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## ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Annual Report for 2015/16 outlines the highlights and successes of Rochford District Council in 2015/16 and includes a summarised view of the financial position 2015/16 (pre audit).

### 2 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

- 2.1 The Annual Report includes summarised financial information for the financial year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.
- 2.2 The Financial Statements for the year are signed off by the Section 151 Officer, 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 13 September 2016, 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.
- 2.3 Further copies of the Financial Statements are available on request from the Section 151 Officer.

### 3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Contained within the report.

### 4 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

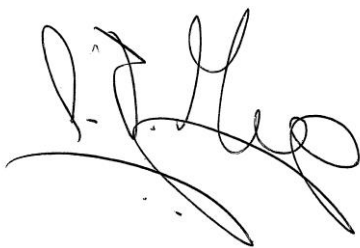
- 4.1 It is a legal requirement under s25 of the Local Government Act 2003 to set a balanced budget and monitor the financial position throughout the year.

### 5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no specific equality implications aligned to the decisions within this report.

### 6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES**
- (1) That, subject to Member comments and changes resulting from the audit of the accounts, the Annual Report be agreed for publication.
  - (2) That the audited Financial Statements for 2015/16 be presented to September's Audit Committee meeting for approval with the external auditor's report.



Rob Manning

Section 151 Officer

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**Background Papers:-**

None.

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## **1 Leaders Foreword**

This is the Annual Report for Rochford District Council for 2015/16, highlighting the key success and challenges we have faced in this turbulent year.

This has been a year of change and a year of challenges that have meant we have had to face up to difficult decisions and stand firm on those commitments we have made to residents over the previous years.

The difficult financial situation has meant that the Council has had to work together to come up with innovative solutions as well as take a long hard look at how we are structured and perform.

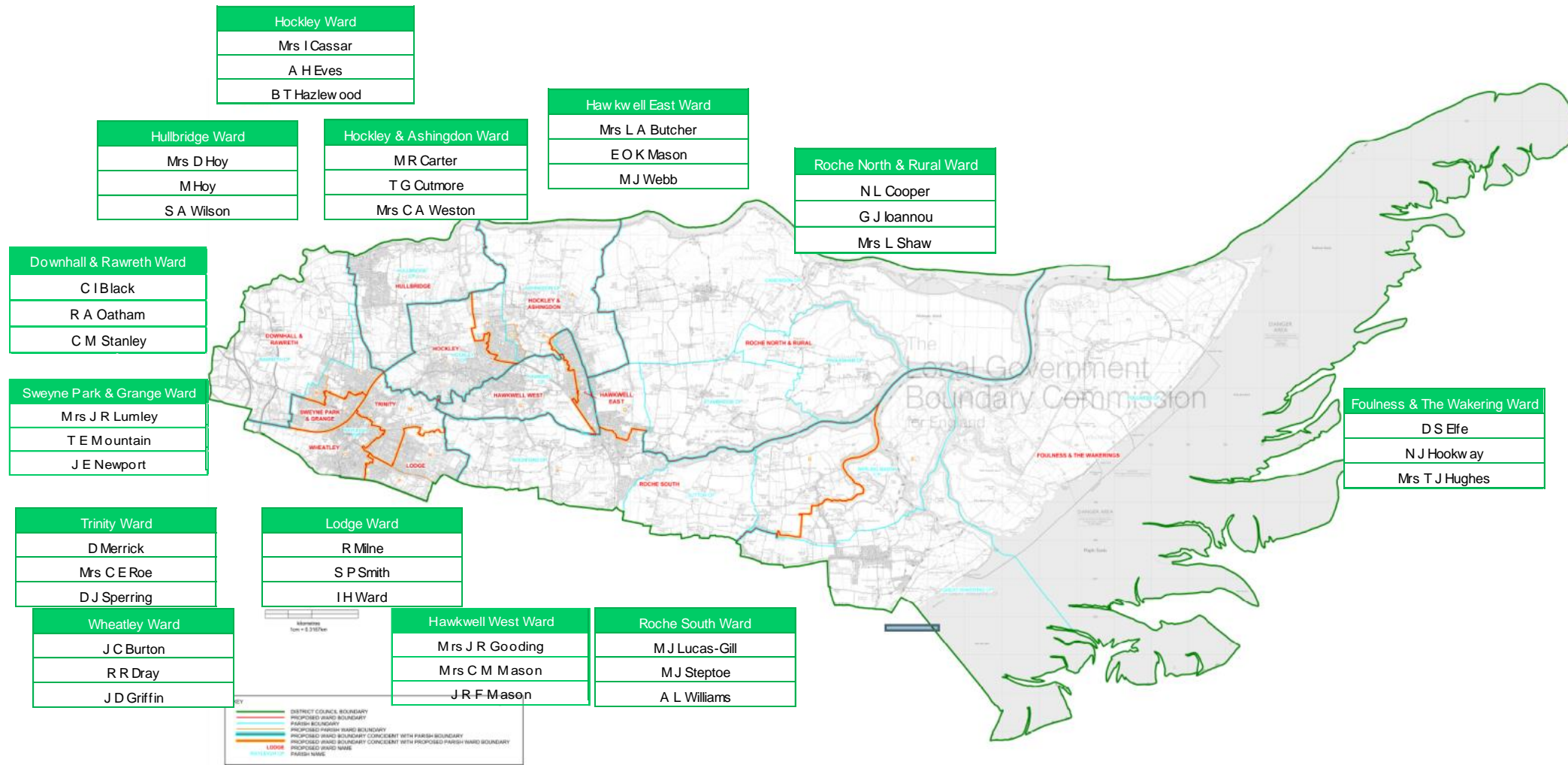
Notwithstanding the increasing financial pressures we face, from government reductions in funding, to increase demand for services through to inflationary pressures, we, as a Council have had many success stories, from the Flood alleviation projects to the creation of the investment board, to drive the districts ambition forward, through maximised use of resources and funding.

