



# **Comprehensive Performance Assessment**

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## **Corporate Assessment 2008**

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### **Our self-assessment**

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# **Version control:**

## **Draft self assessment vX *ddmmyy.doc***

| <b>Version</b> | <b>Date</b>   | <b>Author</b>                                  | <b>Changes</b>                                                                                                                            |
|----------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>3</b>       | <b>070308</b> | <b>Les Simpson</b>                             | <b>Updates to sections 4.2 onwards<br/>Removal of bullet points (for drafting purposes)</b>                                               |
| <b>4</b>       | <b>120308</b> | <b>Les Simpson</b>                             | <b>Changes following SMT discussion<br/>Included Context section – work in progress<br/>Removed prompting bullet points in section 5.</b> |
| <b>5</b>       | <b>130308</b> | <b>Les Simpson as reviewed by Terry Harper</b> | <b>Proof reading and misc. changes. Entry of Showcase material and addition of material re tourism.</b>                                   |
| <b>6</b>       | <b>140308</b> | <b>Les Simpson</b>                             | <b>Accept track changes; edit showcases</b>                                                                                               |

## Context and Summary

### ***The Council's vision for Rochford:***

***To make the District of Rochford the place of choice in the County to live, work and visit.***

### **Living in Rochford**

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 district's population of some 79,700 inhabitants lives in three main settlements and a number of villages. The population is predicted to grow to 80,300 by 2011. Overall, the residents of Rochford have a similar age profile to the East of England, but there are fewer young children (0-4) and young adults (19-31) and more people aged 52-69.

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.

Life expectancy at birth is amongst the highest in the County and over 22% of the population is aged 60 or over. In the period between 2001-2021, the number of residents aged 85 years and over is expected to at least double. 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 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 district is relatively affluent, being 316<sup>th</sup> 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.

The district has approximately 33,700 homes and one of the highest proportions of owner-occupation in the Country at 86%. Social housing comprises approximately 8%.

Following a very positive tenant ballot in 2006, the Council transferred its housing stock of about 1,750 homes to a Housing Association in September 2007.

House prices in the district are relatively high with an average house price at £224,837 (2006) and an average income of £20,051, so affordability for local people entering the housing market can be an issue.

The crime rate in Rochford is one of the lowest in Essex, which itself is one of the safest counties in England. The Rochford Crime & Disorder Partnership was set a target of reducing crime by 13.5% by March 2008 and this has already been exceeded. However, fear of crime remains a concern with 50% of respondents to a recent Essex County Council tracker survey saying that they do not feel safe outside after dark.

### **Working in Rochford**

About 39,000 residents are in employment and the unemployment rate is low, at about 1%. There are about 21,000 jobs in the district, predominantly in the retail, wholesale and service sectors and only five businesses employ more than 250 staff.

A high proportion of the workforce commutes out of the district – 30% to Southend, 14% to London and 24% elsewhere.

There are 7 industrial estates located within the District and work is underway on the new Rochford business park close to the Airport. Port facilities exist on the Rivers Crouch and Roach with a large wharf and warehousing at Wallasea.

### **Visiting Rochford**

Rochford District is predominantly rural in character, with miles of unspoilt coastline and attractive countryside. Located 14 miles from the M25, Rochford 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 District does not seek to attract mass tourism, but rather to make available attractions of specific interest, complemented by the usual range facilities expected by visitors.

The historic towns of Rochford and Rayleigh, are well served with shops and amenities and contain several buildings of historic interest including a rare 18<sup>th</sup> century Dutch Cottage, the 12<sup>th</sup> century Old House and a, recently restored, 17<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 Country Park and the Roach Valley Conservation Zone. A pioneering wetlands project is being created on Wallasea Island and the island of Foulness is internationally famous as a haven for wildlife.

[Marinas and yacht clubs exist to serve the needs of the sailing fraternity?]

## **Delivering our vision**

The Council operates within Shire District, two tier arrangements. It has 39 Councillors (currently 30 Conservative, 5 Liberal-Democrat, 1 Rochford Residents and 3 vacancies), elected by thirds.

Until 2006, the Council operated a committee system with five policy committees. The CPA inspection in 2004 identified that the Council's overview and scrutiny process in particular needed improvement. Following a Member-led review, a single new Review Committee was established to conduct overview and scrutiny work. The political decision making structure was also significantly changed following the Local Government White Paper and the Council now operates with an Executive Board, chaired by the Leader of the Council, and three Area Committees. The Review Committee is now chaired by a member of the main opposition party. In addition, there is a Standards Committee, an Appeals Committee, a Licensing Committee and a Development Control Committee.

The Chief Executive heads the officer administration and he is supported by two Corporate Directors and six Heads of Service. Together, these comprise the Senior Management Team. The Council currently employs 238 full time equivalent staff.

There are 14 Town/Parish Council covering the whole district and some District Council Members also serve as Parish or County Councillors.

Partnerships have always been important to the Council – to help increase capacity and co-ordination, to harness the commitment of local community organisations and to use the strengths of the private sector to deliver high quality services and to innovate, for the benefit of our customers. We recognise that increased partnership working will be important in the future. We have a clear framework to ensure that we focus our time and resources in partnerships that add value and that provide proper standards of governance.

The Rochford Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was reviewed and revised in 2006 to ensure consistency with the Essex Local Area Agreement (LAA). It is chaired by the Leader of the Council and is organised to deliver and report progress through blocks which mirror those in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The Council has a very successful Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and members and officers play leading roles in the LSP, Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership and the development of the Local Area Agreement. Essex is developing LAA2 and the LSP is increasingly focusing on those aspects which can only be delivered by effective partnership working.

