
REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES TO COUNCIL

1 REPORT OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Annual Report

- 1.1 The Constitution states that ‘the Review Committee must report annually to Full Council on its workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate’.
- 1.2 At its meeting on 13 April 2010 the Review Committee approved its Annual Report for submission to Council.
- 1.3 A copy of the Annual Report, as approved by the Review Committee, is attached at appendix 1.
- 1.4 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES** to receive the Annual Report. (HLEMS)

2 REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE

Draft Corporate Plan 2010-2015

- 2.1 This item of business was referred by the Executive on 21 April 2010 to Full Council with a recommendation relating to approval of the draft Corporate Plan. An extract of the key elements of the report of the Chief Executive, with the draft Plan appended, is attached at appendix 2.
- 2.2 The Executive noted that, whilst elements of the Plan could be utilised for news releases/articles, the key audience was partner organisations, agencies, external auditors and the Audit Commission.
- 2.3 In discussing recycling rates it was felt that exceeding a 60% recycling rate should be an aspiration, particularly given the current high rate and aspects of recycling yet to come on stream. It was recognised that any percentage increases needed to be fully evidenced and that, once an Authority is operating at a notably high rate, each additional percentage can be a significant achievement.
- 2.4 It was confirmed that the purple section of the pie chart on page 8 would be identified as government grant and that references to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) would be changed to Community Safety Partnership (CSP).
- 2.5 The Executive agreed that it would be appropriate to:-

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- Clarify the nature of the housing related expenditure identified in the table on page 9, which comprises a mix of expenditure on housing benefit, strategic housing and homelessness.
 - Include reference to the following under longer term targets for 2015:-
 - Aspiring to exceed a 60% recycling rate.
 - Working with partners on opening up public access to the coastline, including the Wallasea Island area.
 - Working with the County Council on road improvement schemes, specifically Sutton Road, Watery Lane and access to Wallasea Island/Baltic Wharf.
- 2.6 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES** that the revised Corporate Plan for 2010-2015 be adopted, subject to the inclusion of the points in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 above. (CE)

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 - Petitions

- 2.7 This item of business was referred by the Executive on 21 April 2010 to Full Council with recommendations relating to a petitions scheme. An extract of the key elements of the report of the Corporate Director (Internal Services), with the proposed scheme appended, is attached at appendix 3.
- 2.8 The Executive recognised that, whilst during previous government consultation on this subject a host of concerns had been identified, the Council was under a statutory duty to introduce a scheme. It was also recognised that a number of potential problems could be associated with the model scheme provided for use by Councils, which pointed to the merits of there being a facility to review its operation by December 2010 (tying in with the timeframe related to the requirement to facilitate electronic petitions).
- 2.9 It was noted that the term 'local population' could be defined in more detail at some point if necessary. It was also noted that it would be for the Council Chairman to facilitate appropriate debate in the fifteen minute timeframe identified in the scheme. There are further detailed definitions around the statutory/regulatory and other situations when different procedures will apply.
- 2.10 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES** that:-
- (1) The petitions scheme appended at pages 8.41 to 8.45 be adopted;
 - (2) The Constitution is amended as outlined in paragraphs 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 of the attached report;

- (3) The scheme is reviewed by December 2010. (CD(IS)/HLEMS)

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Review Committee Annual Report 2009/2010



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2 Glossary

CEL	Connaught Environmental Limited
ECC	Essex County Council
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership

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3 Introduction

- 3.1 During the 2009-0 Municipal Year the Review Committee has considered a number of topics both as a whole Committee and in smaller teams reporting back to the main Committee once the team has completed its work. Details of the Reviews are outlined further on in this report.
- 3.2 In addition to the Committee's role to conduct Reviews it also has the duty to scrutinise decisions made by the Executive. As part of this role the Committee studies the Forward Plan on a monthly basis.

4 Local Strategic Partnership and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

- 4.1 As part of the review of the Political Decision Making structure during the 2008/09 Municipal Year it was agreed that the Committee would look at the Local Strategic Partnership and also the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
- 4.2 The Chairmen of both of these partnerships attended the November 2009 meeting and provided details / responded to questions on the function of the two groups and the partnership work that they are engaged in.

5 Overview of the Refuse Collection, Recycling, Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance Contracts

- 5.1 At its meeting in June 2009 the Review Committee considered a request from two members of the public to consider the bulky household waste collection service and, in particular, the charges associated with it. It was agreed that, rather than carry out a full scale review, this topic could be dealt with at a meeting of the Committee. A report providing an evaluation of the service was prepared for the September meeting and representatives of SITA UK attended the meeting to further inform Members. The Committee submitted recommendations to the Executive for consideration.
- 5.2 Representatives of Connaught Environmental Limited attended the Committee in July 2009 and brought Members up to date with progress since the company took over the grounds maintenance contract during the 2008/09 Municipal Year.

6 Overview of the Forward Plan

- 6.1 Following on from last year, the Committee continued to look at the Forward Plan on a regular basis. A number of items were selected from the Plan and the relevant Executive Portfolio Holders were invited to attend Committee meeting to discuss the details behind the decision.
- 6.2 The Committee has found this a useful way to explore the reasons behind decisions being made and to reduce the need to consider the call in of a decision after it has been made.

7 Review of Council's Community Halls and Associated Assets

- 7.1 Whilst there had been some delay by virtue of a combination of Committee workload and difficulties in arranging meetings with the appropriate parties, the final report was agreed by the Committee in January 2010 and recommendations produced.

8 Review of Surface Rainwater Drainage Systems – the Ownership and Maintenance of Ditches in the District

- 8.1 This review was instigated following concerns that came out of the flooding events that affected parts of the country in 2007. Since the inception of the Review the findings from the Pitt Review have been published, followed by the Government's response. This Municipal Year has seen the passing of The Flood Risk Regulations 2009, which came into force on 10 December 2009, and there is a further Flood and Water Bill expected to be passed by Parliament shortly.
- 8.2 Under The Flood Risk Regulation 2009 a lead local flood authority is designated for an area. In the case of the Rochford District this is Essex County Council. The County Council has a duty to prepare a flood hazard map and also a flood risk map. The Committee is aware of the work currently being undertaken by Essex County Council in this regard and has concluded that, due to the likelihood of a possible crossover, the project should be put on hold until the outcome is known. It is the Committee's intention to ask a representative from Essex County Council to report to the Committee in the Autumn to provide an update.

9 Review of Area Committee Budgets

- 9.1 It was agreed by the Committee in the last Municipal Year, during the review of the political decision making structure, that a separate review be undertaken on the possibility of introducing budgets for the Area Committees.
- 9.2 A small team was formed from the Committee to look at this topic with a final report submitted to and agreed at the March 2010 meeting. The Committee submitted recommendations to the Executive for consideration.

10 Car Parking Issues Review

- 10.1 This topic was selected as worthy of consideration during the June 2009 meeting of the Committee. The Committee split into two teams to

look at the issues surrounding on-street parking and off-street parking. An interim report concerning the Approach Car Park in Rayleigh was submitted to the January meeting and recommendations agreed. The final report of the teams is being submitted to the April 2010 meeting.

11 Review of the Service Provision for our Ageing Population

- 11.1 This topic was selected as a possible topic for Review by the Committee in June 2009. Once it was established that the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was undertaking a similar review amongst its partners, it was agreed that it would be appropriate for the Review Committee to be a consultee in development of the final report.

12 Other items considered by the Committee

- 12.1 During the year the Committee also heard from a representative of Essex County Council's Education Department in relation to Section 106 monies and how they are distributed to benefit education within the District.
- 12.2 In September 2009 the Committee heard from the trustees of the Massive Project on how they were creating a youth centre for the local young people in Eldon Way, Hockley.
- 12.3 The Committee has received a presentation from Rochford Housing Association on how it was meeting the promises contained in the offer document and has visited two of the Association's sheltered housing schemes that have been refurbished over the last year.

