

What we have been doing in the past year

The following table summarises the objectives we set ourselves for 2004/05

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
Complete refurbishment works at Clements Hall by September 2004	Work was completed in October 2004
Commence works on a new sports/leisure centre on the former Park School site by January 2005 and open the centre by March 2006	Work commenced on site in April 2005 with completion planned for Spring 2006
Following the housing option appraisal of the ownership and management of council-owned properties, submit the preferred option to the Government by March 2005	This was submitted in April 2005 and Government approval on the way forward is expected in June 2005
Provide new reception facilities at our Rochford offices by October 2004 and install a lift and disabled toilet at the Civic Suite in Rayleigh by February 2005	<p>A reception facility at Rochford, with full DDA access and facilities, was opened in November 2004</p> <p>Work to install the lift and disabled toilet at the Civic Suite have been delayed and this is now due for completion by August 2005</p>

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
Determine the way forward in terms of our long-term accommodation options by November 2004	With planned organisational and service delivery changes, and the uncertainty of future funding, we are taking a prudent approach and will review our position further by April 2006
Complete the upgrade of sports pavilions and sports grounds to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act by October 2004	All access provisions to pavilions with public use have been completed. Disabled toilets in pavilions will be compliant by June 2005
Demolish the toilet in Old Ship Lane and refurbish the four remaining public toilets by March 2005	The toilet in Old Ship Lane was demolished and the other 4 toilets refurbished by February 2005
Agree an improvement plan by November 2004 to address our Comprehensive Performance Assessment conducted by Audit Commission inspectors	This was agreed in November 2004. Further information is detailed in section 6
Roll out kerbside recycling to all households in the district by November 2004	<p>Kerbside recycling expanded to 85% of households in November 2004. Vehicles suitable for collecting from properties with limited access need to be purchased and recycling will roll out to the remainder of the district by November 2005</p> <p>A green waste buy-in collection service will be available for residents from July 2005</p>

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
Implement decriminalised parking enforcement from October 2004	We took control of enforcement from October 2004: increased use of our car parks indicates its success to date
<p>Meet the targets set out in our Public Service Agreement (PSA) with Essex County Council</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="188 603 994 676">1. Process 85% of homelessness applications within 33 days by March 2005 <li data-bbox="188 852 1081 925">2. Determine at least 84% of planning applications within 8 weeks by March 2005 <li data-bbox="188 1134 945 1208">3. Process 99.9% of land charge searches within 10 working days by March 2005 	<p>Our cumulative performance of 40% over the year resulted from the time taken to clear a large backlog of cases. However, performance improved substantially in the second half of the year and the target is now being met. Stretching but realistic targets have been set for the next 3 years</p> <p>The figure for the year to the end of March 2005 was 70.9%. The reduction resulted from a change to the method of calculation, identified part way through the year, and this impacted on performance for the period before the change. However, in the quarter to March 2005, we were hitting the target.</p> <p>We achieved 99.34% on this target with a 100% turnaround in the last quarter</p>

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
<p>4. Average turnaround time for void properties</p> <p>5. Reduce the Council's annual paper usage to no more than 3.15 million sheets by March 2005</p> <p>6. Reduce sickness absence to 6.8 days per employee by March 2005</p>	<p>Turnaround time on void properties has been reduced from 31 days to 23. This has resulted from tenants' agreement for some works to be completed after occupation</p> <p>The target was met with paper usage reducing to 3.12m sheets in the year</p> <p>Working days lost reduced to 9.44 per employee but we did not achieve the target primarily as a result of some staff on long-term sickness absence. If long-term sickness is taken out of the equation, our year-end figure would be 4.08 days</p>
<p>Rochford's contribution to Essex-wide objectives contained within the PSA:</p> <p>Independence of older people</p> <p>Recycling/composting waste</p> <p>Removing abandoned vehicles from strategic routes</p>	<p>This is summarised on page 8.9</p> <p>This is summarised on page 8.2</p> <p>A new contact arrangement will be in place with the DVLA by July 2005. This will enable quicker removal of vehicles</p>

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
Keeping strategic routes free of litter	We have a structured inspection programme and reporting system to County Council who manage litter on strategic routes
Developing woodland and hedgerows	The development of Cherry Orchard Country Park is ongoing. Grants for woodlands management have been obtained from English Nature up to 2007/08 and DEFRA until 2015
Improving the condition of local roads	In April 2005 an agreement was set up with County to provide a centralised team, with a computerised reporting and tracking system for highway faults within the district
Reducing the number of young offenders	Although this is predominately a police target we are active members of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership which has a 3-year programme for addressing a number issues, including young offenders
Protecting buildings at risk	We maintain a risk register of these properties and monitor their condition. During the year, grants have been given to 3 properties in the district to maintain their integrity
Protecting our heritage	We now have an improved service to remove graffiti both on council property and private property and are working with the police to develop a means for managing this anti-social behaviour

