
ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the draft Annual Report for Members' consideration.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 All Members will have received a copy of the Quarterly Performance Indicators report which was considered by the Executive on 20 June 2012 and information from that has also been used in the compilation of the appended draft Annual Report. Quarterly Performance Statistic Reports for each Division are also available on the Council website by selecting "Quarterly Performance Reports" from the A to Z of Services – the website address is www.rochford.gov.uk.

3 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

- 3.1 The Annual Report includes summarised financial information for the financial year 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012. The Financial Statements for the year were signed off by the Head of Finance, as the responsible officer, on 22 June 2012, 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 26 September 2012, together with the external auditor's report on their audit work. In the meantime, a copy of the draft Financial Statements has been placed in the Members' Library and published on the Council's website. Further copies of the Financial Statements are available on request from the Head of Finance. The Annual Report will be published on the website, with hard copies available on request.
- 3.2 Once the financial information has been audited, a copy of the information presented in the Annual Report will be included in the Autumn edition of Rochford District Matters in order to give it as wide an audience as possible amongst our residents.
- 3.3 Hard copies of the Annual Report will be available on request, sent to the local libraries and to the media and at both receptions.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Failure to report on our performance means that we are missing the opportunity to let residents and interested organisations know what the Council has delivered and achieved during the year.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 By restricting production of the Annual Report to the website and Rochford District Matters, with hard copies limited to public areas and requests, the cost

will be kept to a minimum. The cost is mainly officer time in pulling the report together.

6 RECOMMENDATION

6.1 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES**

- (1) That, subject to Member comment and any changes resulting from the audit of the accounts, the Annual Report be agreed for publication.
- (2) To agree that the audited Financial Statements for 2011/12 will be presented to September's Audit Committee for approval with the External Auditor's report.

Yvonne Woodward
Head of Finance

Background Papers:-

None.

For further information please contact Yvonne Woodward (Head of Finance) on:-

Phone: 01702 546366, Ext. 3100

Email: yvonne.woodward@rochford.gov.uk

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

If you are interested in finding out more detailed information about the Council's performance or our plans, this can be found in the following documents:

- Corporate Plan 2012-2017
- Financial Statements 2011/12

These documents are available on our website **www.rochford.gov.uk**

The Council's Budget Book and Medium Term Financial Strategy are also available on our website.

Any of these documents can be obtained by contacting:

Contact: Financial Services
Email: **financialservices@rochford.gov.uk**
Writing to: Council Offices
South Street
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1BW
Phone: 01702 318029

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1 Introduction

We are pleased to introduce this report which will provide an overview of the Council's performance, spending and financial position for 2011/12 and aim to show what has been achieved in terms of service delivery and outcomes for our residents.

2011/12 was a particularly challenging year as we faced cuts in our Government funding of 16% and falls in income from planning and investments as a result of the economic situation. The Council started preparing for 2011/12 early in 2010 and had to take some tough decisions to balance the budget. The delivery of the achievements highlighted in this report during a time of unprecedented cost reductions together with continuing excellent level of performance across the Council demonstrates the Council's ability to cope with these through times. It is obvious that public sector spending will see further reductions and changes as the Government strive to reduce the deficit and this Council is prepared to meet those challenges.

Over the last year we have been working to deliver on our promise 'to make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best quality of life for all who live, work and visit here'. We have been striving to create an environment that is vibrant, safe, sustainable and modern whilst retaining the essential characteristics of the salt marshes, rivers, woodlands, open spaces, villages and market towns that make the District what it is today.

We cannot do this on our own and we have been working hard to develop networks through the public, private and community sectors within the District ensuring that this Council is seen as a credible partner to deliver for the community.