Feedback from residents is good, across the board, but we are listening, we will review our services so that we provide more of what is important to the resident, we will promote safeguarding of our young and vulnerable and we will endeavour to help provide good quality homes for all of our residents. All of this must be done through wise and prudent spending; it is your money we are spending after all.















**Terry Cutmore**  
**Leader of the Council**

## 2 Our Councillors



### 3 Rochford by the numbers

	£342,000 spent on housing adaptations increasing residents independence		244 new homes built
Recycling rate 66%		0.01% missed bins vs total collected	
	Budget underspend of £1.1m		710 planning applications approved
£154,000 Flood grants to Residents & Businesses		Zero safety related claims	
	Rochford Business Network support for 420 local businesses		703,892 individual visits to Leisure facilities
Exciting new developments considered		Produced a balanced budget for 2016/17	





## 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 2016 include:-

- **Customer, Revenues and Benefits Services:** Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits, Debt
- **Environmental Services:** Open Spaces, Street scene, Car Parks/Transport, Emergency Planning
- **Planning Services:** Planning, Building Control, Economic Development
- **Resources Services:** Payments and Income, Finance, 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, Private Housing, Housing Options, Safeguarding
- **Commercial Services:** Asset Management, Procurement, Leisure, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity.

## 5 Key Highlights and Successes

“The council does a splendid job overall...” *Rochford district resident*

Flood alleviation projects – works at the following areas have been successfully completed – Turret House public open space, rear of Blower Close, Nobles Green ditch, Rawreth Brook, Chapel Lane, rear of Rectory Avenue, a feasibility study regarding Rawreth Brook has also been carried out.

Partnerships – successfully working with Anglian Water, Environment Agency and ECC Highways together with Parish and Town Councils regarding flooding via the Flood Forum. The Flood Forum was started to bring together residents affected by flooding in December 2013 with the different agencies who have responsibilities to improve flood resilience in the District. This has resulted in a number of improvements delivered in 2015/16.