13 Topics for future work programme

- 13.1 The following topics are being forwarded as worthy of consideration by the Review Committee during the 2010/11 Municipal Year:-
- Member role on outside bodies/benefit to the Council/outside body.
 - Role, responsibilities and resources available to the Local Parish Councils. Members requested that an invitation be extended to the Rochford Hundred Association of Local Councils to attend a meeting of the Review Committee early in the 2010/11 Municipal Year.
 - Annual Review of key partnership arrangements.
 - Provision of facilities and services for children and young people in the District. It was likely that this would include a review of the recommendations of the previous review undertaken by the

Committee.

- Area Committees.
- Area Committee Budgets

14 Performance Measures

14.1 The Review Committee has previously agreed a set of performance measures. These are listed below with the results or comments linked to them.

1. Completion of Overview and Scrutiny work programme on time.

Project	Scheduled Completion date	Actual Completion date	Reason for extension of date
Review of Surface Rainwater Drainage Systems – the Ownership and Maintenance of Ditches in the District	February 09	Currently on hold	New legislation has been passed during the year, which has appointed a Lead Local Flood Authority (Essex County Council (ECC)) for each area. The project is on hold until the outcome of ECC work in this area is known.
Review of Council's Community Halls and Associated Assets	December 2009	January 2010	As the Committee did not have a meeting in December 2009 this item was carried over to the January 2010 meeting.
Review of Area Committee Budgets	December 2010	March 2010	During the course of the investigation the team recognized the value of confirming its findings with the Group leaders before submitting

			the final report.
Car Parking Review	April 2010	April 2010	

2. The percentage of Overview and Scrutiny recommendations approved/rejected/acted upon by the Executive.

The recommendations from the Political Decision Making Structure Review were submitted to the Executive following the meeting of 7 April 2009. 53% of the recommendations were approved by the Executive and subsequently introduced.

During this Municipal Year the Review Committee has submitted 4 reports to the Executive / Portfolio Holders. 20% of the recommendations have been approved. These figures do not include the Car Parking Issues Review, which will be presented to the Portfolio Holder following the Review Committee's April meeting.

3. Number of external representatives involved in Overview and Scrutiny work per annum.

During this year the Committee has heard from representatives of five different external bodies in relation to the items that have been examined.

4. Number of items on the work programme suggested by the public or in response to issues raised through surveys, comments or complaints.

The discussions around the bulky household waste collection service emanated from a request from two residents.

The Car Park Review undertaken this year has included a survey, to which 203 residents responded.

5. Number of call-in notices received per annum.

No items have been called in by the Committee this Municipal Year.

6. The number of times that the Executive state that a decision is urgent and not subject to call-in.

During the year all decisions have been subject to call-in.

7. Whether sufficient information is provided to witnesses about the Overview and Scrutiny process.

The feedback received indicates that it could be worthwhile to look at the procedures for briefing witnesses.

8. Witnesses' views of value added by Overview and Scrutiny meetings.

The response received would indicate that there could be value in making sure that the witness is fully briefed and understands what powers the Review Committee has.

9. What has changed as a result of the Overview and Scrutiny function?

When the recommendations from the Review Committee relate to the Authority's internal workings, members of the public are often unaware that anything has changed. This year a team from the Review Committee has been examining the issues around car parking. Part of this work involved asking for residents' views and, from the responses, the team has formulated a number of recommendations to the Executive Member responsible for Planning & Transportation. It is hoped that those members of the public who commented on the situation at The Approach Car Park and requested that the pricing structure be looked at will recognise that the team has responded to their comments.

DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2010-2015

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 To recommend to Council that the revised Corporate Plan for 2010-2015 be approved.

2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Since 2006, the Council has re-introduced the production of the Corporate Plan as a key document to be reviewed on an annual basis. The format and content around the Corporate Plan continues to be reviewed and updated since its re-introduction and the latest draft plan attempts to build on the format and content of the 2009-2014 Corporate Plan.
- 2.2 The draft before Members tonight reflects the decisions taken as part of the 2010/2011 budget process and the content of the Council's Key Plans and Actions Report.

3 OTHER SALIENT INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Plan brings together the Council's main priorities; it picks up the key elements from the 2010/2011 budget. Subject to Member consideration and comment, the Plan, once approved, will be one of the main reference documents for the Council.
- 3.2 The Corporate Plan is a working document which, along with the Annual Report (which will include a look back as to our performance and will be finalised prior to the summer recess), explains what the Council is about, what it is focusing on and what it is aiming to do over a period. The Plan is seen as a key element in cementing linkages between service planning and the budget process and in particular the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2010/11 – 2014/15 which covers the same period.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The content of the Corporate Plan is in line with the decisions taken as part of the budget process and its production is funded from the Chief Executive's budget head.
- 4.2 The preparation of the Corporate Plan impacts upon and will continue to require senior officer time as it is produced and reviewed.

Corporate Plan 2010 – 2015



Rochford District Council – Corporate Plan 2010 – 2015

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What is the Corporate Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out Rochford District Council's short and medium term priorities, over the next five years or so, and is linked into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and budget process.

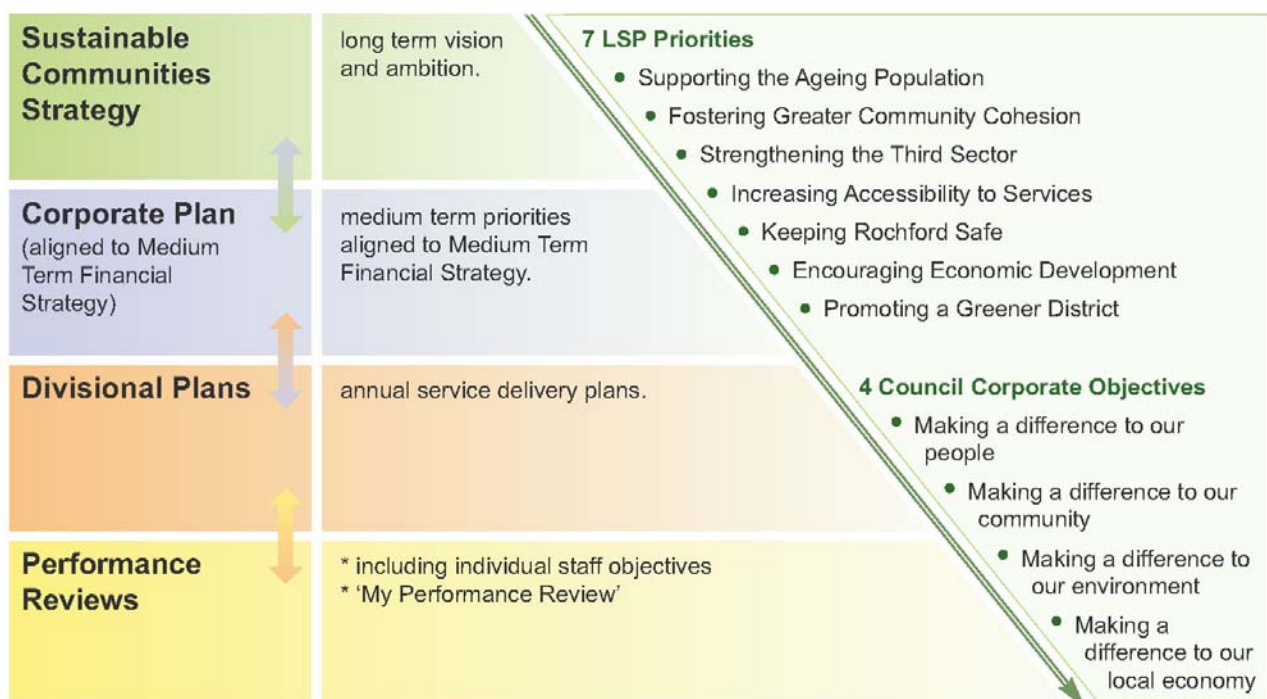
The Corporate Plan and its delivery plan will be reviewed and updated annually. It has not been developed in isolation and has taken account of national, regional, county-wide and local priorities. To inform the Council in setting priorities we use a range of information and intelligence, including the results of public consultation exercises undertaken in the District.