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



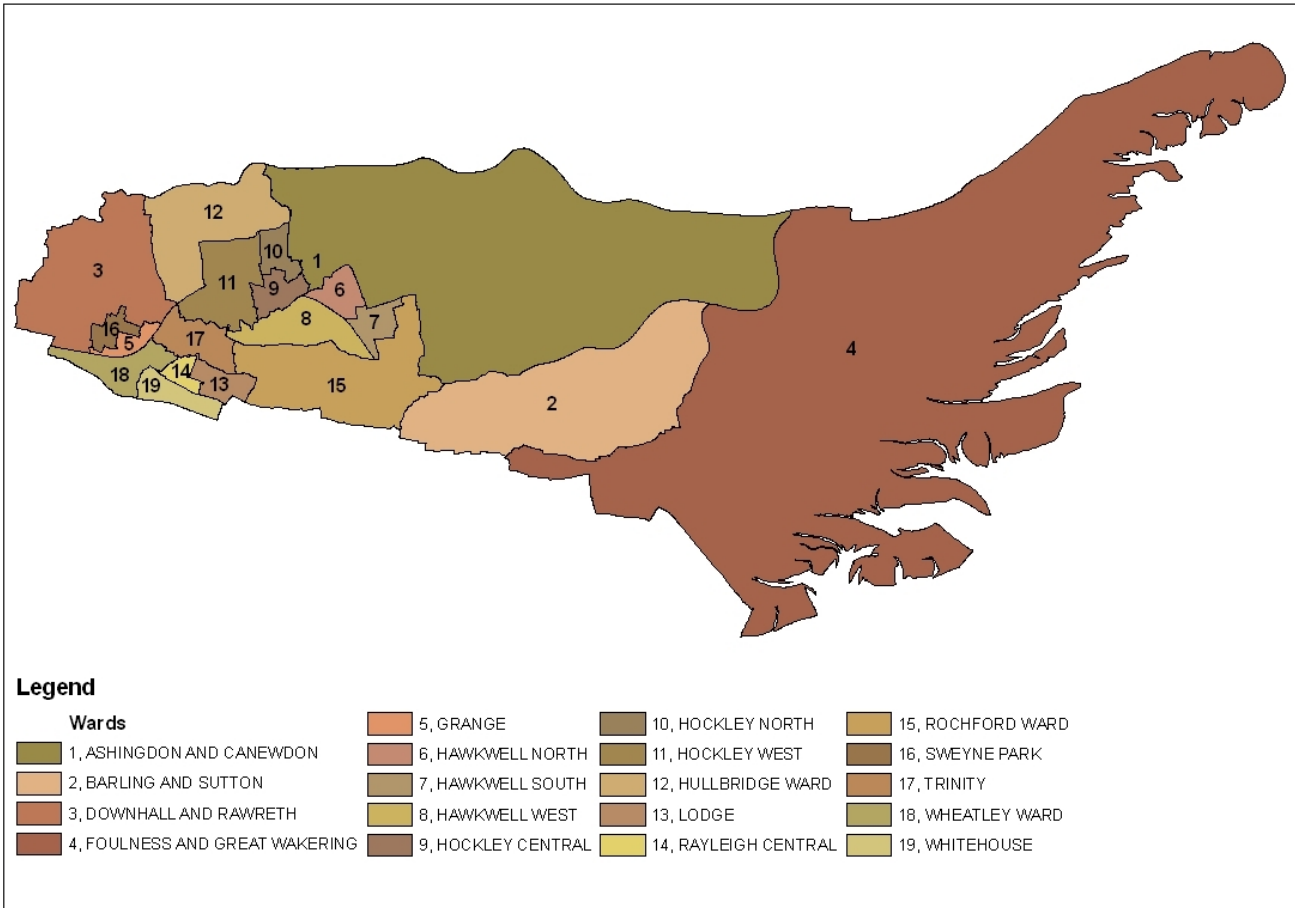
Terry Cutmore
Leader of the Council



Paul Warren
Chief Executive

2 Facts and Figures about Rochford District Council

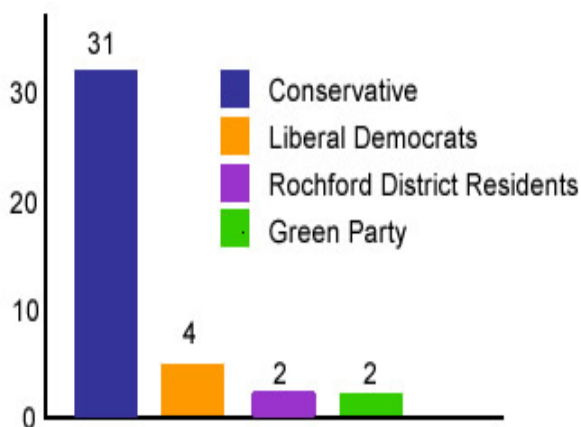
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2010 mid-year population estimates showed Rochford District as having a population of 83,400.
- The area is fairly affluent, ranking 299 out of 326 authorities nationally (1 is the most deprived and 326 the least).
- Owner occupied homes constitute 86% of households
- Private renting accounts for around 6% of households
- House prices are higher than the average for England & Wales
- The proportion of resident working age population in employment is high – ranking in the top 40% of districts nationally.
- The proportion of resident working age population unemployed is very low – ranking in the bottom 20% of districts nationally. In Rochford 4.9% of people are unemployed, compared to a regional average of 6.7% and a national figure of 7.7%.
- Rochford Council employs approximately 210 full time equivalent members of staff, with key services (e.g. refuse collection, street cleansing, leisure management) contracted to the private sector.
- The Council Tax base was 31,386 and the average Band D Council Tax bill in 2011/12 was £1,521.11
- The annual revenue budget for 2011/12 was £10.2m, compared to £11.5m in 2010/11.