Rochford District Council promoted and administered the Government Grant for property level flood protection work, giving £98,502 to residents and £56,094 to businesses.



Working in partnership with Enterprise in Education to deliver Our Young Entrepreneurs event, the winners of our 2015 event created an advert for London Southend Airport, which so impressed, they were invited by LSA management to film the ad on site. Events like YE will continue to encourage engagement with the local business community to increase youth employment opportunities, including work experience, apprenticeships and develop links with secondary schools to bridge the skills gap.

Continue to support new and existing businesses to; find premises, recruit and train staff, sign post and liaise with internal and external services, source grant funding, provide networking opportunities and respond to all types of business needs and enquiries.

Management of the Rochford Business Network (RBN), continuing to add new members' year on year, to provide information & support for over **420** of our local businesses.





“We fully appreciate the difficulties that most public bodies are facing to save money”  
*Rochford district resident*

PARKMARK (Police accredited ‘Safer Parking Scheme’) Award retained for all our car parks.

Review and installation of new and updated Advance Directional Signage to our car parks completed.

Enhanced theft-security added to all our Pay & Display ticket machines.

A successful prosecution following investigation into fly tipping, working in partnership with Southend BC

Recycling Team were finalists in 2015 letsrecycle.com awards for Excellence in Recycling and Waste Management

Maintained position in top three, local authority in country for recycling

Partnership working with McDonalds & KFC, ‘Clean for the Queen’ and other litter picking events

86% of residents report that their independence has increased because we have installed housing adaptations

95% of residents rate Rochford’s Community Safety Roadshows as excellent!

3rd lowest crime rate in Essex.

We have completed 332 food interventions and 94% of our Food Premises are now rated 3 or above

“Keep up the good work. These are hard times for everyone...”  
*Rochford district resident*

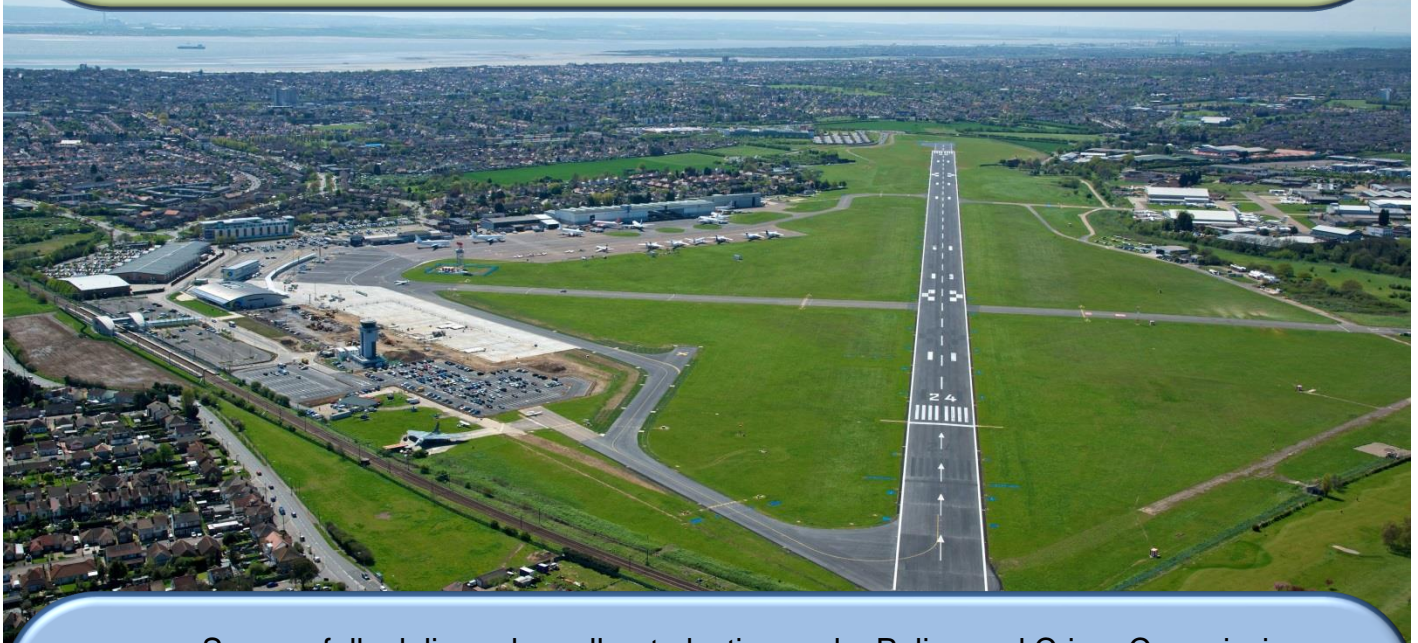
Active Colleagues - 2nd year of 3 year Sport England funded project successfully delivered.

