compared to 78,700 in 2001 – a 5.8% increase.
- Rochford ranks 299 out of 326 authorities nationally (1 is the most deprived and 326 the least).
- 84% of homes within the District are owner occupied and 8.5% of households are privately rented – Census 2011.
- 4.4% of Rochford residents are unemployed, compared to a regional figure of 5.2% and a national figure of 6.2% (nomisweb Jan 2014 – Dec 2014).
- Rochford Council employs approximately 189 full-time equivalent members of staff, with key services (e.g. refuse collection, street cleansing, and leisure management) contracted to the private sector.
- The Council Tax base was 29,313 and the average Band D Council Tax bill in 2014/15 was £1,546.20.
- The annual revenue budget for 2014/15 was £10.40m, compared to £10.09m in 2013/14.



3 Our Councillors

Rochford District Council has 39 Councillors representing the 19 wards across the District.

The Chairman of the Council for 2014/15 was Councillor Mrs June Lumley, and the Vice-Chairman was Councillor Mrs Heather Glynn.

For further information about the Council, please visit our website – www.rochford.gov.uk

4 Our Services

Local Government in Essex is largely structured into what is commonly termed a ‘three-tier’ structure, with responsibilities and service provision shared between District, Parish and County Councils.

For the District of Rochford, Essex County Council, Rochford District Council and the Town and Parish Councils work together with other partners to provide a large range of services to the public.

The functions of Rochford District Council as from 1 February 2015 include:-

Customer, Revenues and Benefits

Services: Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits, Debt

Environmental Services: Open Spaces, Streetscene, Car Parks/Transport, Emergency Planning

Planning Services: Planning, Building Control

Resources Services: Payments and Income, Accountancy, Performance and Risk

Transformational Services: Human Resources, Communications, ICT, Administrative Support

Legal Services: Legal, Partnerships, Licensing, Audit, Overview, Health and Safety, Information

Democratic Services: Support Services, Elections, Member Services

Community and Housing Services: Environmental Health, Community Safety, Housing

Commercial Services: Leisure, Economic Development, Asset Management, Procurement

5 Our Vision

Our vision for 2014/15, aimed at inspiring the organisation to continue to deliver its services to the high standards that have been set, was:

To create a better future together.

To achieve this vision the Council focused on three key values:-

- Place
- Homes
- Economic Growth

The Council worked to the following set of values considered to be important to the District:

- **Rising to the challenge**
- **Delivering in unity**
- **Committed to the community**

The Council's behaviour enabled it to meet its values and drive its culture and achieve overall objectives. The behaviours were to:-

- Think commercially
- Take up challenges
- Learn
- Deliver
- Be pro-active
- Be innovative

6 Our Key Themes

The Council continued to improve services to local communities and enhance the difference made to the local economy and the environment by focusing on three key themes:-

Place

The Council wants a District that is vibrant, inclusive, safe and sustainable and which retains the essential characteristics of its market towns, villages, open countryside, woodland, rivers and salt marshes.

Knowing that feeling safe is an important priority for residents, the Castle Point and Rochford District Community Safety Partnership is supported to deliver one of the lowest crime rates in the East of England.

The Council wants to help its residents develop and maintain active and healthy lifestyles and is committed to providing a wide range of leisure activities and facilities for all ages.

Homes

The Council has ensured that the appropriate planning framework is in place through the production of a Core Strategy and accompanying planning documents.

The Council works with partners to provide a range of quality new housing for communities, including affordable homes for those residents unable to buy or rent in the private market.

Economic Growth

The Council considers economic growth as crucial to the vitality of the District and key to ensuring the right balance between essential development and preservation of the environment.

The following pages highlight some of the work done by the Council during the year.