3 Our Councillors

Rochford District Council has 39 Councillors representing the 19 wards across the District. Currently, the political composition of the Council is:

The Chairman of the Council for 2011/12 was Councillor Simon Smith and the Vice-Chairman was Councillor Mrs Joan Mockford.



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

4 Our Services

Local Government in Essex is largely structured into what is commonly termed ‘two-tiered’. This means that the responsibilities and service provision is shared between District and County Councils.

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

Rochford District Council includes:

Environmental Services which includes: Refuse Collection, Recycling, Public Open Spaces, Woodlands, Environmental Health and Licensing.

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

Planning & Transportation Services which includes: Development Management, Building Control, Spatial planning policy, Planning Enforcement, Taxi Licensing, Car Parking and Economic Development and Regeneration.

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

Information and Customer Services which includes: Elections, Customer Services, Office Support and Information and communications technology

Finance which includes: Audit, Financial Services and Performance Management

People & Policy which includes: Human Resources, Policy Development, Partnerships, Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, Internal and External Communications and Staff Engagement.

5 Our Vision

Our vision is:

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

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.

We see ourselves 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.

In achieving this vision we carry out our work in accordance with a set of values which we think are important. We will:

- 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.
- Coordinate the management of resources with an emphasis on sustainability.
- Value the contribution of partners, employees and citizens, trusting each other and working collaboratively.

6 Our Objectives

We want to achieve Value for Money and this underpins the Council's four main objectives:

Making a difference to our people

A key challenge for the Council is to continue to meet the increasing and changing expectations of our customers. For many, there is no choice but to use the service on offer and therefore it is important that we deliver our services in the most cost effective way, to a standard which is recognised as excellent.

Making a difference to our Community

We recognise that we must have an inclusive community where residents are not only safe but where they feel safe. The District already has a low crime rate compared to the rest of the country but we aim to make the District even safer by playing our part in the Community Safety Partnership which involves a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies.

The Council also aims to progress services and initiatives which deal with the more vulnerable sections of our community.

Making a difference to our Environment

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

We have a growing awareness of the impact of climate change and so, the work we do and the plans we make must be very carefully considered, must be sustainable and also balance the needs of residents, workers and visitors against our long term ambition to protect and enhance the environment.

Making a difference to our Local Economy

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

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

Objective 1 – Making a difference to our people

- We have continued to develop partnership working, delivering cost savings and increased revenue. This includes providing payroll services to Castle Point Borough Council and sharing an Environmental Services Manager. We are also part of the innovative Essex Legal Services Partnership, which has created a ‘virtual’ team of legal experts. A new IT contract has been procured in partnership with 3 other Councils, saving £7 million for the 4 Councils over the next five years.
- We continue to address the cuts in public spending and the impact of the reduction in Government funding, whilst maintaining essential services to our residents.
- We have achieved Excellence standard for the Equality Framework for Local Government.
- We have a firm commitment to animal welfare and have been awarded the RSPCA’s Silver Footprints award, recognising our Animal Welfare Charter and work with stray and abandoned animals.
- We are preparing for Universal Credit – the new benefit system that will replace most other forms of benefit.
- We continue to work in partnership with HR teams across Essex, via the Vine HR Partnership, who won a national award for **Innovation in Workforce Skills and Development – recognition of our unique approach to developing joint HR project to help us make savings and deliver an e-learning platform for our staff.**
- Our Customer Services Team, created in 2010, has developed into an efficient initial point of contact, by telephone or in person at our Receptions, providing swift and effective information and assistance.
- We have also continued to improve service access by holding 5 well received public information days.
- During 2011/12, officers dealt with 530 Freedom of Information requests, compared to 403 requests in 2010/11.
- The Council received 86 complaints, 179 compliments and 11 comments during 2011/2012, compared to 128 complaints, 150 compliments and 13 comments during 2010/2011.
- Affordable sports and arts activities for children aged 0 to 16 are provided across the District during school holidays, delivered in partnership with Virgin Active. 3,216 children attended our organised events and the recognised brand is now established and respected. It provides a one-stop shop for parents/guardians, who have provided very positive feedback.



