

Comprehensive
Performance
Assessment **2008**

Corporate
Self-Assessment



making Rochford District the place of choice in the County to live, work and visit

Version control:

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Version	Date	Changes
3	070308	Updates to sections 4.2 onwards Removal of bullet points (for drafting purposes)
4	120308	Changes following SMT discussion Included Context section – work in progress Removed prompting bullet points in section 5.
5	130308	Proof reading and misc. changes. Entry of Showcase material and addition of material re tourism.
6	140308	Accept track changes; edit showcases
7	260308	Redrafting Context and Summary Section
8	280308	Redrafting Context and Summary Section; edit showcases
9	310308	Redrafting Context and Summary Section; edit showcases
10	010408	Redrafting Context and Summary Section; edit showcases. Included text on Health Inequalities (in Context)
11	020408	Minor changes to context and summary; updated showcases
12	040408	Inserted introductory letter (Leader/CEX); started glossary; incorporate amendments (version originally issued to Review Committee)
13	090408	General amendments, including show cases. Started highlighting hypertext links.
14	110408	Two column format; inserted context map; various additions/amendments

Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation	Description
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CPA	Comprehensive Performance Assessment
CYPSP	Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
ECC	Essex County Council
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDeA	Improvement and Development Agency
liP	Investors in People
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LDF	Local Development Framework
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MTFS	Medium Term Financial Strategy
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
RRAVS	Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Service
SOCITM	Society of Information Technology Managers
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound
SMT	Senior Management Team
TGSE	Thames Gateway South Essex

Rochford District Council's Corporate Self-Assessment: April 2008

Much has happened in the District since we received our first Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of 'Weak' in 2004. We want our residents to be assured that their District Council is committed to continuous improvement, keen on meeting their needs and delivering services to their satisfaction. Hence, we welcome the chance to prove our capability to the Audit Commission through this Corporate Assessment.

We are in the throes of realigning our corporate planning to the emerging Essex Local Area Agreement and facilitating a refreshed Sustainable Community Strategy. Our 'business' planning processes will ensure that we focus and manage our resources and partners to deliver our priorities, informed through consultation with our communities. We are well positioned to represent our communities on wider partnerships, such as the Essex Management Board, the Essex Partnership Forum and Thames Gateway South Essex.

We have tackled under performance of services and have taken difficult decisions in determining and managing the best provider for services and a measure of our success is the high customer satisfaction results received.

The Council has risen to the challenge of the previous CPA and we are confident that the corporate assessment will demonstrate that the Council now deserves a higher rating, in recognition of its achievements and improvements.

Signed:



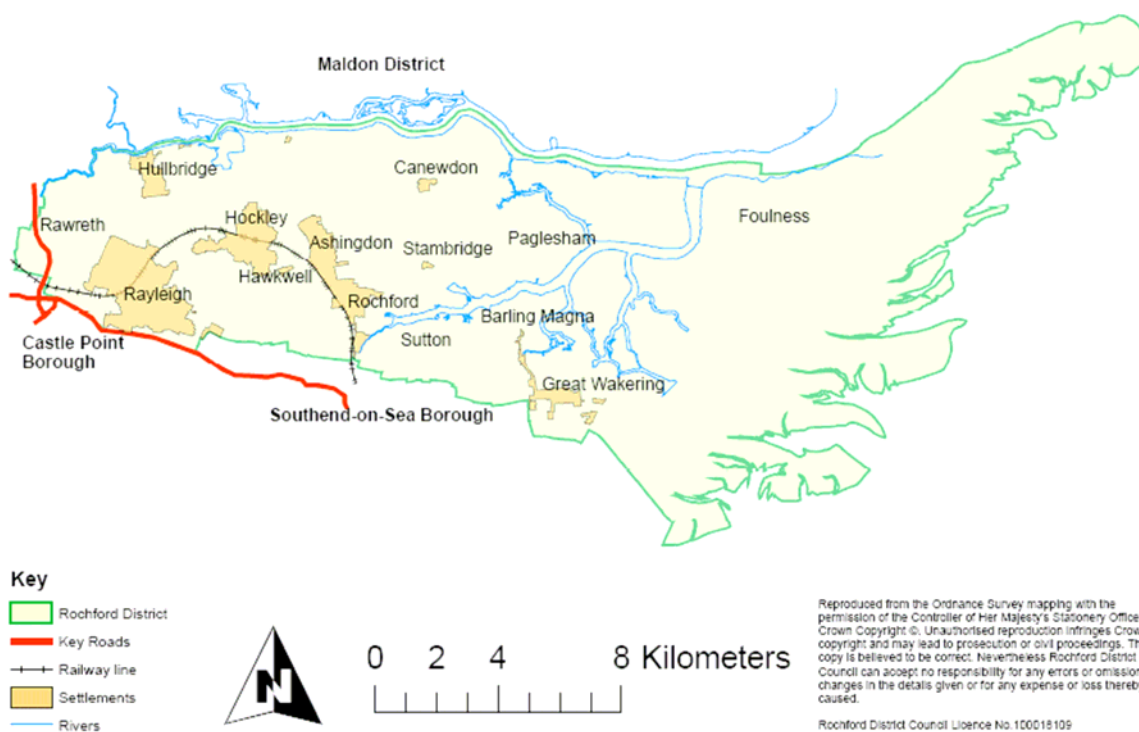
**Cllr Terry Cutmore
Leader**



**Paul Warren
Chief Executive**

Context and Summary

***The Council's vision for Rochford District:
To make Rochford District the place of choice in the County to live,
work and visit***



