

APPENDIX

Final Draft

A Community Strategy for the Rochford District

The Rochford District Local Strategic Partnership

The Rochford District Local Strategic Partnership includes representatives from the statutory agencies, local businesses and the community and voluntary sectors. All Partnership members have come together to achieve one aim – to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives, works in or visits the District. It has been responsible for the drafting of the Strategy, which brings together a number of organisations working in the District.

Membership of the Partnership

The membership currently includes:

Business Representatives Businesses	Ken Wickham, Federation of Small Josephine Mears
Essex County Council	Councillor Ray Howard, Keith Blackburn
Learning and Skills Council, Essex	Serena Smith
Essex Police	Chief Superintendent John Mauger
Faith Representative	Reverend Tim Clay
Parish and Town Councils	John Dickson (Rochford), Richard Vingoe (Hockley)
Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Service	Derek Helson
Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust	Malcolm McCann
Rochford District Council	Councillor Peter Webster, Paul Warren
Schools Representative	Sue Nichol, The King Edmund School
South Essex Partnership	Patrick Geoghegan
NHS Trust	
Thames Gateway South Essex	Mike Goddard

Foreword

On behalf of the Rochford District Local Strategic Partnership I would like to welcome you to the first Community Strategy, a document which identifies local needs and priorities, suggests local solutions and shows how, together, we can achieve a better quality of life for everyone, today and in the future.

We have listened to the views of local people and have created a plan, which involves the statutory agencies, local businesses and the voluntary and community sectors. The Community Strategy shows that by combining our efforts and resources, we can work together on the challenges facing us.

This plan will be of interest to anybody and everybody who wants to see their local area improved. It is the first time that a long term vision for the Rochford District has been attempted. By having a shared vision we can ensure that we all work towards the same goals, and that we make the most of what we have.

Our thanks go to those who contributed to its development. I know that together we can build on the solid foundations created and continue to improve the quality of life for the people of the District.

Paul Warren
Chair
Rochford District Local Strategic Partnership

Setting the Scene

The Rochford District

The District of Rochford is situated within a peninsula between the Rivers Thames and Crouch, and is bounded to the east by the North Sea. The District has land boundaries with Basildon and Castle Point Districts and Southend-on-Sea Borough. It also has marine boundaries with Maldon and Chelmsford Districts. It is ideally located within South Essex, with linkages to the M25 via the A127 and the A13 and direct rail links to London.

The Rochford District covers an area of 65 square miles. It is rich in heritage and natural beauty, with miles of unspoilt coastline and attractive countryside. There are more than 200 sites of archaeological interest, 14 ancient woodlands and several nature reserves across the District.

Rochford District is predominantly rural with three larger urban areas and a number of smaller settlements. The District's towns and villages are diverse in character reflecting their history, location and size. The character, layout and form, of groups of buildings, streets and spaces make a significant contribution to providing a sense of place and adding to the quality of life in town and country. Residents have a strong sense of identity with their own settlement.

Home to around 78,500 people, the District is one with an ever increasing percentage of older residents. The District is considered to be reasonably affluent, except for a few small pockets of deprivation and has a low rate of recorded crime compared to the rest of the country.

This Community Strategy

The requirement to produce a Community Strategy was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 in order to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their areas and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK.

This Community Strategy is the first produced for the Rochford District. It illustrates how local businesses, statutory agencies and the community and voluntary sectors work in partnership. It includes long, medium and short term visions for the District to cover the next 20 years.

How have we developed this Community Strategy?

Development of this document, over the last eighteen months, has involved consulting widely with local people and organisations that have a stake in the future of the Rochford District.

A draft plan was published in July 2003, which was followed by an extensive

consultation exercise, including a questionnaire in Rochford District Matters and public meetings across the District. A Consultation Panel has also been recruited, in partnership with Castle Point Borough Council and the Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust. This includes more than 500 local residents and will provide an opportunity to approach willing participants on a regular basis to gauge how well we are doing.

The results of this consultation have enabled us to develop this Plan, based on what you have told us.

Summary of results

- What you told us you liked

You like the District due to its quietness and rural nature. Parks, countryside, open spaces and woodland were priorities that you would like to see further enhanced. You like local facilities, such as shops and schools, and the town centre enhancements that have been carried out in recent years. Many people consider the District to be a good place to live and raise their families, with a friendly atmosphere and a good community spirit.