- We work in partnership with Extended Schools, Virgin active, and others, on 'activerochford', to create, develop and promote opportunities for local people to take part in sport, physical activity and well-being opportunities in the Rochford District.
- The Council has been recognised nationally as having one of the best-performing websites in the country. The website continues to provide many services including applying for planning permission, paying Council tax or business rates, reporting graffiti or even paying a parking penalty.
- £2,012 worth of local business sponsorship was secured to support 2 talented athletes in the District. The scheme has seen increased exposure and promotion for the participating businesses, whilst giving invaluable support to the athletes, which has allowed them to continue competing at the highest level.
- Active Plus Games is a project aimed at increasing participation in the over 50 age group and has been awarded the London 2012 Inspire Mark, which recognises innovative and exceptional projects that are directly inspired by the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- During 2011-12, 3,776 people attended health walks – the largest number recorded in a 12 month period since the scheme started. Midway through the year we also took on the coordination of Castle Point health walks through funding from Essex County Council. Volunteer walk leaders now hold joint meetings to share good practice and an innovative new training programme is being trialled, giving a more practical hands-on approach to training new walk leaders.
- The 'Walking your way to the Games' project has been awarded the London 2012 Inspire Mark, which recognises innovative and exceptional projects that are direct inspired by the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The project is delivered in partnership with Essex County Council, activecastlepoint and South East Essex Ramblers. 5 walks took place over a 12 month period, linked to the Olympic rings.

Objective 2 – Making a difference to our community

- There has been a 28.5% reduction (unaudited) in the number of reports of anti-social behaviour to the police and we continue to raise awareness of reporting these incidents, including an online reporting via our website.
- Hate Crime Awareness Workshops are being delivered to secondary schools within the District. This pilot project was part of a wider Be Safer project that has received 2 national improvement awards for our work within this field. A Hate Crime page has been developed on our website to encourage reporting and provide details of help lines and contacts.
- The J9 project and Freedom Programme have both been successfully delivered within the District and continue to run to support victims of Domestic Abuse and their families.
- Our Community Safety Team successfully tendered to deliver County wide training in Domestic Abuse and take-up has exceeded expectations.
- Details of all invoices paid, with a value of more than £500, are published and updated on a monthly basis.
- 150 young people from across the District took part in Philharmonia workshops, performances, mentoring and leadership training, working with professional musicians from the Philharmonia Orchestra. Project costs were met through grants and sponsorship.
- For the third year running, Rayleigh Windmill received the national accreditation of Quality Assured Visitor Attraction from Visit England – the national body that assesses visitor attractions throughout the Country. We host a variety of touring exhibitions and installations featuring local artists. Nearly 3,000 people visited the Windmill in 2011/12.
- The Rayleigh Windmill has become immensely popular as a wedding venue since it became licenced for Civil Weddings, Civil Partnerships, naming ceremonies and renewal of vows. During 2011 the 50th wedding took place in the Windmill.
- Rayleigh Arts Festival provides a platform for local artists and groups to promote their work and for local people to engage in high quality arts activities. This year there were 24 events and 2,500 participants, including 60 young people and 62 artists.
- New funding and delivery partnerships have been formed, including Rochford Extended Services. 38 people volunteered directly at this event and over 1,000 volunteer hours were spent by participants, performers, artists and group leaders in preparation for taking part in the festival.
- The Rochford Art Trail was held for the third time in October, with 65 artists and 34 venues taking part. Exhibits included artworks, textiles, ceramics and photography. Businesses recorded increased visitor numbers, new trade and awareness of the town, with some businesses recording a 450% increase in footfall.