Key Theme 1 – Place

- Grants to Voluntary Organisations (£90,000 for revenue and £15,000 for capital funding) were distributed across the District for voluntary services and projects, including Citizen Advice Bureau, the Rayleigh and Rochford Association of Voluntary Services, Wyvern Community Transport, Bar n Bus Trust, Supporting Families and Carers Together and The Peaceful Place.
- The Council continued to develop partnership working, delivering cost savings and increased revenue. Payroll services are provided to Castle Point Borough Council, with debtors payroll provided to Brentwood, Castle Point and Thurrock.
- Affordable sports and arts activities for children aged 0 to 16 were provided across the District during school holidays, delivered in partnership with Fusion Lifestyle. 2,350 children took part in arts and sports workshops and projects across the District.
- The Council held its eleventh Wild Woods Day in June 2014. This is now a key event in the calendar, promoting the District's open spaces, art and sport and attracting approximately 2,000 people.
- During 2014/15, 2,400 people attended our health walks.
- The 'Charity Bins' campaign, which incentivised people to bin their litter responsibly by linking the amount of litter collected in the bins to donations to local charities, was pioneered for three months. The results showed that, on average, litter on the ground was reduced by 41.7%, with the biggest reduction in a single month being 53.3%.
- National Lottery funding of £82,000 was received to help workforces in the Rochford and Castle Point Districts get fit and healthy over the next three years. The scheme enables local companies to offer free sports sessions to staff.
- The Council re-launched the J9 Domestic Violence Initiative whereby businesses/services sign up as a J9 information point and display a sticker in their windows so victims know where they can obtain information to help them access the support they need.
- The Rayleigh Windmill won the 2014 National Museums and Heritage Awards for Customer Service Excellence. The windmill hosted a variety of touring exhibitions and installations and over 3000 people visited in 2014/15.
- The Rayleigh Windmill also continued to be immensely popular as a venue for Civil Weddings, Civil Partnerships, naming ceremonies and renewal of vows. During the past year 45 ceremonies took place at the Windmill.
- The youth arts leadership project 'Student-Led Music ensembles' received a funding boost. The project has been running since autumn 2013 and received additional funding from the Essex Music Education Hub to enable extra music sessions to be arranged.
- The Rochford and Castle Point Sports Awards, sponsored by Pinnacle PSG, were held at Runnymede Hall. The ceremony was compered by BBC Essex's Ben Fryer and awards were presented by Olympic gymnast, Max Whitlock.

- The Council set up the Forum for Surface Water Flooding Issues, which brought together organisations including Essex County Council (Flood Management Team), Anglian Water, Essex Highways and the Environment Agency to identify who is responsible for carrying out various flood prevention measures.
- The Council continued to address the cuts in public spending and the impact of the reduction in Government funding, whilst maintaining essential services to our residents.
- In the fight against litter we joined forces with all other Essex Local Authorities and three fast food giants to launch the first pan-Essex 'Clean Essex Campaign', raising awareness of litter and the risk of fines for those who offend.
- We were, once again, awarded the prestigious Safer Parking Award Scheme Park Mark, an initiative aimed at reducing crime and fear of crime in parking facilities.
- Our Street Scene team launched a new initiative to reduce dog fouling in the District using social media and word of mouth.
- Essex County Council Trading Standards, in partnership with Rochford District Council's Community Safety Team, held a series of free one-day home safety checks for residents in the District. As part of the checks, Trading Standards Officers carried out Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) on small domestic appliances.
- We held our first 'Re-Think Rubbish' event, celebrating the District Council's recycling achievements and marking the 10th Anniversary of our first kerb-side recycling scheme. The event included a fashion show showcasing recycled and re-used clothing created by students from Seevic College and Fitzwimarc School.
- We continued with the Community Older Persons Event run by the Castle Point and Rochford District Community Safety Partnership, which gives the older generation information and tips on how they can 'stay safe' in their daily lives.
- Our annual Citizen of the Year Awards recognised residents from within the Rochford District for their valuable hard work, generosity and outstanding achievements.
- Employees from Southend McDonalds worked with Council staff at Hockley Woods, clearing a stream by removing branches and debris.
- We took part in a campaign to reduce chewing gum litter by encouraging residents to 'Bin it your way'. The Council partnered with the Chewing Gum Action Group to tackle gum litter. Rochford District saw a 64% decrease in gum littered after the Council took part in last year's campaign.
- Litter picks to clear up various areas and rid the District of unsightly litter took place across the District, involving volunteers from Rochford District Council, Southend McDonald's and SITA UK.
- More than 40 people attended a free disability sporting taster session run by the District Council, Active Rochford, Essex County Cricket Board and Stambridge Parish Council.
- The first Hockley Woods parkrun was held. Between February and March there were 1,298 attendances and 148 volunteer hours. The parkrun takes place every Saturday at 9 a.m.
- We planted 420 tree saplings donated by the Woodland Trust, at Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park, in remembrance of those who fought in the First World War.