The Council's total net expenditure for 2008/9 is £12.34m, an increase of 18% on 2007/8. This is primarily due to the additional costs of the environmental contracts and concessionary fares. The Council is drawing down balances of £1.48m to reduce the impact on council tax. The level of General Fund balances has been built up over the last few years to prepare for the contract renewals which we foresaw would be a major cost because of the additional level of service offered leading to increased recycling. The normal level of General Fund balances is based on a risk assessment approach and the minimum level has been identified as about £1.4m. By the end of 2008/09, balances

will be £1.4m. During 2009/10, the balance remaining on the Housing Revenue Account will revert to the General Fund.

The Capital budget for 2008/09 is £2.72m, compared to £990K in 2007/09. The main item of expenditure is £1m on the purchase of bins for the new recycling contract. Capital reserves will be around £1.8m at the end of 2008/09 and the main sources of capital receipts are from housing and sale of assets.

Council tax for 2008/09 is £188.01, an increase of 4.87%.

### **Future challenges**

[Analysis to be included from Local Futures, Economic Development Strategy, LDF etc]

## What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

### 1. Ambition for the community

#### 1.1 Are there clear and challenging ambitions for the area and its communities?

*The Council has sought to address the concerns about ambition raised in the 2004 CPA assessment. Building on the existing Community Strategy, the Council is driving the production of a new Sustainable Community Strategy that is well informed by community-based research and supported by SMART action plans. The golden thread is evident from the Community Strategy through our Corporate Plan (aligned to our Medium Term Financial Strategy) to Divisional Plans and, ultimately to individual Performance & Development Reviews.*

The Community Strategy for Rochford District was published by the Local Strategic Partnership in April 2004 and describes the vision for the area against 6 key themes:

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

**Looking after our environment:** to protect and enhance the natural and built environment for present and future generations.

**A good education, good skills and good jobs:** 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.

**Healthy living:** 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.

**Getting around:** to improve people's ability to get across and around the District.

**An inclusive community:** 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.

These individual visions can be collectively summarised as:

***To make the District of Rochford the place of choice in the County to live, work and visit.***

This is Rochford District Council's vision and it is underpinned by 6 corporate objectives within our medium term corporate plan:

- To provide an excellent cost effective frontline service for all our customers.
- To work towards a safer and more caring community.
- To provide a green and sustainable environment.
- To encourage a thriving local economy.
- To improve the quality of life for people in our District.
- To maintain and enhance our local heritage.

The vision and objectives have been widely shared with partners and stakeholders through partnership arrangements, and communicated to the wider community through the District newspaper, Area Committees and other engagement techniques. Council staff understand the Council vision and objectives and how the Council is delivering these through regular team briefings and annual sessions with the Chief Executive and Council Leader.

The Council's Corporate Plan describes the 6 corporate objectives over a three-year time frame; it is essentially the business plan for the Council. Additionally, each year the Council agrees a Key Policy and Actions paper setting out for the coming year the Council's immediate priorities, which are then incorporated into SMART action plans in Divisional Plans for services. Pending the publication of the new Sustainable Community Strategy, the Council has taken steps in the interim to ensure that its staff and partners have clarity about ambitions and objectives. In February 2008, the Council agreed a paper entitled 'Vision to Reality', derived from visioning sessions with Members (and in particular the Executive Board), which articulates, at a point in time, the Council's key themes and areas of work it wishes to progress over a period (currently up to 2021). This is not a substitute for any other corporate or statutory plan but its purpose is to inform Council staff and partners about ambitions for the community. It is also a public document that serves as a vehicle for on-going community engagement about the Council's aspirations for Rochford District.

The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) brings together Police, County and District Councils, community and voluntary sector groups to tackle crime and the fear of crime, and has been recognised by the Government Office for the East of England as a highly effective partnership being the best performing in its family group delivering the greatest reduction in crime.

The Council is a full and active member of Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) Partnership to deliver regeneration across South Essex. We have levered in funding [insert figure - total £s over last 3 years] to enhance town centres and our country park. We are working closely with neighbouring Southend Borough Council, to undertake a joint assessment on the future of London-Southend Airport and its environs. The Council is also working closely with TGSE to fulfil its role as the 'green part of the gateway' and develop high quality spaces for the enjoyment of the local residents but also for the wider South Essex community. Following the development of linkages with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) around the District's 'wildlife offer', the Council is working with the RSPB to develop a wildlife haven of international significance in the north of the District, the Wallasea Wetlands Project.

The Council has played a full and active part in the Essex Local Area Agreement, indeed the Chief Executive has led on one of the blocks. The Council and LSP priorities have been aligned to those of the Essex LAA where appropriate. In the development of the new LAA, the Council and its partners are aligning to meet County, District and local need. The Council, the LSP and its partnerships will be agreeing to specific targets where there is alignment to deliver improved outcomes for the local communities.



The original Community Strategy was developed largely through consultation between 2002-03. We have continued to seek out information and understanding of our communities through new innovative approaches, for example the on-line consultation for planning policy. We have also developed our understanding from work around:

- the Local Development Framework;
- the County Council's research in developing the County Sustainable Community Strategy;
- our commissioned research from Local Futures;
- the joint strategic needs health assessment for Rochford; and
- our Access to Services Strategy.

The information gathered has also contributed to the refresh of the Rochford District Area Profile, published on our web site, which provides a definitive, common source of key data about Rochford District and its communities.

Improving community engagement - on-line planning consultations:

Our Planning Policy team have introduced an on-line consultation system for the Local Development Framework, along with other measures to increase public participation. The on-line consultation system addresses two primary needs:

- As a database of people/groups interested in planning policy who are automatically consulted;
- To enable access to and viewing of new planning documents for consultation. Additionally the system allows for on-line responses and collates and analyses the responses.