- Our Leisure Team generated a commission fee for the Council by Essex Legacy to facilitate the Hadleigh Art Trail, which was successfully delivered in partnership with Castle Point Borough Council.
- Evaluation of Rochford, Hadleigh and other Art Trails across Essex showed a significant impact on the County, attracting £750,000 to the Essex economy, job creation and 130,000 additional visitors.
- Our Wild Woods Day is a key event in our calendar, promoting arts, sport and play. Our Leisure, Woodlands, Recycling and Environmental Teams work closely together with local groups, businesses and charities to run activities to promote their work. In 2011 we were one of ten flagship events for the prestigious National Family Week – the biggest annual celebration of families and family life in the UK. A record number of over 2,500 people attended the 8th annual event, which included a range of sports and arts activities, as well as information from our Recycling and Woodlands teams.
- We have installed new automated kiosks in our Rochford and Rayleigh Receptions – to make payment facilities quicker and easier to use. Payments can be made by card or cash (change is given). The touch screen is easy to use and a receipt is issued immediately. Cheque payments can also be made via the kiosks if a receipt is required.
- We have made improvements to the way parking is paid for across all car parks in the District. The new pay and display machines offer a variety of payment options and give motorists better value for money. Parking can be paid for by credit/debit card, mobile 'phone and cash. The half-hour time band has also been re-introduced.
- We joined forces with Essex Police and the Community Safety Partnership in a new initiative to tackle anti-social behaviour and nuisance in Hockley. A Dispersal Order was secured, giving police proactive powers to defuse potential nuisance behaviour. The Order allows police to arrest anyone refusing to leave an area and gives police the power to take children under 16 years old home, if stopped in a designated area after 9 pm and not accompanied by a responsible adult. In the month following introduction of the Order, police used their powers to remove 66 people and there were 15 fewer incidents of anti-social behaviour in the designated areas, compared to the same time during 2010/11.
- The fourth Rochford District Sports Awards, sponsored by Virgin Active and a number of local businesses, took place at the Mill Arts and Events Centre. The ceremony was compered by BBC Essex's Ben Fryer. A record 76 nominations were received and nearly 200 guests heard stories of outstanding contributions by the very best of the sporting talent in the District.
- The Dreams and Memories project has also been awarded the London 2012 Inspire Mark. The project records Olympic memories, opinions and hopes for London 2012 and recordings from Rochford District children, athletes, artists, Councillors and residents have been added to a national online archive called The People's Record.
- Grants to Voluntary Organisations totalling £90,000 were distributed across the District for voluntary services such as Rayleigh Age Concern, Hullbridge Senior Citizens Welfare Council, Great Wakering Summer Playscheme, Southend Mencap, 1st Hullbridge Scout Group, Hockley & Hawkwell and Rochford &

District Old People's Welfare Committees, DIAL, Hullbridge Community Association, RRAVS, Alzheimer's Society, Activerochford and the Rochford & Rayleigh Citizens' Advice Bureau.

- The Council also supported local organisations by granting discretionary relief on business rates of £24,600 in 2011/12 and, where the Council is offering a lease to a charitable or community organisation, it will take into account the community value of the asset and the contribution it makes to the community, to enable a discounted rate on the open market rental value.
- We have continued to expand our community engagement programme including consultation activity branded under the title 'Have your Say' to ensure we understand residents' priorities and community needs.
- An Ageing Population Strategy is in place to ensure that we can respond to the needs of a growing section of our community.

Objective 3 – Making a difference to our environment

- All residential premises in the District are now on alternate weekly refuse collection arrangements, following completion of the roll-out of recycling to flats and parkland homes.
- In 2011 Rochford District Council was named as the top recycling authority in the country by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Our residents recycled 65.79% of their waste, making them the top recyclers in England.
- Our Travel Plan was approved by the Executive In September 2011. This Plan assists in the carbon and financial management of the Council. It builds upon our Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy and is identified as a key action in this year's Climate CO₂e action plan. This plan sets out why green travel is important to us and how we intend to achieve it.
- The Council has been making essential improvements to the heating and electrical systems in its offices which have contributed to a 40% reduction in energy usage since 2008.
- In January 2012 a public consultation on our Air Quality Action Plan for the Rawreth Industrial Estate was approved.
- Further refurbishments have been carried out to our open spaces including new car parking at Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.
- Following a massive community consultation exercise involving many residents, Rochford District Council has produced a Core Strategy setting out key planning policies over the next 15 years and beyond. The Core Strategy was found to be sound and legally compliant by the Planning Inspectorate in November 2011 and adopted in December 2011.
- Our Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park Management Plan for 2011-2016 was approved in April 2011. The Plan incorporates a revised capital programme and sets an agenda for the next five years. It sets out the context for ownership as well as setting out management direction, subject to review. Specific actions are set out in an Action Plan.
- A draft local list of heritage assets has been produced. This, together with new policies in the Core Strategy, will help protect buildings and other features that are of local historical importance.
- Progress continued with production of the Local Development Framework evidence base, Allocations Development Plan Document and Development Management policies. This will ensure future development is sustainably located and implemented.

Objective 4 – Making a difference to our local economy

- The Council continues to work with partners to support local businesses through the recession and will seek to maximise and encourage economic growth for the benefit of the communities in the area.
- We are aware that many local businesses are suffering as a result of the economic instability. As part of its support for local businesses, the Council prioritises payment of their invoices and during 2011/12 96% of local suppliers were paid within 10 days, compared to 93% in 2010/11. 98.8% of all invoices were paid within 30 days of receipt, if undisputed, compared to 98.2% in 2010/11.
- The Council once again brought in free parking charges for all of its District car parks in the four Saturday mornings leading up to Christmas to encourage people into the town centres. Saturday afternoon parking has been free for many years to help encourage local shopping and parking remains free on Sundays.
- The Rochford Business Network, which was set up in 2009 and continues and we have now published 10 editions of 'Business News' – a publication which contains information, advice and references to key support services.
- Rochford Council led the set up and delivery of 'Shop at my Local', a keep trade local campaign for the District.