- Volunteers from across the Rochford District came together to participate in community clear up events, as part of Keep Britain Tidy's national Community Clear Up Day.
- We developed an Open Spaces Strategy to entice more people into our green spaces in order to lead a more active lifestyle.
- The 'Keep Safe' scheme, which had been developed to ensure that people at risk feel safe and confident outside their home, was launched in Rayleigh and Hockley. Shops, businesses and other venues display a 'Keep Safe' sticker to show that they belong to the scheme.
- We were awarded Gold Standard in recognition of the accuracy of our database, which lists every property in the District. This information forms part of the National Land and Property Gazetteer, used by organisations such as the Royal Mail, Emergency Services and Google.

Key Theme 2 – Homes

- We successfully defended a legal challenge that sought to quash the Council's Allocations Plan. The judgement means that the Plan will remain in place in full and will continue to be used to manage development proposals coming forward in the District.
- Rochford District Council was one of nine local authorities within the region to commission a service to improve outcomes for single homeless people. The authorities are now working with the homelessness organisation St Mungo's Broadway to provide outreach and a 'No Second Night Out' service to rough sleepers, funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government.
- The Council's Development Management Plan, which sets out the detailed day-to-day policies by which planning applications are assessed, was approved.
- 249 people were rehoused from the Housing Register between April 2014 to March 2015, which was 48 more than the previous year.

Key Theme 3 – Economic Growth

- The Rochford Art Trail returned for its fifth consecutive year, playing host to dozens of artists who exhibited their talents in the town's shops, cafes and businesses.
- The Council secured over £50,000 worth of grants from the Government's Regional Growth Fund through Southend Borough Council. In total, this money has created nearly 30 FTE posts and has safeguarded over 80 FTE posts.
- The Council is aware that cash flow is crucial for businesses and prioritises payment of business invoices, with a target of paying within 10 working days.
- Once again free parking was introduced at all District Council car parks on the three Saturday mornings leading up to Christmas to encourage people into the town centres. Saturday afternoon parking has been free for many years to help encourage local shopping and parking remains free on Sundays.
- The Council continued to provide quarterly newsletters to all businesses signed up to the Rochford Business Network, which was set up in 2009. Forty new businesses joined the Network in 2014/15 and it is anticipated that membership will continue to grow.
- An 'Independents Day' initiative was held across the District in July to champion local retailers. Parish and Town Councils, Chambers of Trade and local independent traders joined forces with the District Council to provide various activities and events.
- Free one-to-one support was provided to over 140 businesses on a range of subjects, including starting up, premises searches, employment, tourism, grants and funding.
- The Council hosted three business breakfasts on the subjects of funding, public sector procurement and skills. The October 2014 Business Breakfast programme was revised to become the first ever Skills Summit. The Summit included exhibition stands from key education and employment specialists.
- The first Business Summit was held and gave attendees the chance to shape the Economic Growth Strategy that will drive forward investment opportunities over the next three years.
- The Council partnered with the Low Carbon Programme, which awarded more than £280,000 in grants to over 50 businesses in the Rochford District. The Programme also provided support to hundreds of local businesses by giving advice on ways to reduce the carbon footprint.
- Young entrepreneurs from secondary schools around the District learned key business skills and competed in a 'Dragons Den' style business challenge organised by the District Council and Enterprise in Education. The competition was the grand finale of the Young Enterprise Scheme, an initiative that aims to support a more enterprising culture amongst young people by developing the skills and awareness needed to succeed in business.
- Representatives from local businesses, parish and town councils, communities, national organisations and the District Council met in February to consider how to promote tourism in the District. The Council has become a member of Visit Essex.