Efforts are made to engage with diverse community groups via exhibitions, use of the local media as well as working with local groups, such as residents groups and Parish Councils.

There are currently 5 specific groups reporting into the LSP, each have action plans for 2004-09 and progress is monitored through exception reporting to the LSP Executive.

Whilst the current Community Strategy has provided a focus for planning and delivery, nevertheless we have recognised the need to improve this key document. There is scope to improve target setting and action planning, and we have taken the opportunity with the development of the new Essex Local Area Agreement to revisit the strategy. The LSP commissioned research (Rochford Futures) in November 2007 that, together with community intelligence from the development of the County-led LAA and our Access to Services Strategy, has identified some new priorities for the LSP. Additionally the LSP has reflected on its own operation and, in order to give better focus, it has decided to:

- recognise that supporting statutory partnerships (eg CDRP, CYPSP) should deliver their strategies and be monitored by the LSP, and
- the LSP's own action plans will comprise only projects that require partnership delivery.

The intention is to deliver a new Sustainable Community Strategy for Rochford District by the end of June 2008 that will then necessitate the Council to review and revise its Corporate Plan for 2009-10 onwards. The new targets and

objectives will be incorporated into the Council's Divisional Planning process, beginning with the budget development process from October 2008. Building on the experience of the first Community Strategy, the new Sustainable Community Strategy will be better informed about the needs of our communities, with a clearer focus through challenging, SMART action plans and underpinned by our robust performance management system.

## 1.2 Are ambitions based on a shared understanding among the Council and partner organisations of local needs?

*The Council, with its LSP partners, has developed a joint evidence base on which to develop its new Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework, and influence the shaping of the Essex wide LAA to ensure local needs are addressed within it. This evidence base has brought agreed understanding with all partners about the needs, challenges and opportunities for the economic, social and environmental well being of the District.*

The Council and its partners are using the evidence base to develop joint key actions to address these needs within the new Sustainable Community Strategy. This baseline evidence is already being used to shape future service delivery in the Council's Access to Services Strategy and has been developed from the following sources:

- **Rochford Futures** – specifically commissioned by the Rochford LSP in September 2007 and undertaken by the Local Futures Group. This has resulted in a report on 'future drivers of change' that will shape the environment within which the District Council and its partners will operate.
- **Local Area Agreement (LAA) Surveys** – As part of the LAA process there are a number of surveys being undertaken that provide the Council with a range of information on the communities within the district and their changing attitudes to a number of issues.
- **Tenants' Forums** – these were run by the Housing Division for their tenants prior to the Housing Stock Transfer. The Forums continue post-transfer and allow tenants to discuss services issues with the Housing Association.
- **BVPI Survey** – the statutory survey conducted every three years seeking residents' views on quality of life in the area, and on a range of services. These surveys provide quantitative data that can be benchmarked against other authorities for customer satisfaction.
- **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** - As part of the Local Development Framework the Council has produced a SCI setting out how it will consult people in the new planning system.
- **Access to Services Strategy** – customer insight profiles are being built up by our consultants, Tribal, and including BME and groups at risk of disadvantage.
- **Area Committees** – formed as part of the new political arrangements operating from July 2007, are vehicles for airing local issues.
- **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** - by the Primary Care Trust and the County Council for the future health, care and well-being needs for Rochford.

The Council has greatly improved its approach to community engagement which had been predominantly postal questionnaire based to using a much more diverse range of engagement techniques. Service users have been involved in a number of service development initiatives, including:

- the revision of benefit forms;
- focus groups in different localities to shape the new waste management contract;
- focus groups and telephone surveying to better include disadvantaged groups in the development of the Access to Services Strategy;
- engaging young people at youth events;
- going into and working with schools to get young people to engage with the Local Development Framework.

The Council has also used roadshows to get into communities and engage them. The District has a small BME population that is dispersed widely across the District and without any recognised representative organisation; the Council recognises that engaging these groups is difficult. However, with Castle Point and Maldon Councils it has secured money through the Building Capacity East fund to undertake work to map and engage these and other minority groups, and to establish engagement arrangements. This joint working ensures that groups are not overly consulted but a systematic framework can be established so that groups can have the opportunity to input into decision-making and service issues.

The Council has recently refreshed its Citizens' Panel to increase the size of the panel in order to make it more robust and increase the number of people that can be engaged, but also to be able to identify needs and trends at the sub-district level. The Citizens' panel is seen as a useful engagement tool, but is seen as one of a basket of engagement techniques. The Council will also continue to use its District newspaper and website to engage and inform people.

The Council works with and supports Rochford District Association of Voluntary Services (RAVS), the District's voluntary sector infrastructure organisation. RAVS has undertaken a needs assessment of local third sector groups to inform the sectors development needs and the data gleaned from this is being used by all partners to support the sector in the long term. The Council and partners have also worked closely with the voluntary sector in developing and agreeing the new Compact.

**1.3 Does the Council with its partners provide leadership across the community and ensure effective partnership working?**

*The Council has robust, established working relationships with the County Council and is actively engaged in a number of partnerships with County service functions, such as youth services represented on the LSP Executive Board. The LSP has been restructured to align more closely with the LAA and the District LSP priorities are being delivered through similar blocks to the LAA. The Leader and Chief Executive are key figures in providing community leadership in Rochford through the LSP and in representing the interests of Rochford and its*

*partners in other partnership arenas, eg Essex County Council and Thames Gateway.*

The Chief Executive was instrumental in establishing the first LSP and has initiated and managed change in the LSP governance arrangements, ensuring that it responds effectively to the changing partnership agenda.