Most importantly the plan provides the Council's link to the Rochford Local Strategic Partnership (of which Rochford District Council is a lead member) and highlights how the Council's own objectives aim to support those of the Local Strategic Partnership through its Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Internally, the Corporate Plan is underpinned by Divisional Plans and individual staff and team priorities are picked up through the Performance Review process. The Corporate Plan does not set out everything the Council does. However, it attempts to focus on the 'headline' items and provides clarity around where the Council plans to concentrate its activity. The Plan should be read in association with the Council's Annual Report on performance, which is to be published in July, and gives details of how we have performed over the last year.

We describe this linkage between partnership and Council priorities, our Corporate plan and Annual Report and ultimately to divisional plans and individual employee's personal development reviews as our golden thread. This means that everything the Council does can be related to the priorities of our community.

Rochford's 'Golden Thread' – Cascading Objectives



Our Vision for Rochford

The Council's vision is shared with that of the Local Strategic Partnership:

To make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best possible quality of life for all who live, work and visit here

The Council cannot deliver all services and improvements without its partners. To that end we are involved in a range of partnerships. The overarching partnership for Rochford is the Rochford Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which includes a range of partners. The LSP is responsible for delivering the Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009 – 2021 which identifies shared priorities for the District.

The LSP also links the partners to the broader county Local Area Agreement. This is an agreement between central and local government. It includes a number of performance targets that the partnership works towards.

To support this, the Council has four main corporate objectives for 2010 – 2015, these are:

-  **Making a difference to our people**
-  **Making a difference to our community**
-  **Making a difference to our environment**
-  **Making a difference to our local economy**

Our vision and our four corporate objectives translate into the things that we do; our key strategic documentation such as this Corporate Plan, the Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF); the services we deliver and the facilities we provide. It is our intention that these are complementary with the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Essex Local Area Agreement.

As a Council we have been asked what we envisage the District looking like under our vision. Over the **next five years**, we see a number of projects coming to fruition or making considerable progress to being delivered. These projects will contribute to the Council achieving its vision and its aims.

We want to improve the quality of life for the people in our communities and play a full role in the sustainable growth and prosperity of our county. In particular, we wish to utilise our position within Thames Gateway South Essex to promote the District as the 'green part' of the sub-region.

By the 'green part' we mean woodlands; coast and areas for outdoor recreation and leisure – all the things which fit well with our overarching vision. To this end, there will be improvements in the provision and upgrade of green space, resulting in increased usage. Enhancement of heritage sites and local facilities will improve opportunities for leisure and free time activities, improving the quality of life for residents, workers and visitors to the District and providing quality places to visit.

Following its expansion and completion of a new car park entrance at the eastern end of the site, together with improved footpath and cycle links, residents will be able to take full advantage of the resource offered by Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park. In addition, the environmentally sympathetic Wallasea Wetlands Project, will have commenced, this will become a popular destination for bird watchers and others, particularly during the winter months.

We see us developing our services and improving their access to meet the changing needs and expectations of our communities. Our emphasis will be on quality and cost effectiveness whilst ensuring that Rochford District will remain one of the safest places in the country and the fear of crime will be reduced.

Our Planning Core Strategy will provide clarity as to where and how the housing needs of our communities will be met. The new homes to be provided will offer high quality design and include water retention and renewable energy features. There will be growing emphasis on responding to and meeting the needs of a community which is ageing. At the same time, engagement with and facilities for young people across the District will have improved. We have been very successful in helping residents to increase their recycling rate and will aim to maintain this above 60%.

The automotive development on Rochford Business Park will be complete. Passenger flights will have increased from London Southend Airport which will result in new jobs for the area. Further employment land will also be under construction in the environs of the airport and progress will have been made on the development of a new terminal and station.

Lastly, in working to achieve our vision and ensure delivery against our corporate objectives the Council will carry out its work in accordance with a set of values which it thinks are important.

- Be an open, accountable, listening, responsive Council
- Put the customer and citizen at the heart of everything that we do, delivering services in a caring and sensitive manner.
- Co-ordinate the management of resources with an emphasis on sustainability.
- Value the contribution of partners, employees and citizens, trusting each other and working collaboratively.

A Picture of our District

The Place

Rochford is a small District located in south east Essex. It is bounded by the River Crouch to the north and the urban areas of Southend and Castle Point to the south. The District has three main towns, Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley. Much of the remaining area is green belt with a large area around Foulness under Ministry of Defence control. London Southend Airport straddles the District's southern boundary with Southend.

The People

In the 2001 census Rochford District had a population of approximately 79,000 people.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2007 mid-year population estimates showed Rochford District as having a population of 82,200.

The area is relatively affluent, ranking 314 out of 354 authorities nationally, where 1 is the most deprived and 354 the least deprived. The most deprived ward, Foulness and Great Wakering East, ranks 2,680 of 8,414. Owner occupied homes constitute 86% of households. Private renting accounts for approximately 6%. House prices are higher than the average for England and Wales. The proportion of the resident working age population who are in employment in Rochford is high, with the area ranking in the top 40% of Districts nationally. The proportion of the working age population who are unemployed in Rochford is very low, with the District ranking in the bottom 20% of Districts nationally. In Rochford, 2.4% of people are claiming job seekers allowance.

The Council

The Council employs 223 full-time equivalent staff, with key services contracted to the private sector, for example, refuse collection, recycling, street cleansing, grounds maintenance, leisure management and the IT service.

The Chief Executive, supported by two Corporate Directors, heads the Council's staff structure. Heads of Service then lead the management of particular service areas. The organisational structure separates the external, front line focus services from internal services, creating a clearer focus for the organisation's work.

The Council has 39 elected Members, has a Conservative administration and the political composition is as follows:

- 33 Conservative;
- 5 Liberal Democrat; and
- 1 Rochford District Residents.

Since June 2007 the Council has operated a structure with an Executive Board and three Area Committees. The chairmanship of the Review Committee has also passed to the main opposition party. Further refinement has taken place in that we have now moved to a 'strong leader' model of government, with the Leader appointing eight members to the Executive and allocating portfolios to those members. This was implemented in May 2008.

Consultation and Engagement

Consultation across the District, both as a Council and as part of a wider group of public sector partners is an important aspect of delivering community focused services. The Council carries out regular consultation exercises and events throughout the year on a range of issues.

Rochford also has a duty to consult with its residents under 'the duty to involve' which aims to ensure that local people have regular opportunities to comment and shape local government services.

Examples of our consultation work in Rochford include:

- The RDC Youth Council.
- The Citizens Panel and use of focus groups for a range of service improvement work including shaping the development of the Access to Services agenda and the new waste management and recycling contract.
- The Area Committees.
- The business breakfast and local development plan events.

The Council also uses its District newspaper, **Rochford District Matters**, and website to engage, inform, and respond to those who live, work and visit within the District.

Place Survey

The Place Survey is a biennial consultation exercise for all local authorities. The results of this survey are one of the primary means that Rochford has in order to gauge public satisfaction and confidence. The survey does not just look at the Council but at residents' views of the District as a whole.

Following the most recent survey in 2008 Rochford District Council scored very highly on two important measures of performance; value for money and satisfaction with the way the Council runs things.

In terms of perceptions of value for money, Rochford District Council's score of 44% places them amongst the best local authorities across the country. Comparing performance on this item with other District Councils, Rochford is well above the average District Council score of 34.9%.