- London Southend Airport enjoyed its busiest year ever with over one million passengers using the airport in 2014. The Airport is looking forward to even more exciting developments in 2015.
- The Council received a High Impact Award in recognition of its involvement in the 2014 Global Entrepreneurship Week and in helping local start up businesses.
- The London Southend Airport and Environs Joint Area Action Plan was adopted by both Rochford District and Southend Borough Councils. The Plan envisages 7,000 jobs being created within the next 15 years through the construction of up to 100,000sqm of new employment space.
- The Council facilitated the start of Town Teams, with Rayleigh and Rochford now established and discussion underway with partners on the options most appropriate for Hockley.
- More than 60 people attended the first Parish and Town Council Summit. The aim of the event was to encourage improved communication between the District, Parish and Town Councils.

7 Financial Summary

This Report provides a summary of the Council's statutory Statement of Accounts for 2014/15. The Statement of Accounts runs to over 60 pages and its content is largely prescribed by accounting standards that apply to all local authorities. The figures were compiled in line with proper accounting practice. Information is produced in the hope that it will give the reader a brief and uncomplicated picture of the main features of the Council's financial results for 2014/15.

The Statement of Accounts was signed off by the Assistant Director - Resources on 30 June 2015 and will be audited by the Audit Commission's appointed external auditors, BDO LLP UK.

The unaudited Accounts are available on the Council's website and the audited Accounts will be available from September 2015 by contacting:

Contact: Financial Services

Email: **financialservices@rochford.gov.uk**

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South Street
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1BW

Phone: 01702 318029

Joseph Raveendran
Assistant Director - Resources

What Rochford District Council spent

The Council produces a detailed Income and Expenditure Account, which can be found in the Statement of Accounts and is set out in a prescribed manner. The account below shows the cost of services in 2014/15 under each of the Council's Key Themes and the amount left to be financed from local and national tax income.

	Net Expenditure 2014/15 £m
Place	
Collection of local taxes	
Council Tax and Housing Benefits	
Emergency Planning & Health & Safety	
Leisure and Sports Development	
Mill Tower Windmill	
Elections	
Local Land Charges	
Cemeteries & Churchyards	8.49
Licensing	
Public Conveniences	
Democratic Services	
Woodlands, Parks and Open Spaces	
Car Parks	
Street Cleansing	
Recycling	
Homes	
Planning and Building Control	2.50
Environmental Health	
Housing Services & Homelessness	
Community Safety	
Economic Growth	
Economic Development	0.39
Net Cost of Services	11.38
LESS Statutory Accounting Adjustments, including capital charges	(0.07)
LESS Income from cash investments	(0.04)
LESS Money from reserves to support expenditure	(0.56)
Cost of local services to be met by local and national taxes	10.71

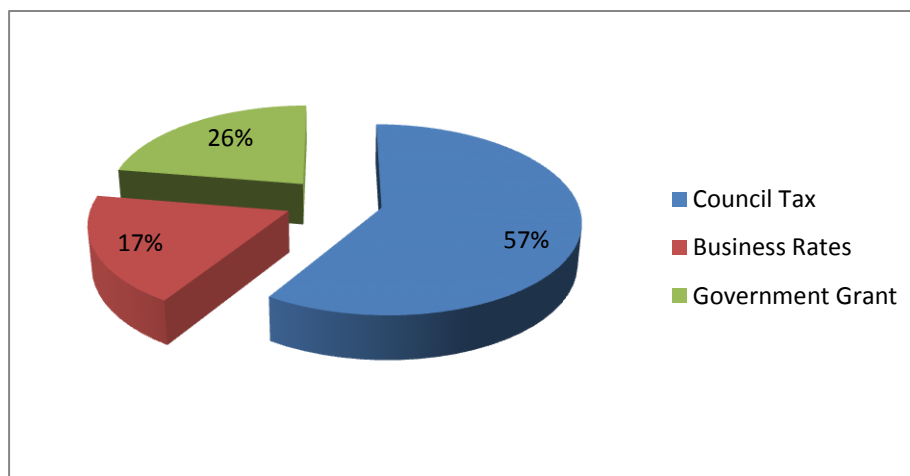
The Net Cost of Services last year (2013/14) was £11.78m, shown by Council Themes as follows:

What did we spend last year:	Net Expenditure 2013/14 £m
Place	8.54
Homes	2.80
Economic Growth	0.44
Net Cost of Services	11.78

Where did the money come from?

The £10.71m spent on providing local services, after contributions from reserves and income raised from various fees and charges, came from local and national taxes and redistributed business rates.

Our total income for the year was £10.71m (2013/14 £10.22m), which was split £2.80m Government Grants, £1.79m from national business rates returned to the Council and £6.12m from Council Tax from residents as shown below.



Summary of Income and Expenditure

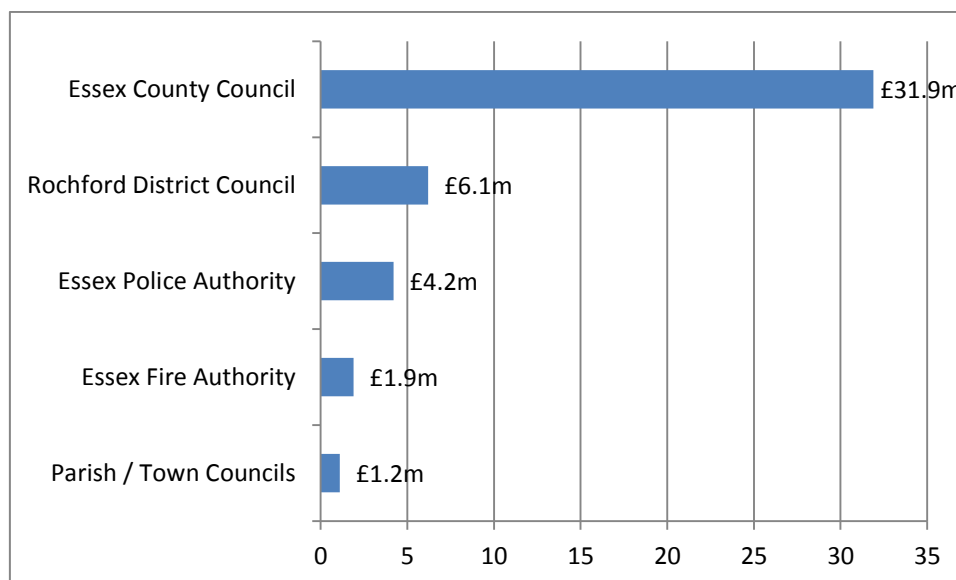
Revenue Account Surplus	2014/15 £m
Total Income	(10.71)
Total Cost of Services	11.27
Deficit for the year	0.56

The Council has been using balances built up over previous years to cover some of the reduction in Government funding and these must now be built up again.

Council Tax

The Council was responsible for collecting £45.3m of Council Tax last year, but only kept £6.1m, equivalent to 14p in every £ collected. The majority of monies collected are paid to others as shown in the graph below:-

Amount of Council Tax collected for each organisation



The average Council Tax for Band D property for 2014/15 was made up as follows:-

	2014/15
Rochford District Council	£208.98
Essex County Council	£1,086.75
Essex Fire Authority	£66.42
Police & Crime Commissioner for Essex	£144.27
Town/Parish Councils (average)	£39.78
Total	£1,546.20

In 2014/15 the national average for Council Tax on a band D property was **£1,468**.