There was a surge in shopper sign-ups, with 117 in one month. The number of shoppers has increased from 545 in 2010 to 775 in 2011 and the number of traders has increased from 406 to 430. A range of vouchers and offers are available on the website at (<http://www.shopatmylocal.co.uk/>)

- We have increased the ways in which we communicate Shop at my Local with businesses and shoppers through Facebook and Twitter.
- We are progressing area action plans for the regeneration and enhancement of Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley centres, identifying potential options and undertaking community involvement.
- We are progressing well towards targets set by the Low Carbon Business Initiative. The scheme has engaged with over 100 businesses in the District, with 20 project grants being awarded, totaling close to £153,000. It is pleasing to report that, through the scheme, 48 jobs have been created and 52 safeguarded in the District. 12 apprenticeship grants have also been awarded.
- We received great feedback on the two Business Breakfasts we have hosted – one which focused on London Southend Airport and one on apprenticeships and services that can help businesses.

7

Financial Summary

This Annual Report provides a summary of the Council's statutory Statement of Accounts for 2011/12. The Statement of Accounts runs to over 60 pages and its content is largely prescribed by accounting standards that apply to all local authorities. The figures in this summary were originally compiled in line with proper accounting practice. This summary information is produced in the hope that it will give the reader a brief and uncomplicated picture of the main features of the Council's financial results for 2010/11.

The Statement of Accounts was signed off by the Head of Finance on 22 June 2012 and will be audited by the Audit Commission's appointed external auditors, PKF (UK) LLP.

The unaudited Accounts are available on the Council's website and the audited Accounts will be available from September 2012 by contacting:

Contact: Financial Services
Email: **financialservices@rochford.gov.uk**
Writing to: Council Offices
South Street
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1BW
Phone: 01702 318029

This is the fifth year that we have presented the financial performance of the Council in this way and we would be very interested in your comments and views on both the content and format of this report, so that we may continue to improve how we communicate with you. Please use the above contact details and let us know what you think about this Annual Report and its contents.

Yvonne Woodward CPFA FMAAT
Head of Finance

What Rochford District Council spent

The Council produces a detailed Income and Expenditure Account, which can be found in the Statement of Accounts and is set out in a prescribed manner. The account below shows the cost of services in 2011/12 under each of our Corporate Objectives and the amount left to be financed from local and national tax income.

	Net Expenditure 2011/12 £000s
Making a difference to our People	
Elections	
Local Land Charges	
Cemeteries & Churchyards	
Licensing	
Public Conveniences	
Democratic Services	2,512
Making a difference to our Community	
Collection of local taxes	
Council Tax and Housing Benefits	
Emergency Planning & Health & Safety	
Leisure Premises	
Sports Development & Promotion	
Concessionary Fares	
Housing Services & Homelessness	4,487
Making a difference to our Environment	
Mill Tower Windmill	
Woodlands, Parks and Open Spaces	
Planning and Building Control	
Environmental Health	
Street Cleansing	
Recycling	5,939
Making a difference to our local Economy	
Economic Development	
Car Parks *	(205)

Net Cost of Services	12,733
LESS Statutory Accounting Adjustments, including capital charges	(2,257)
LESS Income from cash investments	(97)
PLUS Money put into reserves for future use	75
Cost of local services to be met by local and national taxes	10,454

***Note:** We received more in income from car parks than we spent out.

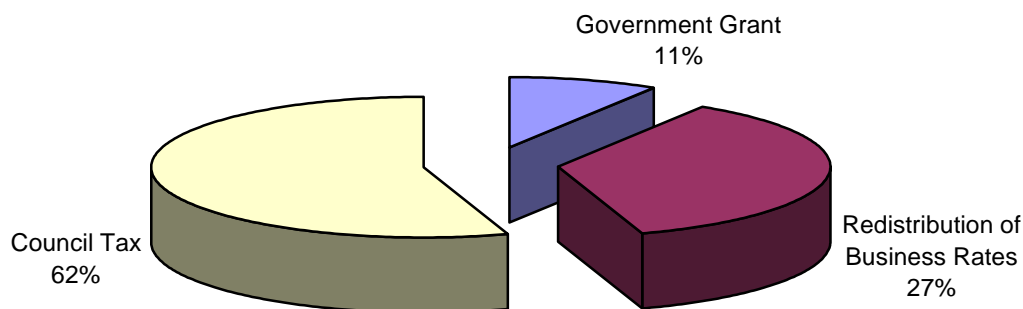
The Net Cost of Services last year (2010/11) was £15m shown by Corporate Objective as follows:

What did we spend last year:	Net Expenditure 2010/11 £000s
Making a difference to our People	3,336
Making a difference to our Community	5,453
Making a difference to our Environment	6,205
Making a difference to our local Economy	6
Net Cost of Services	15,000

Where did the money come from?

The £10.5m that we spent on providing local services, after contributions from reserves and income raised from various fees and charges, came from local and national taxes and redistributed business rates.

Our total income for the year was £10.33m (2010/11 £12.5m), which was split £1.14m Government Grants, £2.79m from national business rates returned to the Council and £6.4m from Council Tax from residents as shown below.



Summary of Income and Expenditure

Revenue Account Surplus	2011/12 £000s
Total Income	(10,332)
Total Cost of Services	10,454
Deficit for the year	122

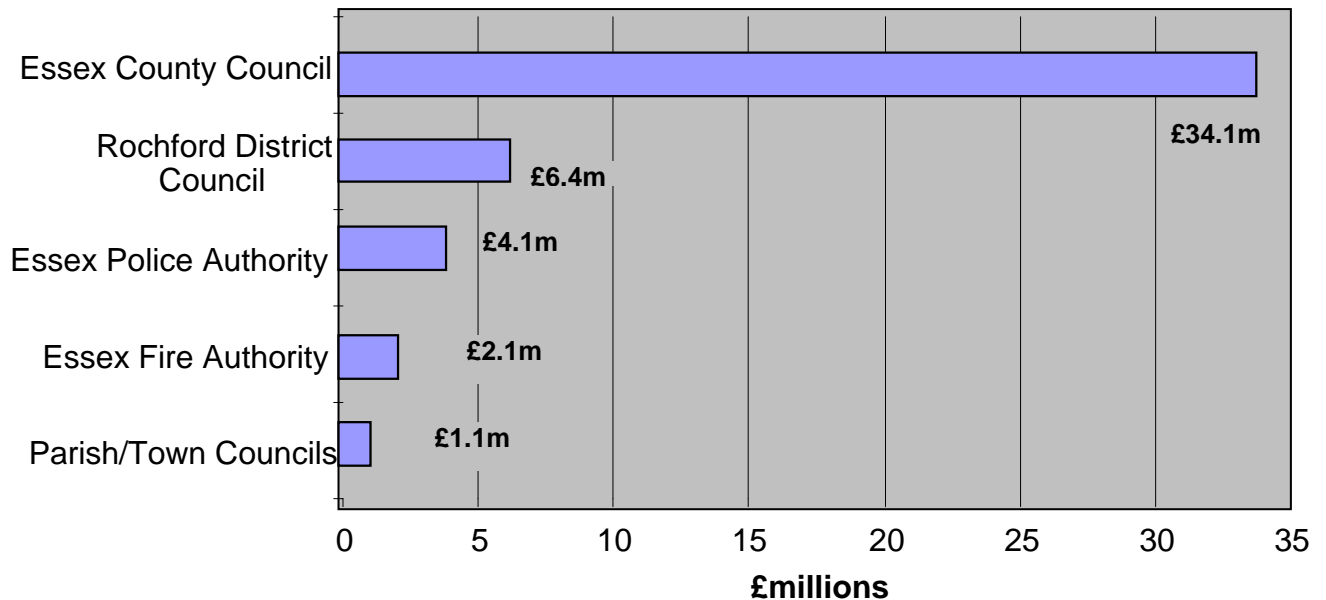
The Council is using balances built up over previous years to cover some of the reduction in Government funding.

The Council recognises that these balances won't last and has plans to continue to reduce expenditure.