This partnership ethos is also reflected in the Council's Values:

- 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.

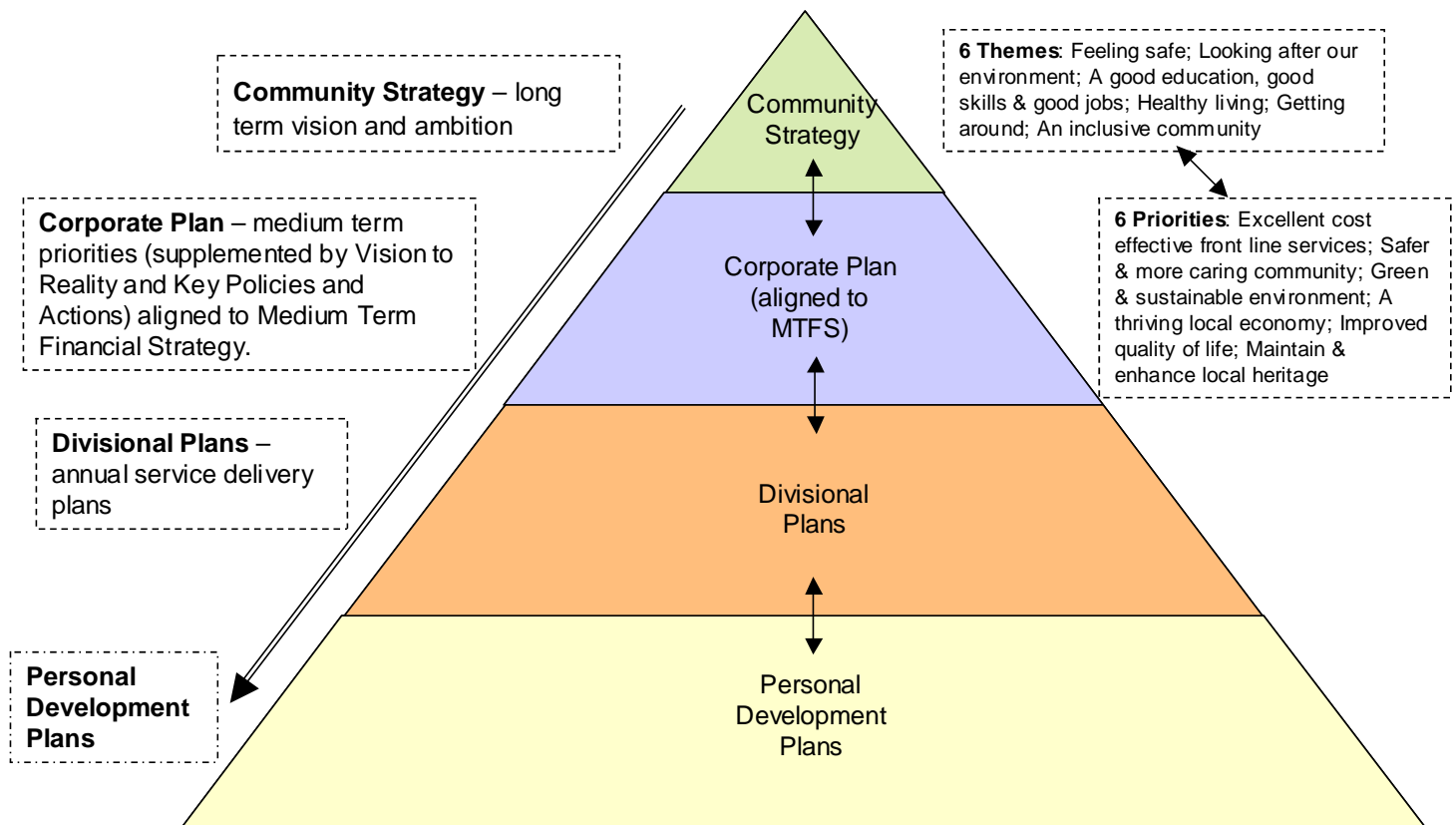
The Council is open to challenge about service provision and has a history of working with the private sector. Following strong tenant support, we have in the last year completed our housing stock transfer to ensure that we meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010, but we have also contracted to deliver some 50 affordable homes per year through this transfer. We have not backed away from taking difficult decisions where there is a clear benefit to our customers.

## 2. Prioritisation

### 2.1 Are there clear and robust priorities within the ambitions for the area?

*The Council is clear about its priorities and has established the ‘golden thread’ to ensure the delivery of those priorities. Staff and Members understand the priority actions for the following year through the Key Policies and Actions paper agreed by Council every February. These actions are mirrored in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and link directly to the Corporate Plan objectives, which in turn support the delivery of the Community Strategy.*

## Rochford’s ‘Golden Thread’ – cascading objectives



Since 2006 the Council has operated a Divisional Planning and Budget Preparation Process with the following key features:

- June/July: Review of Corporate Plan and MTFS
- Summer: Divisional Planning starts having regard to MTFS pressures, efficiency savings, national agendas, etc
- November: First Member Away Day – reaffirming Corporate Plan, identifying MTFS risks/issues and priorities and non-priorities
- December: Heads of Service generate options appraisals reflecting Member Away Day outcomes.