In terms of satisfaction with the way the Council runs things, Rochford District Council's score of 56% again places them again amongst the top local authorities across the country. Compared to other District Councils, again Rochford District Council scores well the average District Council score of 46.4%.

Over the next twelve months the Council will do more to involve the community through the Have Your Say pages on our web-site and also by encouraging greater access to our citizens' panel. In addition the Council as part of the Local Strategic Partnership will deliver a number of public sector information days across the District.

Our Services

Local Government in Essex is structured into what is commonly termed as a 'two-tier' structure. What this means is that responsibilities and service provision is shared between District and county Councils.

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

Rochford District Council includes:

Environmental Services which includes; Refuse Collection, Recycling, Public Open Spaces, Environmental Health and Licensing

Community Services which includes; Leisure and Culture, Benefits, Council Tax and Strategic Housing

Planning & Transportation Services which includes; Development Management, Building Control, Spatial Planning Policy, Planning Enforcement, Taxi Licensing and Car Parking

Legal, Estates and Member Services which includes; Committee services, Legal, Asset Management, Land Charges and Burials

Information & Customer Services which includes; Elections, Customer Services, Communications, Information and Communication Technologies

Finance which includes; Audit, Financial Services and Performance Management

and

Corporate Services which includes; Corporate Policy, Community Safety, Economic Development and Emergency Planning

Governance

Rochford District Council is committed to the principles of good governance. Governance for the Council is about how our management ensures the Council does things properly. Rochford does this by producing its code for corporate governance and by producing an annual governance statement.

The Council recognises that effective local government and the success of the authority relies on the public having confidence in both the elected members and officers of the Council.

Rochford District Council's monitoring Officer is the Corporate Director for Internal Services until June 1 2010. After June 1 the monitoring officer will be the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services. The role of the monitoring officer is to ensure lawfulness and fairness of Council decision making, ensuring that the authority complies with codes and protocols whilst promoting high standards. In addition the monitoring officer provides an annual report which provides information about work from the previous year.

In addition to its commitment to good governance, Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the Council to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and requires one officer to be nominated to take responsibility for the administration of those affairs.

Rochford District Council's Section 151 Officer is the Head of Finance. The Section 151 officer has a number of duties which include; administration of financial affairs, giving financial advice and ensuring lawfulness and prudence in all financial matters.

Finally, Rochford Council is subject to an independent annual review of its business and services through the use of resources inspection and through the Comprehensive Area Assessment. These assessments cover a whole range of Council activities but include assessing the Council's compliance with sound accounting principles and effectiveness.

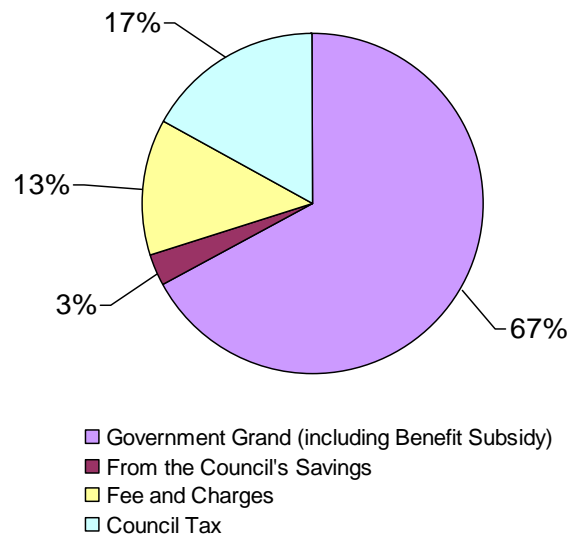
Under the inspection for our use of resources for 2009/10 the Council achieved a score of three out of four. This means that the authority is performing well.

Our Finances

Rochford District Council is keen to keep local people informed about how it spends their money. In this section we explain how we raise income and where we spend money.

Where our money comes from

Source	£m
Government Grant (including Benefit Subsidy)	24.24
From the Council's Savings	1.23
Fees and Charges	4.91
Council Tax	6.37
Total	36.75



Council Tax – Rochford District Council collects the Council Tax charge, on behalf of Government, not only for itself but also for Essex County Council, Essex Fire & Rescue Service, Essex Police and the local town and parish Councils.

Each authority sets its own charge that contributes to the total. In 2010/11 the total average charge, at Band D, for all these authorities will be:

Precept	2010/11
Essex County Council	1,086.75
Essex Fire Authority	66.42
Essex Police Authority	132.03
Town and Parish Councils	32.19
Rochford District Council	201.15
Total	1,518.54

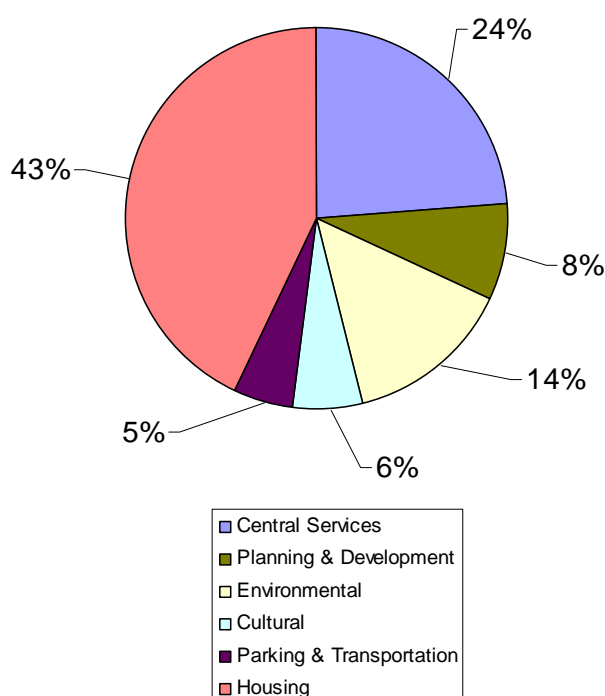
Corporate Plan

Rochford District Council's part of the charge is £201.15, 13% of the total. Rochford's Council Tax has increased by 1.96% in 2010/11.

Government support – Of the 12 District Councils in Essex, Rochford District Council receives the 2nd lowest grant from Government per head of population. For 2010/11 Rochford District Council gets £62 per head of population. The Essex average is £76 and the highest grant is £114. The Government grant has increased by 2%, but there is no guarantee of this funding level in future years.

How the money is spent

	£m
Central Services	9.05
Planning & Development	3.01
Environmental	5.37
Cultural	2.23
Parking and Transportation	1.86
Housing	15.97
Savings Target	(0.75)
Total	36.74



Our Strategy – Our five year Financial Strategy is reviewed, updated and rolled forward each year. Our Financial Plan coincides with this Strategy and is managed in the same way. The Strategy for 2010 – 15 is updated to include the 2010/11 budget and sets out the key financial policies, risks and assumptions. Although Council finance can be complex, Rochford District Council is keen to help keep stakeholders informed about how we manage money.

Our Financial Strategy aims to:

- Support our vision, aims and priorities.
- Set out the Council's future financial prospects.
- Assist the Council's strategic planning and policy making.
- Ensure a strategic approach is taken to the management of the Council's finances, Council Tax, and budget setting.

Timing – The Council has detailed budgets for revenue expenditure for 2010/11 and for capital investment for five years. It also has a summary Financial Plan to 2014/15.

Financial management – The Council's financial strategy over the past few years has been successful in increasing financial sustainability and in releasing resources for high priority areas through:

- improved value for money; and
- the movement of resources away from low priority services.

This has enabled the Council to focus on delivering high quality services based on Members' priorities and consultation with residents and stakeholders through the Community Plan. As part of the strategic business and budget planning process for

2010/12, the Council reviewed its financial position including prospects for the future, and agreed a two year savings target to reduce overall expenditure by £1.5m by 2012/13.