572 individuals have now accessed the project across both Rochford District and Castle Point with throughput of 4,462

Active Rochford funding, £8,350 funding secured from Active Essex to deliver the following projects:

- Active Rochford Apprentice
- Sports Club Forum
- Health tasters and festival
- Family activity sessions
- Outdoor health

Rochford and Castle Point Sports Awards 2015, Successful event delivered, sponsored by Fusion Lifestyle, £5,125 of sponsorship secured.



- Successfully delivered an all-out election and a Police and Crime Commissioner election
- Roll out new member training over three nights by Assistant Directors
- Produce a balanced budget for 2016/17, against a backdrop of a 50% RSG reduction by central government
- Created the investment board, to drive the districts ambition forward, through maximised use of resources and funding
- Electoral Boundary Review successfully implemented
- Council Business Plan approved
- HR Policy and Procedure Review completed
- Live Web Chat introduced and is receiving excellent feedback from the public

## 6 Financial Summary

The Financial Summary below provides a simplified view of the full Statement of Accounts which is largely prescribed by accounting standards that apply to all local authorities. An unaudited version of the full Statement of Accounts is available on the website, and full Audited version can be requested from September onwards from the Finance team at Rochford District Council.

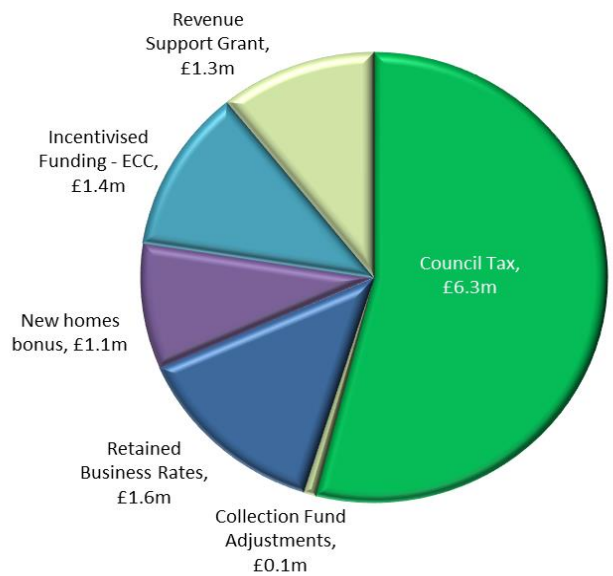
2015-2016 Rochford District Council spends approximately £11m providing services to its residents and businesses.

From the funding position shown right, it is clear, the Council is becoming more self-sufficient financially, with less reliance on central government, meaning local decision making is at the heart of everything it does.