- January: Final Member Away Day – decision on priorities.
- February: Budget and MTFs agreed. Vision to Reality and Key Policies and Actions approved.
- February/March: Divisional Plans finalised with ‘challenge’ process
- March/April: Personal Development Review process begins

Consequently the Council reviews its medium term planning on an annual basis and identifies the immediate annual objectives agreed by Council. These are then embedded into Divisional and Personal Development Plans. The most recent Staff Survey (2006) reported that 70% of staff “have sufficient understanding of the Council’s aims and objectives” and that 82% agreed that “they have the information they need to do their job”. The more recent IIP assessment identified that one of the Council’s key strengths was: *“the degree to which staff understand their contribution to the Council and feel valued.”*

Through our consultants (Tribal) for our Access to Services Strategy, we are getting a far better understanding of the needs of our communities, especially those in groups at risk of being disadvantaged. We are linking this to training for members and staff on Diversity Awareness and specific training on the Equalities Standard; we are proud of our achievement of Level 2 of the Equality Standards Scheme and we are confident of achieving Level 3 by September 2008.

We seek to deliver joined up services to our residents. For example, in response to the needs of residents we have introduced a Handyman/Gardening Service, delivered through the Springboard Housing Association, which is proving to be extremely popular as witnessed by a 71% increase in use. This initiative also links to the reducing fear of crime targets of the CDRP (through reducing the risk of opportunistic crime with homes targeted with unkempt gardens) and prevention strategies of Adult Social Care (in preventing falls and hospital admissions of elderly people).

The Council has established a balance between national agendas and local priorities. For example, we are addressing housing issues (eg affordable housing), regeneration, recycling and crime reduction (Rochford having been recognised as the most successful CDRP in the East of England) on the national agenda; we continue to deliver other national agendas on e-Government, procurement and equalities. Whilst doing this, the Council is still addressing local needs, eg improvements to Rayleigh Mill as a visitor attraction, the Handyman/Gardening service; investing in youth and mini football pitches around the new Rayleigh Leisure Centre.

## **2.2 Is there a robust strategy to deliver the priorities?**

*As outlined in 2.1 above, the Council has a clear framework of strategies and plans with a golden thread to ensure that the Council’s objectives, and thereby its part in addressing the Community Strategy, are delivered within the agreed budget ‘envelope’.*

**[Insert or link to chart of Corporate Plan objectives, stated measures and targets]**

The Divisional Planning and Budget Preparation process enables an integrated approach to service and financial planning to ensure that the Key Policies and Actions (ie priorities) for each year are delivered within the budget envelope in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Additionally, in February 2008, the Council agreed a paper entitled 'Vision to Reality', informed through the Divisional Planning and Budget Preparation process, which articulates the Council's ambitions at that point in time. It projects ambitions for the future (currently for 2013, 2017 and 2021) in order to inform staff and partners of the possible future direction for the Council. This allows partners, in particular, to be cognisant of the Council's thinking to assist them in their forward planning. 'Vision to Reality' supplements, rather than substitutes, the Corporate Plan.

### **2.3 Is robust action taken to deliver the strategy?**

*The Council's processes ensure that priority actions are identified and then embedded into Divisional and Personal Development Plans. Corporate resources are deployed to challenge services in developing the Divisional Plans, SMART Action Plans and Targets. Regular reporting to officers and members ensures that these actions are delivered. Members make difficult decisions and keep their focus on achieving priorities.*

The Key Policies and Actions paper headlines the priorities for the forthcoming year in terms of:

- Policy Developments;
- Service Improvements; and
- Key Projects.

Performance Management Officers act in a challenging role to services in developing Divisional Plans, ensuring that SMART action plans and targets are developed and take account of the Key Policies and Actions priorities, Equalities and Risk Management. [\[Insert and/or link to examples of Divisional Plans with Key Policies and Actions incorporated and accompanying SMART Action Plans\]](#)

As stated in the Ambition section above, the Council recognises that the same degree of rigour and robustness does not apply currently within the LSP framework. However, it is the aim of the Council to extend its performance management framework arrangements to monitor the new Sustainable Community Strategy.

Members keep track on the progress of the Key Policies and Actions through a quarterly performance monitoring report. [\[Insert link to example of latest report\]](#) They take difficult decisions when necessary to ensure priorities are delivered. For example, a priority is the extension of the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Park where, despite objections from the landowner, a Compulsory Purchase Order has been issued to realise the extension. [\[Insert link to case study\]](#)

Additionally members receive regular reports on progress being made to implement decisions. This is a constructive process that allows members to hold officers to account and reinforces the political decision making process. [\[Insert link to recent report\]](#)

## What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

### 3. Capacity

#### 3.1 Is there clear accountability and decision making to support service delivery and continuous improvement?

*In 2007 the Council moved from a fourth option to leader and executive model following a structural review of the authority. This has improved clarity and understanding of the roles and responsibilities of both members and officers in the schemes of delegation and there is a constructive, healthy and professional relationship between the two. An Officer Code of Conduct and revised Member Code of Conduct were adopted in 2007 and comprehensive training provided for both. The new officer structure is developing an environment for cross-cutting work driving continuous improvement.*

*“Senior officers and members lead by example. People said they felt the culture in the authority was transparent and that leaders were honest. ....it was widely reported that relationships between senior officers and councillors was positive. They work well together and respect each other.”*  
*- Ethical governance health check, March 2007 - IDeA*

In section 2.1 there is an overview of how our robust corporate planning processes ensure members are fully engaged in considering and determining priorities and then, subsequently, in challenging and monitoring progress.

The Council also welcomes external challenge and seeks to learn from the experience, for example, the IDeA Peer Review and Ethical Governance Health Check. This openness is also reflected in the both the member and management arrangements of the Council. All Council meetings are held in public and agendas and minutes are published on the internet. The decisions of Management Teams at all levels are recorded and published on the intranet.