Discretionary Rate Relief

Charities and some sports clubs are entitled to 80% mandatory relief on their business rates. In order to provide additional support, the Council can award discretionary relief for the remaining 20%. For 2014/15, discretionary relief was awarded to 33 organisations throughout the District at a cost to the Council of £23,384.

Capital Expenditure

The Council spends money on improving land and buildings in order to continue delivering excellent cost effective services for all its customers. Capital Expenditure is the money spent on the purchase and improvement of buildings, vehicles, equipment, computer software and hardware. It is called capital expenditure as it results in assets which the Council and the community can use for more than one year. Capital Expenditure does not directly affect the Council Tax.

For 2014/15 expenditure on capital compared to what the Council planned to spend was:-

What we spent:	Planned £000s	Actual £000s
Vehicles and Equipment	403	358
Leisure and Play Facilities	240	146
Disabled Housing Grants	370	282
IT infrastructure	104	19
Council properties	211	106
Totals	1,328	911

Some of the projects not completed in 2014/15 will be rolled forward into 2015/16.

How we paid for Capital Expenditure	2014/15 £000s
Grants and Contributions	223
Capital Receipts	688
Total	911

What is the Council worth?

At the end of each financial year, 1 April to 31 March, the Council drew up a balance sheet that showed how much its land and buildings were worth, what was owed to others (i.e. invoices that were unpaid as at 31 March), what others owed the Council (e.g. businesses that owe rates and residents who owe Council Tax) and how much cash the Council has.

Net Assets	31 March 2015 £m
Long term assets	37.0
Money owed to Rochford & cash/bank investments	6.8
Less Money owed by Rochford	(3.5)
Less All other liabilities	(28.6)
Net Assets	11.7

Usable Reserves and Balances	31 March 2015 £m
Capital Grants and Receipts	2.3
Working Balances	0.8
Earmarked Reserves	1.8
Total Revenue Reserves	4.9

Delivering Value for Money

During 2014/15 the Council was successful in generating income through the provision of services to partners and other Councils. Approximately £317,000 was earned from objectives such as:-

- providing a payroll service to Castle Point and electoral payrolls for Brentwood, Thurrock, Rochford and Castle Point.
- working in partnership with other authorities on Legal Services and Building Control
- providing arboriculture and playground inspection services to the Rochford Housing Association

The Council planned to make savings during the year of over £800,000, which were delivered. The full impact of the savings was effective from 1 April 2015 onwards.

Some examples of savings are:-

- Reduction in bank charges due to a new contract with Lloyds Bank;
- Lower staffing costs following the re-design of Senior Management posts.
- Renewal of the refuse collection contract which will deliver particular savings through the financing of the new vehicles;
- Provision of additional temporary accommodation and bringing empty homes back into use.

Rochford District Council Members and dedicated staff continue to work hard to ensure the Council offers its residents value for money

The Council is determined to deliver high levels of performance and has demonstrated that, despite lower government grant funding, it continues to save money and reduce spending. Close scrutiny over Council funding is a continuous process.

Further information on the Council's 2015/16 budget and five year Medium Term Financial Plans are available on the website: **www.rochford.gov.uk**.



Financial Performance

Rochford District Council is amongst the best in Essex and the country when it comes to collecting Council Tax. The Revenues and Benefits team collected 98.4% of the £46.1m Council Tax due last year. 98.2% of business rates due last year was also collected - an increase on 2013/14.

Collecting income in the current economic climate is challenging but staff offer as much support and advice as possible to

help local residents and businesses to pay their bills.

Despite falling returns for investments, the Council achieved investment rates for the year averaging at 0.96% (1.10% in 2013/14).

The Council would be very interested in your comments and views on both the contents and layout of this document so that it can continue to improve communication with residents and partners. Please use the contact details below to let the Council know what you think about the Annual Report and what other information you would like to see included.

Joseph Raveendran

Assistant Director - Resources

Contact: Financial Services

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