Key financial risks – These risks, their possible impact on the Council, and the actions in place to mitigate them are set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy

Budget strategy and process – The Council's Strategic Service and Budget Planning Process is reviewed and updated each year, taking into account current best practice and lessons learnt from previous years.

Its key components are:

- The Council's Vision, as articulated through this corporate plan.
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- Budget Process.
- Divisional Planning.
- Member involvement and challenge.

Budget monitoring – All budgets are the responsibility of Heads of Service, and are managed on that basis. Real time financial information is available to all budget holders and strategic summary information is reported to the Executive on a regular basis.

Investment Strategy – The Council is required to set out its treasury strategy for borrowing and to prepare an annual investment strategy. That strategy sets out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. A similar requirement is contained in the Council's Finance Procedure Rules. The full Strategy is approved by Council each year as part of the budget process. The decisions made by Members are then fed into the calculation of expected investment income included in the Financial Plan.

Capital investment and Asset

Management – The Council is required to "have regard to" the Prudential Code and to set prudential (performance) indicators for the next three years to ensure that the

Council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Council has a capital strategy that sets out the criteria that any capital scheme must be appraised against and prioritised. The capital programme includes mandatory improvement grants, IT investment and key projects such as the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park and extension of the Hall Road Cemetery. The Council has an Asset Management Plan which is reviewed annually to ensure that the land and buildings asset base is aligned in the best way with the organisation's corporate objectives and ensure that asset use achieves value for money.

Value for Money (VFM) – Achieving VFM may be described in terms of the 'three Es':

- **Economy** – doing less with fewer.
- **Efficiency** – doing the same as before but with fewer resources.
- **Effectiveness** – doing more than before with the same (or fewer) resources.

Rochford District Council is committed to delivering VFM as an integral part of its corporate strategy. While it has a specific responsibility to achieve VFM from its use of public funds, this principle extends to all sources of funding. Similarly, the responsibility for pursuing VFM lies with all staff and not just those with financial duties.

Control Framework – As part of the annual process, the Section 151 Officer makes a statutory statement on the robustness of the Council's budget and the adequacy of the reserves. The Council's statutory Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in

the United Kingdom and audited by an external audit company, under the auspices of the Audit Commission – the Government's watchdog organisation.

Managing the Council

The Council recognises that it is a major employer and that both members and officers have a duty to serve the public. We will do this by ensuring that members and officers work together to achieve our vision and priorities.

To achieve our objectives and best serve our public we recognise that the Council must be rewarding and motivating place to work. As such we strive to be a flexible employer who put staff welfare and wellbeing at the heart of our organisation.

Over the next year we will be creating our new workforce development plan to ensure that our support for our staff is further ingrained through to 2015.

The Council also recognises the need to support our members. We offer member training and support in order to further develop members' skills.

Working in Partnership

Rochford District Council works with many partners including other public sector bodies, parish Councils, voluntary groups, local faith organisations, local business and the private sector.

Partnership arrangements vary, from the delivery of day to day public services to the long term strategic planning for our District, county and region. The Council aims to be transparent in its partnership working and details about our partnership activity are available from the Council or from its website. The Council reviews its partnership arrangements on a rolling programme of review which includes work by the members through the Overview and Scrutiny process. The Council has a

partnership guide for officers entering into strategic partnerships and prepares governance guidance for strategic partnerships to adhere to.

Performance Management

Successful performance management will ensure that the Council's aims and objectives are achieved. It requires the Council to:

- Prioritise what gets done and ensure there are sufficient resources to do it
- Ensure the authority provides value for money
- Motivate and manage staff
- Identify and rectify poor performance at an early stage
- Learn from past performance and improve future performance
- Increase user and public satisfaction

Effective performance management requires a co-ordinated approach to planning and review, to enable key decision makers, both political and managerial, to take action based on both facts about performance and the public perception of performance, encompassing consultation with service users and residents.

To effectively manage performance, the Council ensures that there is:

- A systematic approach to deciding and communicating what needs to be done (aims, priorities and targets).
- A plan for ensuring that it happens (Divisional and service plans).
- A means of assessing if this has been achieved (performance measures).

Corporate Plan

- Information reaching the right people at the right time (performance monitoring and reporting) so that decisions are made and action taken.
- Review of performance by Senior Management, Line Management and Members.

The main components of our Corporate Performance Management Framework are:

- Our Sustainable Community Strategy
- The Local Development Framework (LDF)
- Partnership Plans
- Our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- Our Corporate Plan
- Divisional and Service Plans (including Risk assessments)
- Performance Indicators and targets
- Individual performance objectives set for each officer.
- A target challenge which takes place as part of the business planning process

Monitoring and reporting of outcomes is achieved by:

- Council/Executive and Management reviews of Quarterly Performance reports
- Ongoing review of performance via regular team and one to one meetings
- Formal review of individuals' performance via My Performance Reviews (MPR)

- An Annual Report of the Council's performance.

Risk Management

It is the policy of the Council to adopt a proactive approach to Risk Management consistent with the various conventions and best practice.

The Council acknowledges that risk cannot be totally eliminated, the Council is however committed to the management of "significant" risks in order to:

- Ensure compliance with statutory obligations
- Preserve and enhance service delivery
- Maintain effective control of public funds
- Promote the reputation of the Council
- Support the quality of the environment

These objectives are attained by systematically identifying, analysing and evaluating, effectively controlling and monitoring risks, which may endanger the people, property, reputation and financial stability of the Council.

The culture of risk management is embedded into all operations and service planning processes. Risk Registers and the Risk Action Plans are regularly reviewed and updated and are presented to the Council's Audit Committee for approval on a bi-annual basis.

Our Successes from 2009 – 10

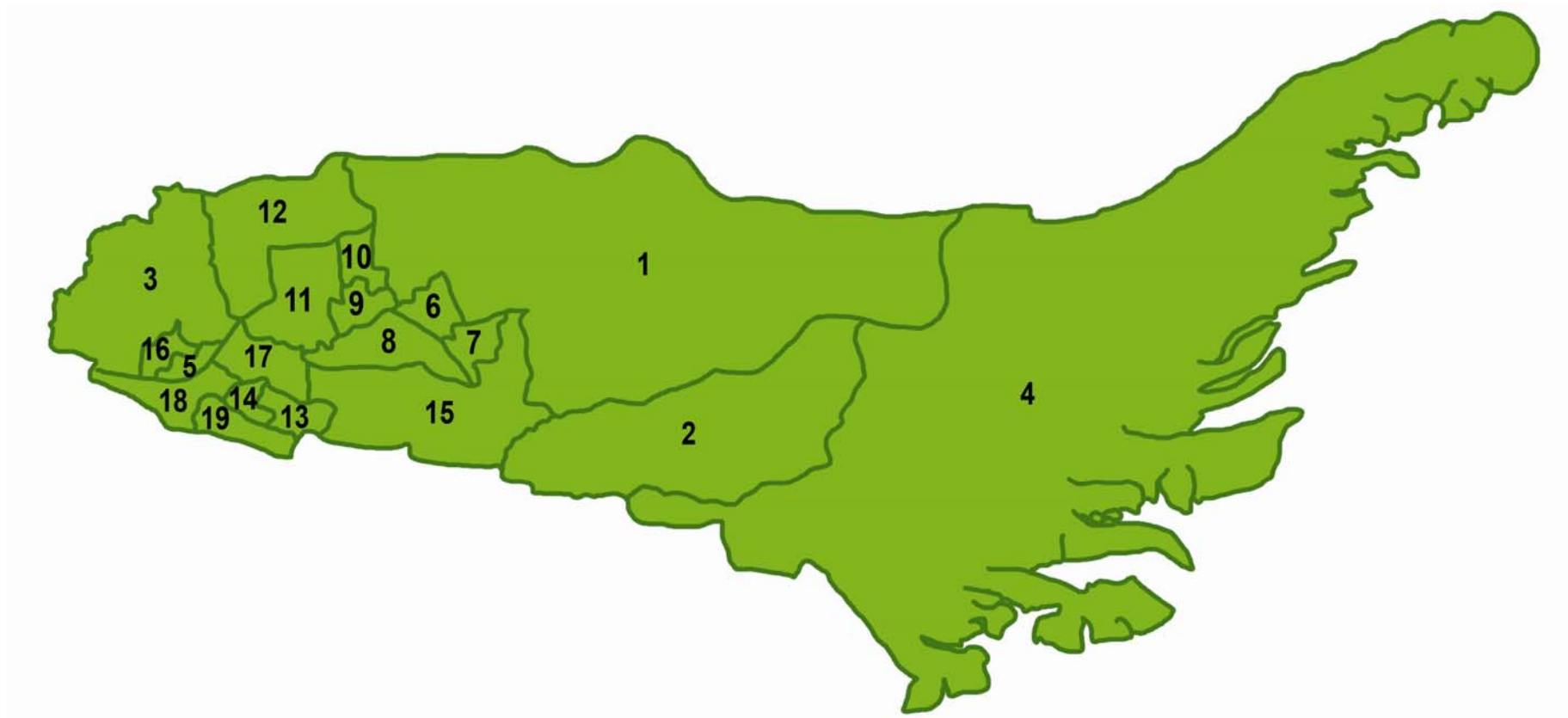
Over the last twelve months Rochford District Council has achieved a number of notable successes, these include:

- Winning the National Recycling Award in the target Challenge category.
- Completed our separation of the telephone switchboard and reception – resulting in improved access to services for our public.
- Secured external funding from the Forestry Authority for the planting of over 38,000 trees in Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.
- Retained our Charter Mark for Housing Benefits and Council Tax.
- Reached Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.
- Launched the Shop@MyLocal initiative in partnership with local businesses.
- Rayleigh Windmill has achieved the accreditation of Quality Assured Visitor Attraction from Visit England.
- The submission of the Rochford Core Strategy.
- Awarded the ‘Disability Symbol’ for recruitment, retention and career development of disabled people.
- Renewal of the Information and Communications Technology contract at lower cost .

Key Policies 2010 – 11

The following list highlights the main policies and strategies of the Council that will require review over the next twelve months.

- The Corporate Plan 2010 – 2015.
- The Local Development Framework.
- The Joint Area Action Plan for London Southend Airport.
- Individual Action Plans for Hockley, Rochford and Rayleigh Town Centres.
- The Asset Management Plan.
- The Capital Strategy.
- The Annual Report.
- The Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- The Workforce Development Strategy.
- Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policies.



Legend

Wards

- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|----|------------------|----|-------------|
| 1 | Ashingdon and Canewdon | 8 | Hawkwell West | 15 | Rochford |
| 2 | Barling and Sutton | 9 | Hockley Central | 16 | Sweyne Park |
| 3 | Downhall and Rawreth | 10 | Hockley North | 17 | Trinity |
| 4 | Foulness and Great Wakering | 11 | Hockley West | 18 | Wheatley |
| 5 | Grange | 12 | Hullbridge | 19 | Whitehouse |
| 6 | Hawkwell North | 13 | Lodge | | |
| 7 | Hawkwell South | 14 | Rayleigh Central | | |

Achieving our objectives from 2010 – 2015

Through the work around the budget process, the Council has identified its key priorities for 2010/2011 and the period up until 2014/2015. These are described below and are aligned to one or more of the Council's four key objectives. The focus and detail is very much on those things to be delivered or started in 2010/2011, recognising that the action plan is reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

The Council provides a wide range of services, functions and facilities. Our key targets for the year are listed under our four objectives, but in terms of absolute priorities, those listed below are seen as paramount for the year ahead:

- Continue to deliver efficiency savings.
- Achieve the Excellence level of the Equality Framework for local government.
- Achieve the Member Development Charter.
- Continue to improve our Council Tax and benefits service.
- Continue to improve service access and delivery for our community.
- Continue to develop and consolidate our partnership arrangements via the LSP and other partnerships such as the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) to develop and improve service provision to our communities, particularly around the ageing population.
- Progressing the Joint Area Action Plan in partnership with Southend Borough Council, covering London Southend Airport and its environs.

- Progressing the LDF Core Strategy through its inquiry stage.
- Implementing the Action Plan that supports the Councils Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy – Climate Co2de.
- Progressing the three town centre studies for Hockley, Rochford and Rayleigh to detailed action plans for each centre.
- Implementing the Action Plan associated with the Council's new Economic Development Strategy, particularly those measures highlighted to combat recession and encourage regeneration.

Making a difference to our people

A key challenge for the Council is to continue to improve and meet the increasing and changing expectations of our customers. For many of them, they have no choice but to use the service on offer by the Council and therefore it is important that we deliver our services in the most cost effective way to a standard which is recognised as excellent. If we wish to deliver our vision '***To make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best possible quality of life for all who live, work and visit here***' it is important we get our service offer right and ensure it continues to meet the ever changing demands placed upon us.

In national surveys to date we have received high satisfaction rates from our residents and it is important that we continue to do so.

Our key targets for the next 12 months are:

- Continue to deliver efficiency savings.
- Achieve the Excellence level of the Equality Framework for local government (formerly level 5) by March 2011.

- Achieve the Member Development Charter by the end of 2010.

Our longer term targets for 2015 are:

- To continue to deliver the Workforce Development Plan to improve the Council's leadership capacity, the skills and capacity of the workforce, and the organisation as a whole.

Making a difference to our community

In order to achieve the Council's vision we recognise that we must have an inclusive community where residents are not only safe but feel they are safe. Although the District already has a very low crime rate compared to the rest of the Country and other parts of Essex, the Council (as part of the LSP) aims to make the District even safer by actively playing its part in the CDRP, which involves a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies. The Council appreciates the link between high levels of community involvement and the feeling of safety and is therefore keen to promote vibrant communities.

Also important to the Council is the caring aspect, aiming to progress services and initiatives which deal with the more vulnerable sections of our community, either alone or in partnership with other public agencies, the private sector or the voluntary and community sector.

Our key targets for the next 12 months are:

- Improving our Council Tax and benefits capacity.
- Continue to improve service access and delivery for our community.
- Continue to develop and consolidate our partnership arrangements via the LSP and other partnerships such as the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to develop and improve service provision to our communities.

Our longer term targets for 2015 are:

- Through the local CDRP, to achieve sustainable levels of crime reduction and fear of crime by tackling crime and the causes of crime, targeting specific issues and particular problem areas where appropriate.
- Implement a series of initiatives aimed at providing more alternative facilities specifically for young people, with the intention to secure at least one new facility per year.
- To secure the delivery on average of 50 affordable housing units per year through the auspices of Rochford Housing Association.

Making a difference to our environment

We are committed to looking after the environment of the District; protecting the amenities of residents and preparing plans for future development that are well designed and sustainable.

Growing awareness of the impact of climate change means that the work we do for the benefit of the District and the plans we prepare for the future must be carefully considered, be sustainable, and balance the needs of residents, workers and visitors against our long-term ambition to protect and enhance the environment.

Our key targets for the next 12 months are:

- Progressing the LDF Core Strategy through its inquiry stage.
- Implementing the Action Plan that supports the Councils Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy – Climate Co2de.
- Improve the customer facilities and access arrangements for Cherry Orchard Country Park.

- Continue to improve recycling rates and complete the roll out of the new scheme to flats and mobile home sites.
- Provide robust evidence for our Use of Natural Resources assessment.
- Continue to monitor and seek improvement in local air quality.