An officer restructuring in (2006) has helped to develop better cross-council working. The Senior Management Team comprises the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors and Heads of Service. Additionally, the Chief Executive and the two Corporate Directors lead on cross-council working groups – Strategy & Partnership; Service Development & Improvement; and Staffing and Resources – and jointly they review all performance reports as a Performance Assessment Board.

The Council has also reviewed the effectiveness of scrutiny and used the move to new political arrangements to improve scrutiny. An opposition member chairs the one Overview and Scrutiny (Review) Committee and the chairman or any three members can call-in any decision. The findings of the Review Committee are presented to the Executive Board and/or Council. **[Insert examples of Review Committee scrutiny work leading to changes with outcomes – see also 3.2 below]**



Risk management is now embedded in the Council. There is a Corporate Risk Register that is kept under review by the Corporate Risk Group that meets on a regular basis, and the minutes of which are published on the intranet. Divisional Plans include a risk assessment and every report to Council includes risk implications. [insert examples of risk management in partnerships]

**3.2 Does the Council, with its partners, develop its capacity effectively to change and deliver its ambitions and priorities?**

*The Council recognises that being a relatively small organisation requires it to manage its resources wisely and to adopt processes and practices that are proportionate to the Council's available capacity. There are new member and officer arrangements in place that give clearer focus and encourage cross-council working. Rochford has a long established track record of successfully 'outsourcing' service provision and using partnerships and external funding where demonstrated that this provides best value.*

The Council has restructured both political and management arrangements in order to give the Council greater focus on priorities and capacity to deliver its plans. The Leader, Cllr Terry Cutmore, has a high profile in partnerships, chairing the LSP and Groundwork Trust for Rochford, and is a member of the main Thames Gateway Board. Paul Warren, one of the longest serving Chief Executives in Essex, is also active in the TGSE and has strong partnership links with Essex Districts and the County Council; for example he is a member of the Essex Partnership Group (overseeing the LAA2) and chairman of the new County-wide Community Safety, Drugs and Alcohol Strategic Partnership. The move to an Executive Board has enabled greater member ownership of issues, for example the Cabinet Member for Environment has been instrumental in reviewing and promoting the revised waste management project. The Deputy Leader led the review of Overview and Scrutiny that resulted in one Review Committee.

The revised management structure has a clear Internal versus External provision split and joined up working is achieved through the 3 cross-Council management teams. These teams help to develop Council-wide approaches, for example the Service Development and Improvement Team have the responsibility: "To develop the Council's agenda in terms of Value for Money and cost benchmarking of the Council's activities and operations." The Council now has a draft VFM Strategy which will include a programme of VFM reviews as part of the drive to deliver the national efficiency targets and ensure delivery against the MTFS. There is a revised Procurement Strategy which encourages new approaches to securing VFM, for example, best bids against a fixed budget for procurement of play spaces equipment; a cost (40%) versus quality (60%) assessment of tenders for new contracts – grounds maintenance, street cleansing and waste management.

We strive as a Council to get the best out of our existing workforce through sound people management and to lever in additional resources as and when advantageous to do so. We have a Workforce Development Plan aligned to our priorities and we have been very successful in reducing sickness absence from [x] days to [y] days. This has been in part down to staff incentives such as the

reward scheme for attendance and an enhanced flexible working scheme. We have recently enhanced the offer to staff on sickness absence with a contract with DHS to manage the sickness absence process. [Insert some benefits of scheme] At the same time we have been re-accredited as a whole council Investor in People; indeed our assessor has commented that we exceed the standards [Insert quote from IiP Assessor]

In seeking to achieve our service delivery objectives, we assess the opportunities to work with organisations, as ‘partners’ and/or ‘contractors’. We have an established track record of working with the private sector – for example a long-term contract for IT (currently with Sungard). The Council has sufficient ICT resources to deliver its priorities. There is significant progress towards realising the benefits from e-government for residents as well as for Council staff. We have invested in our underlying infrastructure to a ‘thin client’ environment that enables home and mobile working, providing a more flexible approach to service delivery.

The Council has an approved ICT strategy and has established an ongoing ICT strategy reserve of £250,000 to ensure that the strategy can be delivered. The website has been re-launched with improved navigation and a wide range of information and online services, giving greater choice and access for residents. 80% of respondents to a user poll thought that the new website was an improvement; indeed SOCITM have reclassified our web site as Transactional, being only one of 5 Essex Districts to have achieved that level.

Rochford District Council Web site: e-enabled applications

Residents can:

- make payments on line for services including council tax and car park penalty notices;
- access planning applications, previous planning decisions, property history and map based information;
- make planning and building control applications online;
- find out details of their local councillors and their refuse and recycling days;
- apply for jobs at the Council;
- make complaints, comments and compliment.

Accessibility is made easier through access tools for changing font sizes, for listening to the web site and for language translations.

The Council is proud of its history of working with the private sector to introduce innovative ways of improving services and delivering better value for money. In 2004, our Revenues and Benefits Service struggled with capacity and consequently was delivering a poor service to residents. We reviewed the situation and created a back – front office split and engaged Capita to manage our front desk (in reality from a contact centre in Coventry). By redirecting staff vacancy funding to an external provider to cover the ‘back office’, we created space for our Council Office based staff to deal with more complex cases with greater care and attention to our customers. The service performance has transformed, not only in national processing performance standards but where it

matters - customer satisfaction with the service to some of the most vulnerable/disadvantaged people in our community.