Rochford District is situated in south-east Essex, within a peninsula between the rivers Thames and Crouch and with the North Sea to the east. The south of the district adjoins the urban areas of Southend-on-Sea and Castle Point. Much of the district's 65 square miles is designated as green belt and there are many miles of attractive coastline and nationally important areas of salt marsh. Foulness Island and some adjoining areas in the east of the District are under Ministry of Defence control.

The following pages give further insight to the District against the constituent elements of the Council's vision. For each element (to live, work and visit) there are some key facts, a brief overview and a statement of what the Council is doing to address the challenges.

Rochford District Council's Evidence Base

The analysis of the District which has informed this self-assessment, the revised Sustainable Community Strategy and our corporate planning process has drawn upon the following sources:

- **Rochford Futures** – research commissioned from Local Futures Group.
- **The Council's Access to Services Strategy.**
- **The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** (South East Essex Primary Care Trust and Essex County Council).
- **The Third Sector Review** conducted by the Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Service (RRAVS).
- Background work done by, and with, the County Council in respect of their new **Sustainable Community Strategy** and the second **Local Area Agreement (LAA2)**.
- Our work around the **Local Development Framework**.

Living in Rochford District

Living in Rochford District – some key facts:

- A population of 78,489 (census 2001) that is predicted to grow to some 81,000 by 2021.
- We have an ageing population: in 2001, 22.99% of our residents were 60 years old and over with the expectation that by 2021 the number of residents aged 85 years and older will approximately double (then representing some 3.3% of the District's population).
- Life expectancy is high across the District, currently at 80.3 years and the highest of Essex Districts, but there are considerable variations at ward level with no obvious reasons.
- Young adults (aged 15-24 years) represented 10.23% of the population in 2001 but this group is expected to fall by 1.1% by 2029.
- In 2006, 80% of pupils in the District gained 5 or more high grade GCSEs; this was the best result of all Essex Districts.
- Relatively low deprivation, being 316th least deprived out of 354 districts
- Our residents have more access to the internet than the average in Britain (at 71%) and we have experienced users (85% started using the internet more than 3 years ago).
- There are small numbers of people who have characteristics which make them vulnerable to social exclusion, the biggest group likely to be those with hearing impairment.
- The population from mixed or ethnic minority backgrounds is only 1.7% although estimates predict a 4% growth between 2001-2004 (source: ONS). The black and minority ethnic (BME) population is relatively dispersed amongst the urban settlements
- The largest town, Rayleigh, and the other two main settlements of Rochford and Hockley, have good rail connections to London and there is access to the A127 London-Southend Arterial Road and then to the A12 and M25.
- London Southend Airport is situated within the District and the airport and surrounding area are part of the Thames Gateway regeneration area.
- House prices in the district are relatively high with an average house price at £224,837 (2006) and an average income of £20,051.

Rochford District is generally a prosperous part of the country, despite only having a modest share of 'knowledge workers', the typically higher paid employees. This is reflected in relatively low deprivation, being 316th least deprived out of 354 districts. However at the ward and sub ward level there are pockets of deprivation with one Super Output Area (SOA) in the top 10% most income deprived in the country. Prosperity is also coupled with average levels of inequality and a relatively healthy resident population that experiences low levels of crime.

Challenges:

We have an ageing population which, combined with average obesity rates (in adults aged 16 and more) and mental health admissions to hospital, suggests longer term care needs of residents with health related issues.

Future social cohesion will be a challenge for the district, with different aspects of social life increasing the chances of social isolation. The growth in IT dependency could widen the 'digital divide' and may be compounded by the ageing population and growing generation gap. More young people are electing to stay within the parental homes as the cost of entering home ownership becomes increasingly difficult.

Rural locations such as the District are increasingly destinations of choice, whether for young professionals seeking a better quality of life, new arrivals seeking employment, or second home owners. Whether people looking to relocate choose Rochford District or surrounding areas as their home/place of work, there will be consequences for services, employment and social cohesion.

Although life expectancy is generally high in the District, there are considerable variations at ward level, between 75 years and 86 years. There are no clearly identifiable reasons for these differences. Some cancers, particularly lung and breast cancers, are increasing and rates are above Essex and East of England averages, as are rates for respiratory disease mortality for males.

The Council has worked with South East Essex Primary Care Trust and other local authorities to conduct a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment of future health, care and wellbeing needs and this has identified priorities for Rochford District:

- Lifestyle choices – stopping smoking, tackling obesity and increasing rates of physical activity
- Cancer mortality
- Dealing with an ageing population and its impact
- Access to services
- Quality of life issues – more parks and open spaces, cleaner streets and waste management, activities for young people.