Our longer term targets for 2015 are:

- To ensure that community facilities provision and access to these is considered in all new major residential developments.
- Progressing the LDF Core Strategy through its enquiry stage.
- Exceed a 60% recycling rate.
- To work on reducing the Council's own carbon dioxide emissions by 10% (based upon 2008 baseline).
- Secure access from Cherry Orchard link road, and improve footpath and cycle access through the expanded Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.
- To continue to improve and upgrade our parks and open spaces through a rolling programme of open space refurbishment.
- To support the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in its proposals to secure the Wallasea Island wetlands project for bird watching and other recreation.
- To utilise the LDF process to support and enhance our built heritage of listed buildings conservation areas and locally important buildings.

Making a difference to our local economy

The Council seeks to work with partners to support local businesses through the recession. In addition the Council will seek to maximise and encourage economic growth for the benefit of the communities in the area.

The District of Rochford is located within the Thames Gateway South Essex sub region. Within South Essex, considerable change to the economy and social environment is planned with an increase of 55,000 net additional jobs across the sub region by 2021 – approximately 20%. There are currently 21,000 jobs in the District and very low rates of unemployment. However, outward migration is high with 68% of workers commuting out of the District to work.

To meet the aspirations of our communities and to begin to sow the seeds for more dynamic and sustainable employment locally, we need to further develop the regeneration of our employment areas and town centres. At this first stage, key to this process will be the planning policies contained in our LDF.

Our key targets for the next 12 months are:

- Progressing the Joint Area Action Plan in partnership with Southend Borough Council, covering London Southend Airport and environs.
- Implementing the Action plan associated with the new Economic Development Strategy, particularly those measures highlighted to combat recession and encourage regeneration.
- Progressing the three town centre studies for Hockley, Rochford and Rayleigh to detailed action plans for each centre.

Our longer term targets for 2015 are:

- To work with the County Council as highway authority, to look at potential solutions to the current congestion problems across the District to ensure the highway infrastructure becomes 'fit for purpose' and at the same time, discuss with them the public transport network to ensure a more frequent, reliable and comprehensive system with better linkages between bus and rail.
- Continue to implementing the Action plan associated with the new Economic Development Strategy.
- Through the LDF process, to seek to develop policies which result in the replacement of the old and poorly located industrial estates within the District. At the same time, to identify the provision of new employment areas.
- To use the LDF process to secure the long-term future of the wharfage at Baltic Wharf as an employment area and ensure that appropriate access infrastructure is put in place.

Corporate Plan – Action Plan 2010 – 2011

The Corporate Plan Action Plan highlights our key targets that the authority will be working towards over the next twelve months.

Making a difference to our people			
Key Targets	Deadline	Key Activities & Actions	Portfolio Holder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to deliver efficiency savings 	March 2011	Identification of savings reported to Executive July 2010. Savings incorporated into revised estimates by December 2010. Report on achievement of savings for 2010/11 as part of the final accounts	Leader, Deputy Leader & Finance & Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver the Council's Strategic Improvement plan. 	March 2011	Quarterly reporting on implementation to Executive Monitor progress at the quarterly meetings of the Improvement Board (whose membership includes the Council's external auditors and the Audit Commission) Learn from results of the 2009/10 Comprehensive Area Assessment, including the Organisational Assessment, which will be published in the Autumn 2010	Leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To achieve the Member Development Charter 	December 2010	Implement the action plan through the Charter Implementation Group and the Member Learning and Development Programme and achieve charter status by December 2010	Standards Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To achieve the Excellence level of the Equality Framework for local government 	March 2011	Implement the Action Plan for achieving "Excellence".	Deputy Leader

Making a difference to our community			
Key Targets	Deadline	Key Activities & Actions	Portfolio Holder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop and consolidate our partnership arrangements via the LSP and other partnerships such as the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) to develop and improve service provision to our communities, particularly around the ageing population 	March 2011	Continue to implement shared performance framework for all partnerships that operate under the auspices of the Local Strategic Partnership. Finalise restructuring of Local Strategic Partnership arrangements. Produce a new strategic assessment for the CDRP Produce a new partnership plan for CDRP Ensure progress against a range of smart targets for all partnerships under the Local Strategic Partnership Revised Sustainable Communities Plan for the Local Strategic Partnership	Leader & Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care & Well-being, Health and Community Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to improve our council tax and benefits service 	Ongoing	Explore the potential opportunities for joint working or the provision of shared services with other public agencies. Further options are being considered, including full shared service, with a full detailed business case being commissioned for receipt by end of February 2010.	Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing Functions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to improve service access and delivery for our community 	March 2011	Deliver 5 Public Sector Information Days as part of the Local Strategic Partnership Report to the Executive on the proposals for new reception space at Rochford Council Offices. Progress to planning permission stage (pending Executive approval)	Leader, Deputy Leader & Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care & Well-being, Health and Community Safety

Making a difference to our environment			
Key Targets	Deadline	Key Activities & Actions	Portfolio Holder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing the LDF Core Strategy through its inquiry stage and then to adoption 	October 2010	A public examination will be held in May 2010, and it is anticipated that following receipt of the inspector's report, the plan will be adopted in October 2010.	Planning and Transportation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing the Action Plan that supports the Councils Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy – Climate Co2de 	Ongoing	Deliver the agreed programme of community and Council based activities; review plans and policies and instigate any necessary improvements	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the customer facilities and access arrangements for Cherry Orchard Country Park 	Feb 2011 Feb 2011 Dec 2010	Additional car parking at Grove Woods Permissive route established through New England Wood More tree planting (Arboretum fruit trees)	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to improve recycling rates 	March 2011	Complete the roll out of the new scheme to flats and mobile home sites	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide robust evidence for our Use of Natural Resources assessment. 	September 2010	Undertake an environmental audit of Council activities together with those of our contractors and implement appropriate remedial action.	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor and seek improvement in local air quality 	Ongoing	Following declaration of an Air Quality Management Area for the Rawreth Industrial Estate, an Action Plan will be developed by July 2011. The action plan will be submitted to DEFRA for their approval.	Environment

Making a difference to our local economy			
Key Targets	Deadline	Key Activities & Actions	Portfolio Holder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Joint Area Action Plan in partnership with Southend Borough Council, covering London Southend Airport and its environs. 	April 2011	Preparation of the submission version of the plan, followed by a public examination and adoption following the receipt of the inspector's report.	Planning and Transportation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing the Action plan associated with the new Economic Development Strategy, particularly those measures highlighted to combat recession and encourage regeneration. 	March 2011	Improving the business support offer Establishing the employment and skills LSP sub group Conducting the young entrepreneur of the year awards Conduct a feasibility study for a new Enterprise Centre	Leisure, Tourism, Heritage, the Arts, Culture and Business
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing the three town centre studies for Hockley, Rochford and Rayleigh to detailed action plans for each centre 	April – June 2012	Community consultation in 2010, followed by the preparation of the submission version of each town centre area action plan. It is anticipated that each plan will be subject to a public examination following submission in 2011/12, leading to adoption in early 2012/13.	Planning and Transportation



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LOCAL DEMOCRACY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION ACT 2009 - PETITIONS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 From 15 June 2010 all Councils are required to respond to petitions received in accordance with a scheme established for the purpose. This report proposes a scheme based on the model contained in statutory guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) together with related amendments to the Council's constitution.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Following consultation on draft statutory guidance and secondary legislation to support the "petitions duty" under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the Secretary of State made an Order on 19 March 2010 requiring all local authorities to establish a scheme for handling petitions made to the authority.

- 2.2 The scheme:-

- must be approved by a meeting of Full Council before it comes into force,
- be published on the Council's website and by any other method appropriate,
- can be amended at any time but the revision must be approved by Full Council and published in the same way and
- the authority must comply with its petition scheme.