- What you told us needs improving?

An increase in facilities for young people was highlighted by people of all ages and from across the whole District. The need for an improved public transport system and more visible policing are high on your list of priorities, along with parking, traffic congestion and the state of some of the roads. You are also concerned about the general cleanliness of the District, with litter, graffiti and vandalism all being identified as problems.

The Vision

Long term - 20 years

The regeneration of the Thames Gateway is a national priority for the Government. The Thames Gateway area includes east London, north Kent and south Essex (Southend Borough, Thurrock, Castle Point, Basildon New Town and a very small part of the Rochford District). Government ministers are leading this 25 year project, aiming to build the prosperity of the whole area so that it can compete more effectively in the global market and provide a better quality of life for all its residents..

The Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Framework document states “Of particular interest to Rochford is the potential to develop those themes which link to the vision in Southend, in particular developing the area for leisure, recreation and tourism activity. The area has a high socio-economic profile, high value housing and quality environment which balances the communities of south Essex, and provides an attractive inward investment proposition for business, particularly the developing service sector. “ It continues by identifying key priorities including the promotion and enhancement of Rochford Town as a centre of “Arts and Crafts”, and the development of walking and cycling initiatives.

Rochford District therefore has the opportunity to position itself to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the regeneration of the Thames Gateway area and ensure that residents benefit from the many future planned initiatives.

Medium term - 10 years

The regeneration of the Thames Gateway south Essex area will provide significant opportunities for the Rochford District. The identification of the District as the “green lung” for the Thames Gateway south Essex area, and the development of the Green Grid offer the opportunity for the District to take advantage of the regeneration, by building on its strengths as an area of ecological importance.

Residents should also be able to benefit from a wider range of training, development and employment opportunities throughout the Thames Gateway area. The potential increase of visitors to the District, to enjoy the local heritage or the unspoiled coastal areas should generate further opportunities for the growing tourism sector of the local economy.

Residents of all ages, throughout the District, should have a wider range of choices for their free time and leisure activities, both within the District and from the opportunities and facilities offered in surrounding areas. Healthier lifestyles leading to a fitter and healthier community will reduce the burden on the health services, who are aiming to provide high quality integrated services through a network of health centres offering treatment, advice, guidance and support.

At the same time a growing number of the community will be older residents. Services will need to adapt to their changing needs, and there will need to be a variety of housing options, with different levels of care and support. Older residents will be supported to remain independent for as long as possible with improved accessibility to support services and information.

Supported housing and a range of accommodation for people with disabilities, including mental health will need to be developed, so that all the District's residents are able to live in as independently as possible.

The District is well located to benefit from any improved transport systems that are developed within South Essex. The London to Southend Transport Study (LOTS) has identified a number of transport infrastructure issues which the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership will be lobbying the Government to address. Sustainable transportation options will be progressed and these should provide real alternatives for local residents, thus reducing traffic congestion.

Awareness and understanding of the importance of managing, in a more sustainable way, the use of energy, water and waste will be promoted through the appropriate agencies and better use of our naturally occurring resources such as wind, wave and sun will be further progressed.

High quality information services, based on the best available technology, should be used to improve the communication between agencies, supporting stronger working partnerships, improved services and maximising benefits to the community. It is probable that residents will be able to access a comprehensive range of information and other services easily, through digital television or other methods.

Rural settlements should feel less isolated. Their residents should be able to access services through the new technology on offer and alternative methods to provide services to these communities will have been developed.

Short term - 5 years

The Rochford District is one of the safest places in the country to live and work. A number of agencies and individuals are committed to working together as partners of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to maintain and where possible improve this standard, whilst also working to alleviate the fear of crime that exists.

Residents will be able to enjoy the early development of the Thames Gateway Green Grid. This should lead to improvements to the provision and upgrade of green spaces resulting in increased usage of these spaces and therefore healthier lifestyles. Enhancement of local heritage sites and a new sports centre at the former Park School site should also increase opportunities for leisure and free time activities, improving the quality of life for many residents.

The Extended Schools Programme should increase the range of services available to young people in their schools, improving their learning opportunities. The development of citizenship education programmes will help

pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need to live confident, healthy, independent lives as individuals, parents, workers and members of society. Addressing the youth agenda is one of the key challenges for the Partners of the Local Strategic Partnership.