The Council is responding to the challenges by:

- Investing in the development of a comprehensive Access to Services Strategy and Action Plan to ensure that all sections of the community have equitable access to services.
- Tackling the problem of affordable housing, in conjunction with our recent housing stock transfer, to deliver a greater variety of accommodation needed to meet increased demand as well as the different age, lifestyle and affordability profiles of residents.

- Improving services and amenities to build a cohesive and prosperous future for the District – multi-agency work to help underachieving young people, improving access to mental health facilities, supporting young carers and working with others to reduce the fear of crime.
- Developing capacity in the District by re-energising Third Sector provision.
- Providing more youth facilities and sport facilities.
- Working within the LSP to support the Ageing Population theme in the emerging new Sustainable Community Strategy.
- Working within other partnerships to address crime and disorder, children and young people and health and older people issues.
- Improving its overall Quality of Life offer.

Working in Rochford District

Working in Rochford District: some key facts:

- 39,000 residents are in employment, with unemployment at 1%.
- 79% of the working age population were in employment between March 2003 and February 2004 (compared to GB average of 75%)
- 21,000 jobs in the district, mostly retail, wholesale and service sectors
- Only 5 businesses employ more than 250 staff
- There are 7 industrial estates located within the District and work is underway on the new Rochford business park close to the Airport.
- Port and marina facilities exist on the River Crouch with a wharf and warehousing at Wallasea.
- A high proportion of the workforce commutes out of the district – 30% to Southend, 14% to London and 24% elsewhere.
- 91.6% of young people aged between 16 and 24 are in full-time education or employment.
- Compared to other Essex Districts, Rochford has the highest percentage of residents who have the equivalent of NVQ level 3 and above.

The District has a small, but reasonably productive, and enterprising economy. Although the District does not record significant levels of 'high skills', nevertheless there is a solid foundation of basic and intermediate skills that underpins the local economy and supports a healthy share of knowledge-driven jobs.

Challenges:

The growth of the local economy, balanced with the demand to retain environmental attractiveness and the high level of out-commuting is a challenge for the council. The small local economy is vulnerable to economic downturn and with the out-commuting there is a risk that spending power of residents is not retained within the district. Whilst the transport infrastructure offers the capability for air, rail and road commuting, the infrastructure is at risk of congestion, and thus economic prosperity and the weak local transport provision threatens social inclusion with more isolated communities.

The Council is responding to the challenges by:

- Developing the capacity and use of the Third Sector.
- Engaging with the business community through hosted 'Business Breakfasts'.
- Including the New Business Start Up Initiative in the Council's Key Actions (2008-09).
- Engaging in County-wide and sub-County partnerships for Economic Development and Transport to ensure that the District has a 'seat at the table'.
- Working with partners on economic development opportunities.
- Utilising its spatial planning power through the LDF process to identify opportunities for economic development, underpin wealth and address transport infrastructure deficits.
- Supporting Community Transport and innovative schemes such as the Disabled Taxi Vouchers initiative

Visiting Rochford District

Visiting Rochford District – some key facts:

- Approximately 85% of the District is green belt with many miles of unspoilt coast line.
- The District has the fourth lowest carbon footprint in Essex
- The three main settlements of Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley are each less than one hour from London by train
- There are 3 Sites of Special Scientific Interest – the Crouch and Roach Estuaries; Foulness; and Hockley Woods
- **Etc.**

Rochford District is predominantly rural in character, with miles of unspoilt coastline and attractive countryside. Located 14 miles from the M25, the District offers easy access from London and from Europe and beyond. Journey time to the District from London by train is less than an hour.

The historic towns of Rochford and Rayleigh, are well served with shops and amenities and contain several buildings of historic interest, including a rare 18th century Dutch Cottage, the 12th century Old House and a recently restored, 17th century Mill. Rochford town centre is one of the few remaining examples of a medieval cross street pattern in the UK, and Rayleigh has the remains of a motte and bailey castle. Ashingdon Church, built on the site of the Battle of Assandun, dates from the 11th century.

Alongside the outlying towns and villages the District includes the historic Hockley Woods (which is the remains of a royal forest), the developing Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park and the Roach Valley Conservation Zone. A pioneering wetlands project is being progressed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) on Wallasea Island and the island of Foulness is internationally famous as a haven for wildlife.

Challenges:

The District does not seek to attract mass tourism, but rather to make available attractions of specific interest, complemented by the usual range of facilities expected by visitors. However, there is a tension between delivering economic development and preserving the environmental quality of life of the area. Clearly the extensive coastline, along with rising sea levels, brings the risk of flooding to the District. Conversely, the opportunity exists to develop marinas and yacht clubs to serve the needs of the sailing community.

The Council is responding to these challenges by:

- Positioning the District as the 'green' offer in the Thames Gateway.
- Managing the development and maintenance of green spaces, including open spaces refurbishment and country parks.
- Resourcing a new Urban Street Tree Planting Programme.
- Producing a tourism guide for the District.
- Utilising its spatial planning power to develop the District's visitor potential and ensure there is capacity to meet potential demand for overnight accommodation.