Council Tax

The Council was responsible for collecting £47.7m of Council Tax last year, but we only kept £6.4m, equivalent to 13p in every £ collected. The majority of what’s collected is paid to others as shown in the graph below:

Amount of Council Tax collected for each organisation



The average Council tax for Band D property for 2011/12 was made up as follows:

	2011/12
Rochford District Council	£201.15
Essex County Council	£1,086.75
Essex Fire Authority	£66.42
Essex Police Authority	£132.12
Town/Parish Councils (average)	£34.67
Total	£1,521.11

In 2011/12 the national average for Council Tax was **£1,492**. From Government Grant and redistribution of business rates, we received £43 per head, down from £61 in 2010/11,, compared to a national average of £60 in 2011/12

Discretionary Rate Relief

Charities and some sports clubs are entitled to 80% mandatory relief on their business rates. In order to provide additional support, the Council can award discretionary relief for the remaining 20%. The full relief is normally awarded to organisations representing Scouts, Guides or youth activities; the provision of welfare in the community and the provision of village or community halls and is also available for eligible sports clubs. For 2011/12, discretionary relief was awarded to 46 organisations throughout the District at a cost of £24,600 to the Council.

Capital Expenditure

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

For 2011/12 our expenditure on capital compared to what we planned to spend was:-

What we spent:	Planned £000s	Actual £000s
Vehicles and Equipment	288	230
Hall Road Cemetery extension	222	22
Leisure and Play Facilities	444	129
Private Sector Renewal Grants	70	36
Disabled Facilities Grants	256	270
IT infrastructure	50	31
Council properties	520	392
Thames Gateway Energy Schemes	135	104
Totals	1,984	1,214

Some of the projects not completed in 2011/12 will be rolled forward into 2012/13.

The £1.214m which was spent on our land and property assets was paid for by capital receipts from the sale of property, grants and from revenue.

How we paid for Capital Expenditure	2011/12 £000s
Grants and Contributions	361
Capital Receipts	853
Total	1,214

What is the Council worth?

At the end of each financial year, 1 April to 31 March, the Council draws up a balance sheet that shows how much our land and buildings are worth, what is owed to others (i.e. invoices that were unpaid as at 31 March 2012), what others owe us (e.g. businesses which owe rates and residents who owe Council Tax) and how much cash we have.

Net Assets	31 March 2011 £m
Value of land and property	36.9
Cash in bank and cash investments	5.6
Money owed to Rochford	1.8
Less Money owed by Rochford	(3.4)
Net Assets	40.9

Usable Reserves and Balances	31 March 2012 £m
Capital Grants and Receipts	2.4
Working Balances	0.8
Earmarked Reserves	2.4
Total Revenue Reserves	5.6

Rochford's net worth is £40.9m. This is represented by unusable reserves of £35.3m and revenue reserves of £5.6m.

Delivering Value for Money

During 2011/12, the Council has been successful in generating income through the provision of services to partners and other Councils and approximately £170,000 has been earned from objectives such as:

- providing a payroll service to Castle Point Borough Council
- working in partnership on Legal Services and Building Control.
- Seconding an officer, part-time, to Sport England
- Rochford Council Officers providing a risk management workshop to Maldon Council and running an Arts Trail for Castle Point Borough Council.
- Appointing a joint manager for Environmental Health services with Castle Point Borough Council.

A new ICT contract was successfully let this year, with 3 other authorities, generating estimated savings for Rochford of £0.6 million for 2012/13 to 2016/17 (£1.2 million in total since the Council successfully negotiated an extension to the current contract at a reduced costs).

The Council also planned to make savings during the year of £1.2m, which were delivered.

This has been achieved by more efficient service and better organisation. Rochford District Council staff are working harder than ever to ensure it offers its residents value for money.

Some examples of savings are:

- Reducing salary costs by £350,000 arising from changes to the Senior Management Team and other organisational restructures.
- Changes to our Democratic Services, including moving from Area Committees to Community Forums, delivered savings of over £15,000
- Increased recycling which generates additional recycling credits.
- Reduction in the cost of office cleaning.



The Council is determined to deliver high levels of performance. Rochford has shown that, despite having one of the lowest government grant funding levels, it continues to save money and reduce spending. We will continue to keep close scrutiny over Council money.

Further information on the Council's 2012/13 budget and five year Medium Term Financial Plans are available on the website, www.rochford.gov.uk



Financial Performance

Rochford District Council is amongst the best in Essex and the country when it comes to collecting Council Tax. The Revenues and Benefits team collected 98.7% of the £47.6m Council Tax due last year (98.9% in 2010/11). We also collected 96.7% of business rates due last year, compared to 96.8% in 2010/11.

Collecting income in the current economic climate is challenging but staff have offered as much support and advice as possible to help local residents and businesses to pay their bills.

The Council achieved investment rates for the year averaging at 1.4% (1.3% in 2010/11) compared to the benchmark of 0.4%.

What Next?

The Council's plans for 2012 onwards are set out in the Corporate Plan which is available from the contact details at the beginning of this Annual Report.

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

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