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
Maintaining bio-diversity	Our woodlands and parks provide a natural environment to encourage the bio-diversity of plant and animal species through appropriate management regimes. The Cherry Orchard Country Park is being developed to encourage a return of several species of flora and fauna that were affected previously by intensive farming.
<p>Investigate the development of a Trust to oversee and safeguard Cherry Orchard Country Park and other open spaces and play areas, with a view to making a decision on this by October 2004</p> <p>Complete the local plan inquiry relating to the use of adjacent land and possible extension of the park by Spring 2005</p>	<p>We have agreed the principle of moving a number of our open spaces into a trust. However there are a number of detailed issues to be resolved before this can be fully realised</p> <p>Objections to the allocation of additional land to add to the Country Park were considered at the Local Plan Inquiry and the Inspector's views are awaited</p>
Refurbish Hardwick House to provide 22 general-need and affordable homes for rent and 30 new flats, with separate bathrooms, for the frail elderly by August 2005	Work started on site in July 2004. The general-need homes will be completed by October 2005 but the frail elderly accommodation being delayed until January or February 2006. This delay was caused by environmental survey requirements on site
Complete 6 new homes with support for those with learning difficulties by August 2005	These new homes have now been completed

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
Complete a joint project with Castle Point Borough Council to provide 5 new homes for those who are living in a refuge as a result of domestic violence by February 2005	These new homes have now been completed
Commence 26 new-build flats for rent on the former Read's nursery site by March 2005	The developer has delayed the start on this project because of site access issues. It is anticipated that building will now start in December 2005. The number of flats has increased to 27
Provide two flats for move-on accommodation, five houses for rent and five houses for shared ownership by April 2005	These have been completed
Obtain lottery funding, for works on Rayleigh Windmill, by October 2005	Lottery funding was not forthcoming but funding from Thames Gateway was obtained. Work commenced in December 2004, and completion is planned for August 2005. Works will include a sensory garden on land behind the Windmill, and this will be formally opened in Spring 2006
Complete a review of our organisational structure by April 2005	Proposals are being shaped to ensure they are 'fit for purpose'. Implementation is planned from July 2005

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
<p>Provide all services that are capable of electronic delivery by that means, by December 2005</p> <p>Continue to develop the Council's website</p> <p>Implement on-line access to maps by October 2004</p>	<p>We continue to work towards this target. Achievements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internet terminals accessible to the public in our reception areas • information on waste and recycling collections • property histories and maps available on the web • an automated telephone response to the annual electoral registration canvass • information on job vacancies with on-line application <p>During the coming year we will be implementing on-line facilities for booking leisure activities and making building control applications. Many more of our forms will also be available on-line</p>
<p>Maintain a balanced budget position</p>	<p>The budget is currently in balance but the position will be reviewed in December 2005 when new funding proposals from Central Government are known</p>

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
Implement a programme for clearing ditches and watercourses in areas vulnerable to flooding	Negotiations with landowners have enabled works to increase the capacity within the ditch network. Approximately 1.5 km of ditches and watercourses have been cleared and cleaned to date and the work is continuing in the year ahead
Approve and commence implementation of a strategy to address the needs of the elderly and frail elderly by August 2004	<p>A draft strategy for housing and support for older residents has been agreed by the Council. We are now working with health and social care agencies on plans for its practical implementation</p> <p>On specific issues we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supported a gardening service for the elderly, with the number of jobs rising from 47 in 2003/4 to 269 in 2004/5. • provided money to purchase smoke alarms to be fitted in the homes of the elderly and vulnerable. • provided financial support to develop a home safety video and leaflet to give advice to the elderly re falls, bogus callers etc. • installed personal computers in our sheltered schemes
Obtain Investors in People status by October 2004	The IIP assessment criteria were changed and consequently accreditation was gained in March 2005

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
Introduce an electronic document management system across the Council by March 2006	The first service area, Planning, went live in May 2005, and this will be followed by Revenues & Benefits, in autumn 2005
Roll out electronic purchasing across all activities by March 2005	Electronic purchasing is now in place across the organisation, enabling us to trade electronically with small and medium-sized enterprises
Address business crime	<p>A survey of unreported business crime has been carried out</p> <p>We are now undertaking a survey of fly-tipping on business premises and when the feedback from these surveys is analysed, an action plan will be developed</p>
Consider further options for recycling business waste by September 2004	Options were considered and £5000 funding has been allocated in 2005/06 for an educational campaign designed to encourage businesses to recycle their waste
Reduce the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for the homeless	We have stopped using bed and breakfast hotels for families, except in emergency situations. Our expenditure on bed and breakfast accommodation fell from £193,000 in 2003/4 to £87,000 last year and the average length of stay reduced by 2 weeks