The local voluntary and community sector should develop a wider range of services for people with disabilities, including those with mental health problems. Training and development programmes for the sector will need to support the growth of the number of services available and the development of the groups providing the services. Access to the Star Fund, currently being established, and improved information about funding opportunities should have increased the funding opportunities for groups within the District.

We will be working with our partners to tackle the problems of traffic congestion, both within the District, and on routes in and out of the District. Improvements in an integrated public transport system, as part of the Thames Gateway regeneration will also offer residents an alternative to traveling by car.

The Strategy includes six key themes which are:

- Feeling Safe
- Looking After Our Environment
- A Good Education, Good Skills and Good Jobs
- Healthy Living
- Getting Around
- An Inclusive Community

Detailed action plans, covering the next five years are included at the end of the document.

Feeling Safe

The Vision is ...

To reduce both the level and the fear of crime and to make the District a safer place for people to live in, work in or visit.

In the next five years

We aim to maintain and if possible improve the district's position as one of the safest places to live and work. All the partners of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership are committed to achieving this aim.

We want to further improve the quality of life of all residents within the District and to reduce the fear of crime that still exists, despite statistical evidence and recent achievements in crime prevention and detection.

In ten years time

We will have learned many new ways of working, and continuing advances in technology will help us to identify and tackle criminals. We will have online links to local businesses and Neighbourhood Watch schemes. Stronger communication links will have been developed between local neighbourhoods and the Police, the Council and other agencies. Our communities will have more confidence in working with these agencies to prevent and deal with crime and anti-social behaviour where and when it occurs.

What you told us ...

- Residents recognise that Rochford District is a safe place with a low crime rate.
- Many residents have a perception that the Police are not visible and are unresponsive to requests for help.
- Youth nuisance, including graffiti, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, is a growing concern across the District with particular problem areas e.g Rochford Market Square
- Residents want the young people "to have somewhere to go and something to do".

Factfile

There are stereotypes and perceptions in our community that young people are 'up to no good'. Our research tells us that people of all ages are sometimes concerned when walking past large groups of young people. Young people also feel this intimidation. This stereotype, that implies that all young people are threatening, is very difficult to eradicate. The truth is that young people are more likely to be victims of crime than offenders.

- Since 1998 the Rochford District Crime and Disorder Reduction

Partnership has worked to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and increase community safety across the district.

- Rochford District has a low and reducing reported crime rate, consistently lower than both Essex and national average rates of recorded crime. Rayleigh Division (which also covers Castle Point) is the only Essex Police division where arrest rates are rising.
- Uniformed Police Ward Managers work closely with their communities to deal with recurring or developing crimes or acts of anti social behaviour. Intelligence from the local community is vital in the fight against crime.
- The Rayleigh Service Desk provides a 24 hour/7 day a week call centre facility, answering and dealing with non-emergency calls from the public.
- There are a number of youth facilities across the District, an Information Centre in Rochford and a mobile unit for use in more rural locations.
- There are 270 Neighbourhood Watch groups in the district, but all residents can report suspicious incidents or other intelligence to the Police.
- The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership ran a poster campaign “Too fast, too furious, 2 dead” about the dangers of speeding. More campaigns will be organised.

What we are going to do:

- Increase the visibility and response of the Police.
- Reduce the incidence and fear of crime, as well as the anti-social behaviour of some people, which fuels that fear.
- Increase usage of the District’s youth facilities including the mobile unit provision.

Detailed action plans, outlining specific actions, are contained at the end of this document.

Related Strategies and Plans

Essex County Council Essex Approach

Essex Policing Plan

Local Implementation Plan for children and young people through the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership

Rayleigh Division 3-Year Policing Plan

Rochford District Council Cultural Strategy

Rochford District Council District Local Plan

Rochford District Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2002 - 2005

Looking After Our Environment

The Vision is ...

To protect and enhance the natural and built environment for present and future generations.

In the next five years

We aim to continue to protect and enhance the local heritage and environment, ensuring that everyone can enjoy the many historic market towns and villages, the ancient woodlands, the green open spaces and the undeveloped coastline. We will seek to maximise funding opportunities to conserve and enhance local heritage sites for residents and visitors to appreciate.