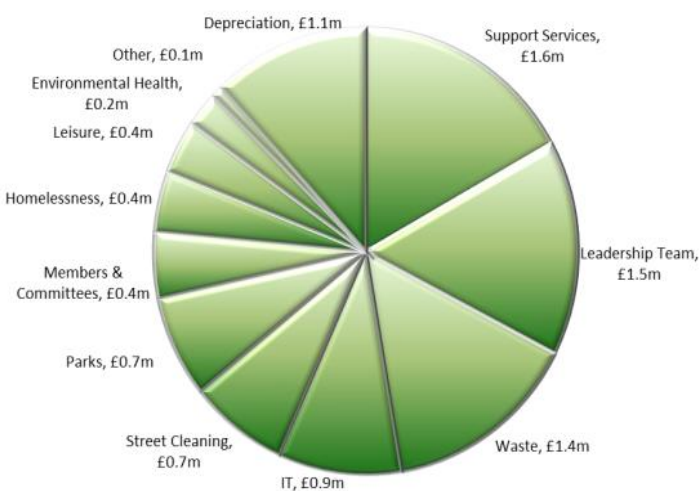
For RDC to meet these Council Tax and Business Rates figures as per the graph right), the Council had to collect 98.4% and 98.5% respectively for the entire year, which has been achieved through the continuing partnership with our residents, businesses and the Council itself.

2015/16 has been a year of change for Rochford District Council; it has been through a major restructure, streamlining the organisation to enable the Council to continue to provide exceptional services in challenging financial times.

**RDC Sources of funding 2015/16 £m**



**2015/16 Actual Spend by major item £m**



These challenges have been met through strong leadership and resilience, when combined with good financial stewardship mean that RDC has reduced expenditure by £1.1m compared to the budget for the year.

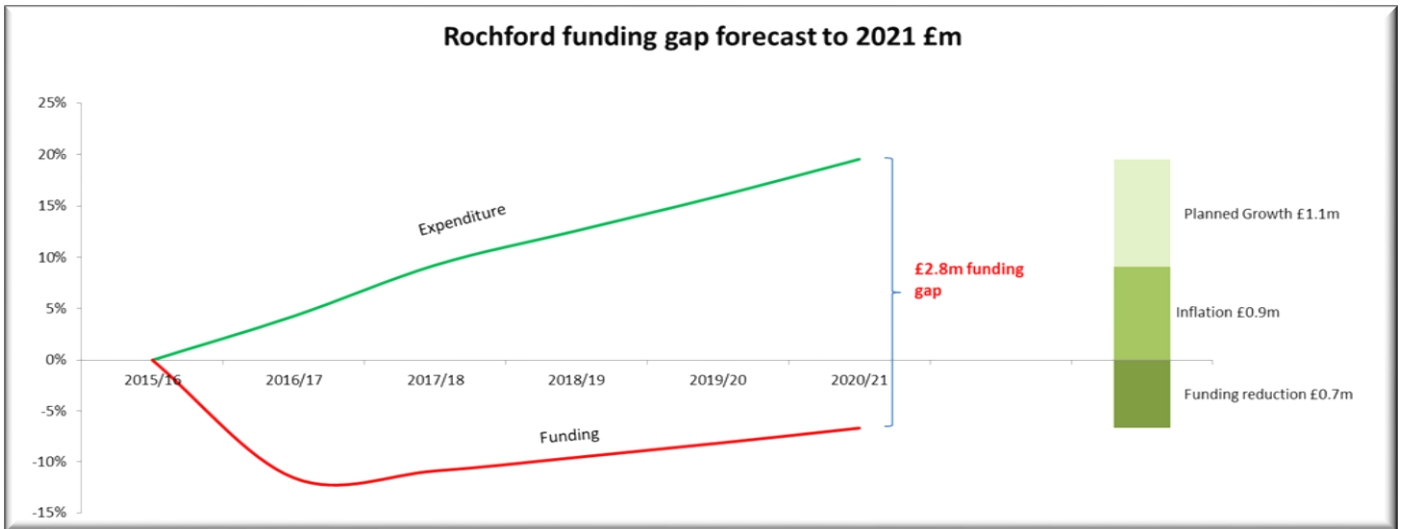
This reduction is not the result of services being turned off or decisions being put on hold, but by careful management of the limited resources available, and by focussing on the Business Plan throughout the organisation, it ensures each pound saved is public money that will not be wasted.