We also seek external funding as appropriate in building our capacity. Recent examples include support for the Access to Services Strategy that is helping to improve our approach to equalities and diversity. The Access to Services inspection report of 2007 contained four key recommendations, namely:

- develop and implement a customer access strategy supported by robust action plan to ensure delivery;
- extend the Council's knowledge and understanding of community access need;
- establish a systematic approach to managing and improving value for money to ensure services are effective, efficient and economic; and
- increase the Council's knowledge and understanding of accessibility.

To provide additional capacity and expertise to deliver this priority area of work, we were successful in bidding to Building Capacity East and received a grant of £157,000. We have used consultants, Tribal, to help develop the Access to Services Strategy (which was approved by members in December 2007) and the Council is developing a comprehensive change management training programme for the Senior Management Team and middle managers. As a consequence, we are seeing in our strategies and plans an integrated approach to diversity, human rights and user focus.

We also look to work in partnership with the third sector to strengthen our capacity. We have a grant funding framework with the Citizen's Advice Bureau being one of a number of beneficiaries. With other Voluntary Sector organisations we have introduced Service Level Agreements to ensure that our funding is delivering value for money against our priorities. This year we increased funding to RAVS but with a Service Level Agreement. **[Insert benefits of SLA]**

However we have identified an area for improvement in adopting a more consistent approach to project management. We have recently produced a project management guide for Rochford that is, in essence, a proportionate and risk assessed application of the Prince2 methodology. This does need to be contextualised in that because of the enabling nature of the Council, any major project necessitating the rigour of Prince2 will be externalised. Therefore the Rochford methodology is designed to:

- clarify the potential client roles in Prince2 and give a general appreciation of the methodology; and
- to give a framework for other projects recognising key best practice components rather than designed to equip staff to operate at a Prince2 practitioner level.

## **4. Performance Management**

### **4.1 Is there a consistent, rigorous and open approach to performance management?**

*Since CPA 2004, the council has risen to the challenge to improve its approach to performance management, including user focus, and this has delivered benefits in service performance. Service and financial planning are integrated. The performance of service delivery partnerships is managed appropriately and significant performance improvements have been achieved. Performance management arrangements are in place for the Local Strategic Partnership and will be strengthened with the revision of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Members are actively engaged in performance management and receive appropriate data to elicit challenge and enable scrutiny. The Council welcomes feed back and learns from the few complaints that it receives.*

In 2004 the Council's performance management was described as having more weaknesses than strengths with concerns on: performance measurement being under developed in some areas; performance management being inconsistent across services; the Council being unable to assess cost effectiveness of services; and risk management being embryonic. Much has changed since then and this has been recognised by the Relationship Manager in his judgement that "performance management is becoming increasingly embedded." This has been achieved through the implementation of the performance management framework with the following key components:

- Ensuring the Golden Thread of objectives flows from the Ambitions (Community Strategy), through the Council's Corporate Plan and its priorities into Divisional Plans, and then into Personal Development Plans.
- Aligning service (Divisional) planning with the Corporate Plan, which in turn reflects the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- Introducing a data quality strategy – raising awareness of the significance of good data quality to underpin performance management, in particular reporting.
- Introducing quarterly reporting of key indicators against the corporate priorities only to members who also receive a mid-yearly report on all BVPIs and progress reports on the Council's Key Policies and Actions for that year. Introducing scrutiny of performance by the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors (as the Performance Assessment Board) in the format of a quarterly exception report.
- Member monitoring of the progress made on the implementation of decisions.
- The Service Development and Improvement Management Team who review performance issues across the Council and develop council-wide approaches to performance improvement, eg Value for Money. Similarly, the Staffing & Resources Management Team have developed the Council's approach to procurement.
- The Council's values which reflect the importance of user focus and service improvement, working in partnership as necessary.

- User focus is also included in the Council's Competency Framework (NB Customer/Client Orientation) which is used in job profiling and the personal development process.

Together these changes have delivered a user focus on achieving priorities and a means of reviewing progress. Supporting processes, eg Divisional Planning and Budget Preparation, are now established and reviewed and improved as necessary.

Strategic Service Delivery Partnerships, in particular ICT, Revenues and Benefits, Leisure, Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleansing and Waste Management, have formal performance management arrangements. These include performance measures and targets set and reviewed on a formal and regular basis. [Insert and/or link to examples where performance problems have been identified and action taken to resolve]

Whilst the Council's own performance management arrangements have improved significantly, it is recognised that there is scope to improve those for the LSP. Currently the LSP block chairs report progress against the action plans regularly to the LSP Executive but improvements could be made in the arrangements with the new Sustainable Community Strategy to make action plans 'SMARTer' and thus give a sharper focus to the management of performance.

The Council welcomes external challenge from regulators and peers and seeks to address areas for improvement arising from these exercises. Similarly the Council welcomes customer complaints and has a long established complaints procedure that is easily accessible for residents. Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, in writing, by email or by online form. Satisfaction with complaints handling has risen from 4<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile. Additionally the Local Government Ombudsman's annual report on the Council for the year 2006-07 was very positive about the low level of complaints received of which in that year none required a report or local settlement.