We will protect the local environment as much as possible from the development impact of the regeneration of the Thames Gateway area, whilst at the same time building on the opportunities it offers. All planned developments will be assessed against strict criteria that will protect the historic character of the District's settlements. We will also need to take into account local housing, business and other social needs.

In ten years time

The development of the Green Grid, a network of open spaces and green links across the whole Thames Gateway South Essex area will have improved the quality and quantity of local environmental amenities, supporting the rich biodiversity of local habitats and providing increased opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

The potential impact of climate change may have increased drought conditions in the summer and localised flooding in the winter. Flood risk management policies will need to address the adverse effects as much as possible.

Developers will be encouraged to build sustainable residential developments with a mix of housing types, using traditional Essex materials and containing a comprehensive range of facilities for residents. Access to housing for local people, and the needs of the growing number of older residents will be key issues to address, demanding higher levels of funding and a variety of solutions.

What you told us...

- You like the quiet, rural nature of the District; the countryside, parks and open spaces and the undeveloped coastal areas.
- Many residents would like to see future development limited or stopped altogether.

- Cleanliness of the District is important to you and you would like to see a reduction in litter, graffiti, vandalism and fly tipping kept to a minimum across the District.
- You want to see better management of trees and shrubs by the roadside, and improved maintenance of the pavements, including weed killing.
- You would like to see more households having the opportunity to participate in the kerbside recycling scheme.
- You are unhappy that Rochford District residents are charged to use the Southend tip, which is managed by Southend Borough Council.
- There is a need for more lower cost and rented housing within the District.

Factfile

Rochford District is not immune to the environmental challenges faced by every community across the world. The impact of the Thames Gateway regeneration adds a local dimension to the global challenges of diminishing resources and climate change. The identification of the Rochford District as the “green lung” for the Thames Gateway South Essex area, and the development of the Green Grid offer the opportunity to conserve and enhance the rural nature of the District.

- Rochford District has more than 200 sites of archaeological interest, four Scheduled Ancient Monuments, 14 ancient woodlands, 3 Special Landscape Areas and 2 Special Protection Areas. In addition, the coast and estuaries are protected under international statutes.
- Rochford District has 39.5 km of rivers. The Crouch and Roach Estuary Management Project will ensure the future conservation and prosperity of the river areas for wildlife and leisure use..
- The Government has provided over £5 million funding to begin the development of a Green Grid across the Thames Gateway South Essex area in the next three years. This will safeguard the local environment and create an extensive network of high quality green space for south Essex.
- The kerbside recycling scheme covers 19% of homes across the District with collection rounds in Rayleigh, Ashingdon, Hockley and Hullbridge.
- 10.53% of all household waste generated within the District was recycled in 2002/03, achieving the Government’s target of 10%. By 2005/06 18% of all household waste must be recycled.
- Low cost market homes are often too expensive for Rochford District first time buyers.
- More than 28,000 trees have already been planted in the newly created Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park, creating an orchard and arboretum.
- Essex County Council will reimburse all residents who are charged for using the Southend tip. Information on the reimbursement

process is available at the site.

What we are going to do...

- Continue to work on the cleanliness and overall appearance of the District
- Protect and enhance the built and natural heritage of the District, increasing opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the local amenities and the countryside.
- Increase awareness of sustainability issues, and participation in recycling activities.
- Examine solutions aimed at providing more low cost and rented housing within the District, whilst at the same time recognising residents' wishes to keep further residential development to the minimum. In this context the District Council as local planning authority is governed by the guidelines and targets set by the Central Government in terms of overall housing numbers.

Detailed action plans, outlining specific actions, are contained at the end of this document.

Related Strategies and Plans

Essex County Council Essex Approach
Rochford District Council Asset Management Strategy
Rochford District Council Biodiversity Action Plan
Rochford District Council Cultural Strategy
Rochford District Council District Local Plan
Rochford District Council Housing Strategy
Rochford District Council Local Agenda 21
Thames Gateway Strategic Plan

A Good Education, Good Skills and Good Jobs

The Vision is ...

To enable all residents of the District to access high quality education, training and skills development opportunities to ensure a thriving local economy now and in the future.