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
Develop a strategy by April 2005 to bring empty privately-owned houses back into occupation	We were unable to make progress on this because of staff vacancies. It is our intention to address this in the year ahead
Provide play spaces at Great Wakering, Ashingdon, Fairview, Grove Woods, St John Fisher and Canewdon, with equipment that is suitable for use by those with disabilities	The programme was completed in July 2004
Produce a new animal welfare charter for the Council by July 2004	The Charter was published in February 2005. It took longer than planned due to the volume of information and evidence collected
<p>Introduce a youth supplement to Rochford District Matters by July 2005</p> <p>Produce a directory of local youth provision by September 2004</p>	<p>An additional 'youth' feature will be included in the summer issue of Rochford District Matters and a separate annual supplement will be introduced in future years</p> <p>The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership has produced an 'info card' providing telephone numbers of services which may be of use to young people</p>
Review our policy and service response in respect of gypsies and other travellers by January 2005	We considered some of the planning issues concerning gypsies and travellers, but further work has been put on hold until the Government determines future national policy

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
Hold a public local inquiry into the Local Plan in early 2005 or alternatively replace it with a new Rochford Local Development Framework	<p>The Local Plan Inquiry was held during February and March 2005. The Inspectors report is expected by September 2005</p> <p>A programme is now in place to produce the Local Development Framework</p>
Complete an evaluation of air quality in the district by October 2004	The review was completed by early November 2004 but more detailed and sophisticated monitoring was required to determine whether an action plan to reduce certain pollutants is needed. This work has just been completed and we are awaiting the Government's views by August 2005
Obtain approval to our new housing strategy by July 2004	Obtaining final approval of the new strategy took longer than anticipated, but was signed off as fit for purpose by Government in February 2005. The strategy identifies housing priorities and a series of actions to help deliver these
Introduce a new liquor licensing policy when statutory guidance is available	Our policy was adopted and published in December 2004, as required by law
Set up a dedicated liquor licensing team	We have set up a new small licensing team and a phased changeover commenced in February 2005

What we said . . .	What we did . . .
Produce an action plan for the Cultural Strategy by July 2004	This will be produced later in the year, when a new post-holder has been recruited
Complete a risk register to enable us to identify principal risks to the authority and the means for reducing those risks	A draft corporate risk register is now in place. An action plan is being developed for full implementation
Complete works to improve footways, lighting and forecourts to a second parade of shops in Hullbridge by July 2004	The scheme was completed in 2004
Increase the number of statutory indicators in the top two quartiles by 5% each year	We have exceeded this target. Full details are contained on page 8.16
Review our complaints procedure	We are investigating the incidence of complaints not currently processed through the formal complaints procedure, with a view to identifying and tackling problematic areas
Reduce the housing benefits form size and introduce specific forms for each type of claim	The form size was reduced and an additional form was introduced
Consider new ways for dealing with dumped rubbish	An improved system has resulted in dumped rubbish being removed in approximately 1 day

Some successes and failures

The following tables illustrate some of our successes and failures over the past year, by showing

those activities where performance improved in 2004/05, and those where performance declined

how we performed compared with other authorities in 2000/01, 2001/02, 2002/03 and 2003/04 (the latest figures available)

areas where we performed well or poorly in 2003/04 compared with other authorities

These tables should not be read in isolation, for each shows just one element of the picture. Within this section we have selected those indicators that focus on service delivery in specific areas and the management of the district.

Full details of all our performance measurements, from which these examples have been taken, can be found in section 9. Indicator numbers have been given in brackets after each description.