## 7 Looking Ahead

The future position which RDC faces financially will be challenging, in the autumn a forecast difference between funding available and the expenditure of the organisation was identified of approx. **£2.8m by 2021**

The graph below represents the Medium Term Financial Strategy of Rochford, from both a funding and expenditure point of view.



By 2021, there is a forecast funding gap of £2.8 million, due to a perfect storm of:

- reducing government funding (through the Revenue Support Grant being halved and then removed within two years);
- growth in services through demographic changes and increased service need; and
- increasing inflationary pressures (such as the Living Wage).

However, Rochford District Council has taken bold steps in 2015/16 to address these pressures. Through **cross party workshops and collaboration**, the Council has agreed a transformation programme linked to the Rochford Business Plan which will make difficult decisions and drive savings from the cost base to meet this financial gap head on, so far **£2.4m** of savings & income ideas are being considered, leaving **£0.4m remaining gap**.

Savings & income plans of **£0.8m** were approved in the 2016/17 Budget as set in Council in February; further ideas / concepts were included for future years but these are not yet approved and will be considered in future budget rounds, but the Council cannot shy away from tough decisions that will need to be made in these fiscally challenging times.

“I think you have done well to keep costs down...” *Rochford district resident*

8 The Business Plan

# BUSINESS PLAN 2016 2020



## OUR PRIORITIES

*“Our residents will be at the heart of everything we do”*

**We will enable our staff to meet future challenges by working in a business-like way;**

**We will enable our communities to help deliver services which they consider to be specifically important to them;**

**We will create opportunities to maximise income to continue delivering services;**

**We will help this District become renowned as a leading regional centre in the science, medical and technology sectors within the next 10-20 years;**

**We will support new and existing businesses;**

**We will make the most of our coastal areas.**

### BECOME FINANCIALLY SELF-SUFFICIENT

- We will set up a trading arm and increase our traded services to generate investment income and make us more 'self sufficient';
- We will pursue large scale commercial projects to generate income;
- We will ensure our commercial activity will, where possible, have social benefits;
- We will use local businesses and resources whenever possible whilst ensuring Best Value;
- We will review our services so that we provide more of what is important to our residents.

### EARLY INTERVENTION

- We will use early intervention to manage demand on our services;
- We will endeavour to help to provide good quality homes for all of our residents by bringing, for example, more empty properties back into use;
- We will promote the safeguarding of our young and vulnerable residents;
- We will work closely with those partners who will help us achieve our aims, especially those whose focus is on early intervention and prevention.

### MAXIMISE OUR ASSETS

- We will ensure that all of our assets are fully utilised to maximise income whilst ensuring social purpose.

### ENABLE COMMUNITIES

- We will engage with all parts of our communities, including Parish Councils, businesses and our residents, to encourage the most efficient way to provide services and to help create full employment, including more apprenticeships.

*To achieve these priorities we will create a culture in the Council that is: focussed on real outcomes, not process; proactive; flexible; able to make decisions promptly; business-like; empathetic; willing to take risks whilst maintaining appropriate safeguards.*

*How we will achieve our priorities: a number of detailed delivery plans will emerge from this business plan; these will set out how we will achieve the objectives set out in this plan.*



## 9 Closing Statement

Rochford District Council will continue to face challenging times; demand on the services we provide is rising, whilst the level of funding we receive is falling. One thing that is certain, is that there is uncertainty ahead and the result of the recent referendum adds to that uncertainty.

In order to meet these challenges the Council has a Business Plan which sets out our key priorities, and a linked Medium Term Financial Strategy designed to deliver robust financial planning, stewardship and budgetary management. In times of uncertainty it is ever more important that we keep our focus and follow our carefully prepared plans.

Over the past year it has been evident that we are well on the way to making our foundations strong. This means being financially sustainable, with an organisational culture that is fit and ready to meet these challenges head on.

With strong foundations in place we can continue to do what Rochford District Council does best, which is to put the residents at the heart of everything we do and deliver excellent services.



Shaun Scrutton

**Managing Director**



Nicholas Khan

**Executive Director**