In the next five years

Local schools and school buildings will have increased their importance as hubs for community life and activities, as part of a continuing focus on improving learning opportunities for all. Schools will be responding to the challenging social issues faced by some young people, by providing a range of services within the school. These may include healthy lifestyle choices, sexual health, mental health services, personal safety, housing, debt advice and information and advice services, and generally better preparing them for transition into adult life.

A wide range of educational opportunities will continue to be available to all residents in a variety of venues across the District. Local employers and voluntary and community groups will be encouraged to provide training and development opportunities for their staff.

Improvements in information and communication technology will provide greater access to a wide range of information about local services, amenities and opportunities. Residents will be able to pay bills, access services and local information through the internet.

In ten years time

The establishment of a university in Southend, as part of the regeneration of Thames Gateway South Essex, will provide improved educational opportunities for the residents of the Rochford district. There will be strong links between local schools and other educational establishments and the university. A greater emphasis will be placed on the upgrading of skills so that residents are able to take advantage of the increasing number of new job opportunities resulting from the Thames Gateway regeneration.

The local economy will be thriving. Increased numbers of visitors will be using the new hotel facilities, visiting the parks and open spaces within the Green Grid and spending money in the local arts and crafts businesses. Rayleigh Windmill and Castle will have become important visitor attractions, encouraging people to visit the District.

What you have told us.....

- We need to support our young people and invest in them, as they are our future
- Opportunities should be available for all residents to participate in life long learning, to enable everyone to live their best life, fulfil their potential and gain the maximum benefit from local job opportunities
- We need a better range of shopping facilities including a major supermarket in Rochford town.
- Rochford District must keep up with the technological changes in the global market so that its residents and businesses are able to compete.
- Local employers in the public and private sector are finding it difficult to recruit trained or skilled staff.

Factfile

Even though Rochford District is considered to be a comparatively affluent area, there are small pockets of deprivation. A growing number of residents commute out of the District for work, suggesting a lack of suitable, local, well paid jobs. However, local employers are facing severe recruitment difficulties and are struggling to fill their vacancies due to a shortage of skilled local labour. Many vocational training opportunities do not exist within the District and there is a shortage of local craftspeople such as plumbers, construction site workers etc. There is gap between local skills and the skills required by local employers.

- There is a good range of shops, particularly in Rayleigh and recent improvements have made Rayleigh town centre even better.
- A new Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership has been established to cover the Castle Point and Rochford districts. This partnership is responsible for all health, education and social issues in a young person's life from conception to 19 years.
- Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Service has been awarded funding to establish a Computer Club for elderly residents in Rochford Library and to take computers into people's homes and sheltered housing units across the District.
- It is planned to create 55,000 new jobs within the Thames Gateway area.
- The Government has allocated £1.5m towards the development of the new Cherry Orchard Business Park. In total this development will cost over £55 million and should create 1,000 new jobs by 2010.

What we are going to do...

- Increase the opportunities for people of all ages to have a good education and gain new skills.
- Work together to identify and address local learning needs.

- Increase the prosperity and facilities of the Rochford District.

Detailed action plans, outlining specific actions, are contained at the end of this document.

Related Strategies and Plans

East of England Regional Skills Strategy

Essex County Council Essex Approach

Essex Learning and Skills Council Strategy

Local implementation plan for children and young people through the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership

Rochford District Council Economic Development Strategy

Rochford District Council Implementing Electronic Government Strategy

Healthy Living

The Vision is ...

To improve and promote the social, physical and mental health of everyone in the district by providing a variety of choices for leisure and free time pursuits and first class healthcare.

In the next five years

We aim to encourage people to live a healthier lifestyle. This will help to reduce the burden on our already stretched health services. New staff in health centres will undertake some of the work traditionally seen as being in the GP's domain. This will enable doctors to see more patients. New health promotion and accident and fall prevention projects will aim to reduce the demand.

We aim to address the needs of specific groups within the community, e.g. young people, the growing number of elderly people and residents with mobility, access or mental health problems. We will work on ensuring that services are accessible to all, including the more isolated groups. We aim to have a new primary health care centre in the west of the District with fully integrated services.

More services that support older residents to stay in their own homes, or return to their homes as soon as possible after treatment elsewhere will be developed. We aim to increase training and development of staff working with older residents to advise on falls prevention and independent living.

A new sports centre will be built on the former Park School site in West Rayleigh. This will expand opportunities for leisure activities.