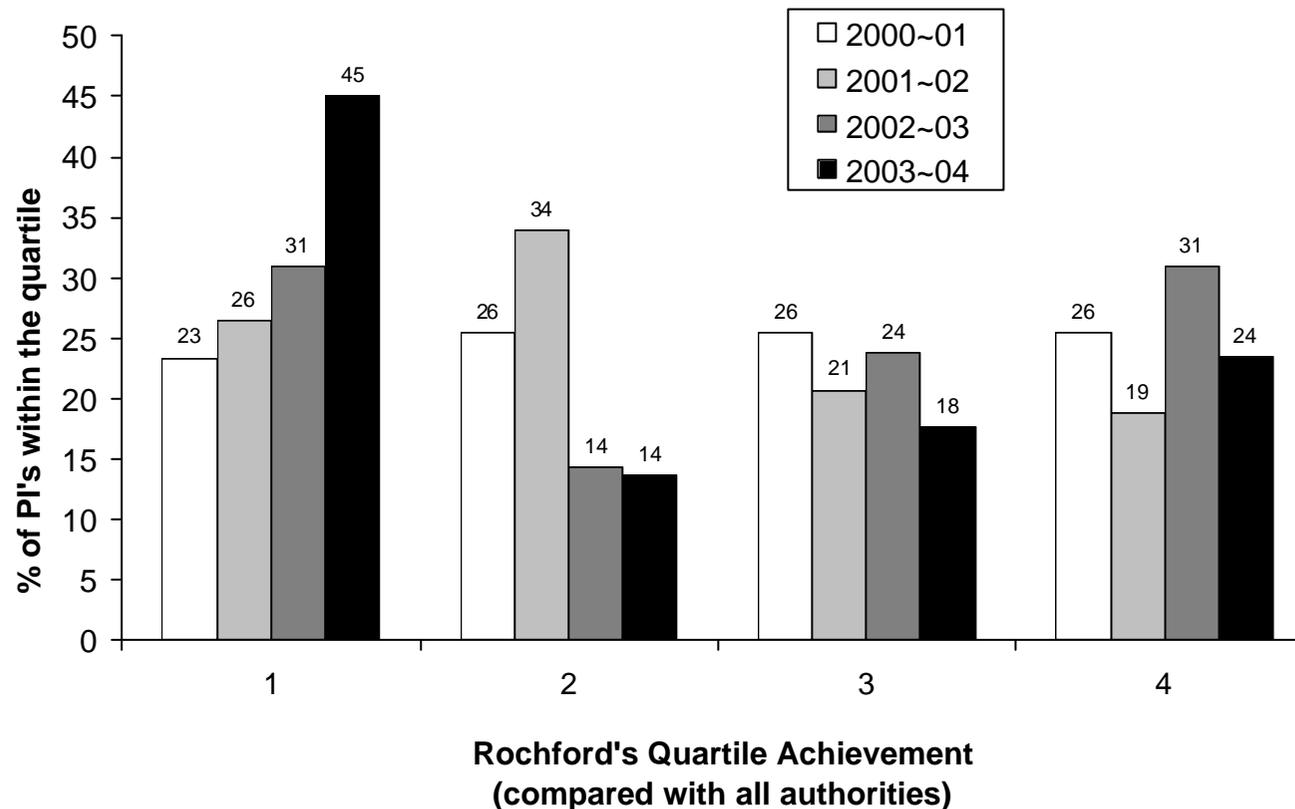
Our performance in 2004/05 compared with the previous year

☺	☹
Council buildings in which all public areas are accessible to disabled people (BV156)	Enforcement proceedings actioned within 10 days of instruction (Local 8.3)
Proportion of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished as a result of our action (BV62)	Proportion of homelessness cases on which a decision was made in 33 days (Local 9.3)
Time taken to re-let local authority housing (BV212)	Time for processing new claims for housing/council tax benefit and change of circumstances (BV78)
Percentage of total waste recycled (BV82)	
Proportion of households served by kerbside collection of recyclables (BV91)	
Percentage of homes built on previously developed land (BV106)	

Our performance compared with other authorities

The following chart demonstrates how our performance on measurable performance indicators compared with other authorities in 2000/01, 2001/02, 2002/03, and 2003/04. There has been a substantial increase in the number of indicators within the top quartile in 2003/04, resulting primarily from the positive responses received to the statutory consultations, particularly benefits administration.

The inclusion of indicators in the 3rd and 4th quartiles does not mean that our performance has not improved; simply that our improvement on some indicators may be less than that achieved by other councils. All councils are striving for continuous improvement. Nevertheless, we will now be concentrating our efforts on those indicators in the 3rd and 4th quartiles, and looking at ways to improve these. Our target is to increase the number of indicators falling in the 1st or 2nd quartiles to 62% and 65% in 2004/05 and 2005/06 respectively. Information on actual performance is detailed in section 9.



The following table summarises both areas where we did particularly well in 2003/04, and those where our performance was weak, when compared with other authorities. We are concentrating our efforts on these weak areas and are aiming to improve our ranking in future years.

Where we did very well 	Where we did poorly 
Overall satisfaction with the Council's performance (BV3)	Satisfaction with complaints handling (BV4)
Payment of invoices (BV8)	Unfit private dwellings made fit (BV62)
Council tax collected (BV9)	Proportion of household waste that is recycled (BV82a)
Rent collected (BV66)	Proportion of households served by kerbside collection of recyclables (BV91)
Satisfaction of tenants with services provided by their landlords (BV74)	Length of stay in bed-and-breakfast accommodation of those who are pregnant or with children (BV183)
Satisfaction with the benefits service (BV80)	Length of stay in hostel accommodation of those who are pregnant or with children (BV183)
Satisfaction with cleanliness standards in the district (BV89)	
Proportion of non-decent local authority homes (BV184)	