3 REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1 CLG statutory guidance published on 30 March 2010 states that the minimum requirements for a scheme are that:-

- anyone who lives, works or studies in the local authority area, including under 18's, can sign or organise a petition and trigger a response
- a facility for making electronic petitions is provided by the local authority (because of the difficulty of introducing an electronic facility at short notice, this element of the duty will not come into force until 15 December 2010.)
- petitions must be acknowledged within a time period specified by the local authority

- among the many possible steps that the authority may choose to take in response to a petition, the following must be included amongst the options listed in the scheme:-
 - taking the action requested in the petition
 - considering the petition at a meeting of the authority
 - holding an inquiry
 - holding a public meeting
 - commissioning research
 - a written response to the petition organiser setting out the authority's views on the request in the petition
 - referring the petition to an overview and scrutiny committee
- petitions with a significant level of support trigger a debate of the Full Council. This threshold can be determined locally, the model provides for 1500 signatures, but it must be no higher than 5 per cent of the local population
- petitions with a requisite level of support, set by the local authority, trigger a senior local government officer to give evidence at a meeting of the authority's overview and scrutiny committee. The model provides for 750 signatures
- petition organisers can prompt a review of the local authority's response if the response is felt to be inadequate.

4 THE SCHEME

- 4.1 A model scheme is included with the CLG guidance. This model has been used as the basis for a draft scheme although the table of examples of petition subjects and appropriate steps for the Council to take contained in the model has been omitted as tending to prejudge the outcome of such issues. The model has been adapted to provide for the introduction of a facility for e-petitions by 15 December 2010.
- 4.2 The draft is attached as an appendix to this report. If agreed, the Scheme will be incorporated into Part 5 of the Council's Constitution.
- 4.3 It will also be necessary to amend the Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 to provide for receiving petitions at ordinary meetings of the Council. To this end, it is proposed to add the following to those rules:-
- after paragraph 2(v)

“2(vi) receive petitions in accordance with the Council's petitions scheme contained in Part 5”.
 - after paragraph 10

“11 - Petitions

11.1 - Presentation of Petitions

A petition organiser or person acting on their behalf will be allowed a maximum 5 minutes to present a petition that has been properly submitted in accordance with the Council's petitions scheme.

11.2 - Petitions Requiring Debate

Petitions with the requisite number of signatories will be allowed a maximum 15 minutes for debate.

No more than 4 petitions will be set down for debate at any one ordinary meeting of the Council.

11.3 - Order of Petitions

Petitions will be presented in the order in which they are received unless the Chairman decides otherwise.

11.4 - Response to petitions following debate

The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting by either:-

- Taking the action requested in the petition
- Not taking the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate
- Commissioning further investigation into the matter or
- Deciding whether to make recommendations where the matter falls to the Executive to make the final decision

11.5 - Notification of Response

The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of the decision made and this will be published on the Council's website.”

- 4.4 The numbering of paragraphs in the Council Procedure Rules will require amending to accommodate the above.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The government acknowledges that costs will arise from increased work for officers, time at council meetings and overview and scrutiny committees, and set up costs for e-petitions.

- 5.2 Local authorities will each receive a grant for 2010/11. This amount will vary by local authority dependent on the local population and has yet to be determined. CLG state that it expects funding for future years to be incorporated into the revenue support grant.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council is under a statutory duty to introduce a scheme for petitions. It will be necessary to review the scheme later in the year with regard to e-petitions.
- 6.2 It is likely that the level of compliance with CLG guidance will form part of the Audit Commission's inspection regime.

Petitions

All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out how the petition is to be dealt with. We will treat something as a petition if it is identified as being a petition or if it seems to us that it is intended to be a petition.

Paper petitions can be sent to:-

The Member Services Manager, Rochford District Council, Council Offices, South Street, Rochford, Essex SS4 1BW

Or, from 15 December 2010, in electronic form if created, signed and submitted online by following a procedure to be introduced for the purpose and to be set out on the Council's website.

Petitions can also be presented to a meeting of the Council. These meetings take place on a regular basis and dates and times are published by Notice and on the Council's website. To present a petition to the Council in person, or to request your Councillor or someone else to present it on your behalf, please contact our Member Services team on 01702 546366 at least 10 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process.

If your petition has received 1500 signatures or more it will be scheduled for debate at Full Council in any event. If this is the case we will let you know whether this will happen at the same meeting you present your petition or at a later meeting of the Council.

What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

Petitions submitted to the Council must include:-

- a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition
- what action the petitioners wish the Council to take
- the name and address and signature of the persons supporting the petition

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the Council's website.

If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted.

Appendix

In the period immediately before an election or referendum we may need to deal with your petition differently – if this is the case we will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which will apply.

If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the Council may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case, we will write to you to explain the reasons.

What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again. It will also be published on our website.

If we can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Council debate, or a senior officer giving evidence, then the acknowledgment will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

If the petition applies to a planning or licensing application, is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor), or on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as Council tax banding and non-domestic rates, other procedures apply and the matter will be dealt with accordingly. Further information on all these procedures and how you can express your views is available on our website.

We will not take action on any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.

To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, the details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.

How will the Council respond to petitions?

Our response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it, but may include one or more of the following:-

- taking the action requested in the petition
- considering the petition at a Council meeting
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- referring the petition for consideration by the Council's Review Committee*

- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views on the request in the petition

*The Review Committee is an overview and scrutiny committee of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – in other words, the Review Committee has the power to hold the Council’s decision makers to account.

In addition to these steps, the Council will consider what specific actions are available to address the issues highlighted in a petition.

The Council’s response to a petition will set out the steps we intend to take and the reasons for taking this approach.

If the petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. The Council works with a large number of local partners and where possible will work with these partners to respond to the petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you. You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible on our website.

If the petition is about something that a different Council is responsible for we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. This might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other Council, but could involve other steps. In any event we will always notify you of the action we have taken.

Full Council debates

If a petition contains more than 1,500 signatures it will be debated by the Full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior Council officer to give evidence at a public meeting.

This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next ordinary meeting although on some occasions this may not be possible and it will then be referred to the next following meeting.

The petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes.

The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. It may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee. Where the issue is one on which the Council Executive are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. The petition organiser will receive

written confirmation of the decision. This confirmation will also be published on the Council's website.

Officer evidence

A petition may ask for a senior Council officer to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, the petition may ask a senior Council officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected members to enable them to make a particular decision.

If your petition contains at least 750 signatures, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Review Committee. The senior officers that can be called to give evidence are those officers who are members of the Council's Senior Management Team. Their details can be found on the Council's website.

The Review Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer to give evidence instead of any officer named in a petition, for instance if the named officer has changed jobs. The committee may also decide to call the relevant Portfolio Holder to attend the meeting. Committee members will ask the questions at this meeting, but the petition organiser will be able to suggest questions to the Chairman of the Committee by contacting the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Officer at the above address or on 01702 546366 up to three working days before the meeting.

E-petitions

The Council intends to introduce e-petitions by 15 December 2010. These will be created and submitted through the Council's website. E-petitions will follow the same guidelines as paper petitions.

The petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and email address and will also need to decide how long the petition is to be open for signatures. Most petitions are expected to run for six months, but you will be able to choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of 12 months.

We expect the following to apply to our e-petitions;

- When you create an e-petition, it may take five working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature. If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within 10 working days, a summary of the petition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published under the 'rejected petitions' section of the website.

Appendix

- When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to our Member Services team. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days. If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting of the Council, please contact Member Services as above within 10 working days of receipt of the acknowledgement.
- A petition acknowledgement and response will be emailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The acknowledgment and response will also be published on this website.
- All the e-petitions currently available for signature will be on our website.
- When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, your postcode and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email to the email address you have provided. This email will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is complete your 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed it but your contact details will not be visible.

What can I do if I feel my petition has not been dealt with properly?

If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the Council's Review Committee review the steps that the Council has taken in response to your petition. The petition organiser must give a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.

The Committee will endeavour to consider the request at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will take place at the following meeting. Should the committee determine the Council has not dealt with the petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the Council Executive and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the Full Council.

Once the appeal has been considered the petition organiser will be informed of the results within 5 working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.