In ten years time

We aim to provide high quality integrated services through a network of health centres; advice and guidance through digital and electronic communication systems, including digital television and web technology. Patients should have the support of health care professionals to enable them to take as much responsibility for their own health as possible.

The development of the local voluntary and community sector should have resulted in the provision of a wider range of services to people with disabilities, including those with mental health problems. These will include advocacy, and other advice, guidance and support services.

Residents of all ages should have a wider range of choices for their leisure or free time, with activities being offered that meet the needs of all the different groups within the wider community. More green spaces should be available for leisure activities and residents and visitors will be able to enjoy the green

and rural nature of the Rochford District.

What you told us...

- There is a shortage of GPs in the District and access to a GP can be difficult. Many residents were complimentary about the services provided by their GP.
- All NHS dentists in the district have closed their lists to new patients.
- Some services which are often provided by the voluntary sector are currently unavailable within the Rochford district, e.g. an advocacy service for people with mental health problems.
- There is a lack of counselling services available for young people in the district.
- Sexual health and barrier protection services for young people are based in Southend and these present some access problems for young people from the Rochford district.
- Staff recruitment and retention is a growing concern for the whole health sector.
- There are limited support services for residents of all ages who have mental health problems. These residents often suffer isolation due to poverty and lack of support. There is also a lack of affordable housing or supported housing for these residents in the District.
- There is a perception that there is a lack of things for young people to do, or places for them to go.

Factfile

Healthy living is not just about doctors and nurses. It's bigger than that – it's about living our lives in a healthy way. Good health doesn't just depend on access to health services but on each and every person taking responsibility for their own lives. Access to health services is important, as is access to leisure and free time activities. Increased provision and better links between open spaces will enable residents and visitors to enjoy the green and rural nature of the District and improve their health at the same time.

- All NHS dentists in the District have closed lists and are currently are not taking new NHS patients. A new contract is currently being negotiated at a national level. This will come into effect in April 2005. It is hoped, but not guaranteed that this will increase the number of available NHS dentists.
- Runwell Hospital mental health services are being transferred to Rochford Hospital, plus Primary Care Mental Health Services are now being implemented in GP surgeries
- There is a variety of leisure provision in the District, including Clements Hall, Great Wakering Sports Centre, The Mill and the Freight House.
- The Star Partnership promotes community led healthier living projects and is about to launch a youth football initiative across the District.
- A Leisure card has been developed, which gives a discount of 25% on

the joining fee and annual subscription to residents of the District when they become members of local leisure facilities

What we are going to do

- Improve access to quality health services for all residents
- Improve the health and wellbeing of particular groups
- Increase access to and usage of leisure and recreational facilities across the District

Detailed action plans, outlining specific actions, are contained at the end of this document.

Related Strategies and Plans

Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust Local Delivery Plan
Essex County Council Essex Approach
Local Implementation plan for children and young people through the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership
Rochford District Council Cultural Strategy
South Essex Partnership NHS Trust Local Delivery Plan

Getting Around

The Vision is ...

To improve people's abilities to get across and around the District

In five years time

We aim to work with our sub-regional partners to protect the green and rural nature of Rochford District, whilst seeking to address the problems of traffic congestion in south Essex. We will be working to promote improved public transport systems and traffic management that results in less traffic congestion within the district and on major routes in and out of the district.

In ten years

The regeneration of the Thames Gateway South Essex area provides the opportunity to move towards a high quality integrated and sustainable transport system. Transport alternatives to the use of the car will be promoted, providing residents with other methods of traveling to school, work or the shops or to access other services or facilities. A separate but integrated network of cycle ways, bridle paths and footpaths (the Greenways project) will be progressed across the whole District for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

Public services will be more accessible to residents, through a variety of mechanisms so that people will not necessarily need to travel to the service providers. Improved job opportunities within the District should reduce the number of commuters and improvements to the transport connections within the District aim to link residential areas with major employers.

What you have told us

- You believe that the District is relatively well located with easy access to London, Southend, Basildon and Chelmsford. You are concerned, however, about traffic congestion and delays in town centres and on major routes in and out of the District.
- Bus links across and around the District are poor, and improvements are required.
- Many residents are unhappy about the condition of the roads and the weeds in the pavements.
- Some residents felt that more car parking was required in residential areas and in town centres. Changes to the car parking fee structure were suggested, with free or lower charges for short stays.
- The District needs footpaths, cycle ways and bridle paths across the District.
- Speeding is perceived as a problem throughout the District.

Factfile

Transport and the ability to travel around are a major part of everyday life. A lack of transport can significantly reduce the quality of life and increase feelings of isolation and exclusion. Dealing with traffic congestion on a daily basis brings its own stresses.

- Rochford District is well placed to access other major centres, e.g. London, Southend, Lakeside, Chelmsford etc.
- A Community Transport Scheme was launched in October 2003 and is already proving to be very popular.
- There are X miles of cycle ways and bridle paths in the District.
- The decriminalisation of parking will result in the District Council recruiting Parking Enforcement Wardens from October 2004.

What we are going to do...

- Continue to review options to improve traffic management and parking in and around town centres within the District
- Seek to Improve the maintenance of roads and pavements, including roadside trees and shrubs across the District
- Work in partnership to promote and improve public transport services across the District

Detailed action plans, outlining specific actions, are contained at the end of this document.

Related Strategies and Plans

Rochford District Council District Local Plan

Rochford District Council Economic Development Strategy

Rochford District Council Transportation Plan

Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Framework

An Inclusive Community

The Vision is ...

To promote active and responsible citizenship, creating a community inclusive of all groups, and enabling everyone to fully participate in activities that improve their quality of life.

In five years time

This theme includes issues that run through all of the other themes and highlights the variety of topics which go towards developing an inclusive community.

The feedback from the consultation told us that people are generally very happy in the communities in which they live. Quality of life means something different to all of us though it is often bound by the threads of having good health, a comfortable home and surroundings, opportunities to learn, having satisfying work when we need it and being able to enjoy leisure time with family and friends. We will work to ensure that everyone has the chance to benefit from the opportunities that are available within the District that will go towards improving their quality of life.

Most people can pick and choose what they want to do to lead the kind of life that they want, however, not everybody finds it so easy - this may be because they do not have the skills or confidence to join in or they have difficulty in communicating; they may live in a rural area or be unable to get around very easily, either through disability or cost. None of these things should exclude people from enjoying the benefits which are available to the community. A more inclusive community promotes better understanding between groups of people. We will work together to improve opportunities for local people to get the work, education and skills they need to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

We will work to encourage a thriving voluntary sector which offers a wide range of opportunities, including training and development which will benefit the whole community.

In ten years

Though we sit on the edge of the area, the expansion of the Thames Gateway area will have an effect on our community as we know it today. We must capitalize on the opportunities it offers for the benefit of the community whilst ensuring that we maintain the positive aspects of the District.

What you told us...

- People generally like living in the Rochford District, in part due to the community spirit and friendly atmosphere of its people.
- Some groups within the community find it more difficult to access facilities or services; these include residents living in more isolated rural locations (due to poor public transport), people with mental health problems (due to cost and isolation) and young people.
- Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Service has successfully initiated projects for older residents, but it recognises that it is limited by its size and resources. Some services provided in areas where the sector is stringer are unavailable within the District.

Factfile

- Formal consultation mechanisms in the District largely depend on the 14 Parish and Town Councils
- Approximately 9% of the District's population is over 75 years old and the number is expected to increase to 17% by 2011.
- The Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association of Voluntary Service, Sports Council and Arts Association exist as umbrella groups within the voluntary sector.
- An Essex Youth Assembly is being established and Rochford District young people will be participating.
- There is an active Neighbourhood Watch network across the District.
- Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association of Voluntary Service organises an annual Voluntary and Community Awareness Open Day.
- Rochford District Council hold a Citizen's Debate in February each year, which involves teams from each of the District's secondary schools in the District.
- The Castle Point and Rochford Consultation Panel has been established, which includes more than 1200 residents from across the two districts.
- The Star Partnership facilitate health promotion and community development projects that benefit residents across the District.

What we are going to do...

- Continue to support the development of the voluntary and community sector within the Rochford District.
- Ensure high quality and comprehensive information about available services is accessible to all the District's residents.
- Engage the different groups within the wider community, including young people

Detailed action plans, outlining specific actions, are contained at the end of

this document.

Related Strategies and Plans

Rochford District Council Social Inclusion Strategy

Rochford District Council Implementing Electronic Government Strategy