*"When we complete an investigation we must issue a report. I issued no reports this year and for the first time in three years no complaints resulted in a local settlement. This is a significant achievement for the Council."*

*"At my visit to your Authority last May I found that the overall performance of the Council was good in terms of how the Council deals with complaints from the public. Things were put right quickly and the fact that I did not uphold any complaints against the Council .. would seem to indicate that it is maintaining its performance in this area."*

*"My staff only had to make enquiries on four complaints last year and your average response time was 20 days, well within our target time of 28 days."*

*- Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter (2006-07)*

**4.2 Do the Council and partner organisations use their knowledge about performance to drive continuous improvement in outcomes?**

*The Council has adopted a robust approach to target setting to drive continuous improvement in service delivery via the Divisional Plans. Performance information is regularly monitored and reported appropriately to members. Service Delivery partnerships are performance managed by the client. The Access to Services Strategy continues to help improve the Council's understanding of its diverse communities. The Council welcomes feed back from residents and regulators and can show examples of change as a result of this feed back. The Council voluntarily initiated an Improvement Board to support the improvement post-CPA 2004. The revised Sustainable Community Strategy will have an improved performance management framework that reflects the Council's experience and desire to implement robust performance management arrangements.*

Performance management is an area that the Council has endeavoured to improve since the CPA in 2004. Our efforts can be evidenced in respect of:

- Introducing robust challenge to our target setting as part of the Divisional Planning and Budget Preparation Process. This developed from the work undertaken by the Relationship Manager and External Auditor with service managers in 2007.
- We have moved from a routine reporting of all indicators in 2005-06 to performance reporting focused on key priorities and targets from 2006-07 onwards. This includes:
  - Quarterly reports on the Key Policies and Actions for the year (with 22 indicators) to all members and discussed at Executive Board. This report also contains progress of key projects for the Council.
  - Mid-year performance report summarising performance trends and achievement against target for all national and local indicators.
- Members have received formal training in 2007 and 2008 in the Council's approach to performance management, together with some technical skills on analysis of data to enable challenge, and positive feed back was received.
- Year on year improvements to the Divisional Planning process to ensure that the golden thread is evident with SMART targets and that the plans specifically take account of equalities issues and risk management.
- The development of an in-house performance management system to improve the quality of reporting, including data quality aspects, which has helped to identify more easily areas where performance issues need to be investigated.

The Council is keen to learn from inspection and regulation; recommendations are properly considered by the Council and action taken as appropriate. Following inspections of Environment Services and Access to Services, the Council has taken steps to improve. The whole improvement agenda, including 20 Improvement Plans, has been overseen by a voluntarily initiated Improvement Board (chaired by the Relationship Manager and with representatives from the Government Office and external auditor). The recent focus of the Improvement

Board has turned to the future agenda rather than monitoring the largely completed improvement plans.

Feedback from complaints has led to service improvements, for example, complaints about refuse collection and missed bins led to a review of systems and closer working with the contractor, resulting in a significant reduction in the number of complaints in that area.

The internal complaints reporting process has been reviewed to improve corporate knowledge and understanding of user-feedback. The formal reporting process sets out how complaints information is used in service areas to identify improvements, followed by reporting into the management structure and the Executive Board. [\[Insert link to flowchart of the reporting process\]](#).

We also obtain user feedback from mystery shopping. We have developed a joint approach with our neighbouring authorities of Castle Point and Southend to mystery shop service areas across key channels of customer contact. Feedback from the mystery shopping is assessed in each service area and lessons are learnt, for example:

- additional web pages have been produced in revenues and benefits, including a more obvious invitation to customers to make contact if their questions are not answered, and
- frequently asked questions have been developed in the waste team.

The feedback has also been assessed on a corporate basis at the Customer Access and Consultation Group and the Strategy and Partnership Management Team. Corporate issues that have been addressed include the need to standardise the 'sign off' used on emails and consistency in application of telephone answering procedures.

## What has been achieved?

### 5. Achievement and improvement

***[Please note: for this section of the self-assessment there will be a short summarising narrative followed by brief case studies against our priorities.]***

#### 5.1 What level of quality has the Council with its partners achieved (and/or not achieved) in relation to its services, priority areas and impact on local quality of life?

*In the context of rising customer expectations and with increasing demands for greater efficiency on a small district council, Rochford has continued to achieve high customer satisfaction results (relative to national averages). The district has the best performing CDRP in the region delivering improved quality of life by reducing crime. In other key services, eg Revenues and Benefits, we have seen a massive change in performance ensuring that some of our most vulnerable residents receive what they are entitled to with great customer care, recognised by the Chartermark award. The Council is continuing to deliver improved outcomes against its stated priorities.*

Rochford is one of the smallest district councils yet is still exposed to the demands for efficiencies against the backcloth of greater customer expectations. In this respect it is pleasing to note the 2006 national surveys of customer satisfaction demonstrated that:

- Overall customer satisfaction with the Council was 62% compared to the average for districts of 56%;
- Customer satisfaction with the standard of cleanliness of the District was 77% compared to the average for districts of 69%;
- Customer satisfaction with the local recycling facilities was 76% compared to the average for districts of 72%;
- Customer satisfaction with the Council's household waste collection service was 88% compared to the average for districts of 79%;
- Customer satisfaction with the parks and open spaces was 82% compared to the average for districts of 73%;
- Overall user satisfaction with our Planning Service at 79% is above the average for Single Tier and County Authorities (72%).
- Overall tenant satisfaction with our Housing Service was at 88%
- Satisfaction of tenants with their participation on the management of their housing service was at 79%

In terms of outcomes arising from partnerships, the CDRP is an excellent example of success. The latest performance report (January 2008) shows Rochford as being the lowest in our family group for 'All Crime' and 'British Crime Survey'. The CDRP has previously been commended by the Government Office on its excellent performance. Low crime reduces the fear of crime which in turn delivers a better quality of life for our communities.



## 5.2 How much progress has the Council made?

*Using Audit Commission data, we are close to the average for districts in improving the number of performance indicators over the last three years. Significantly, 36% of our performance indicators are now in the top quartile which is higher than the average for 'Good' councils and just short of the average for 'Excellent' councils. Using our local basket of indicators that measuring our progress in delivering our priorities, we can demonstrate that we are meeting [x] % of our targets.*

We believe that the Council can demonstrate significant improvements in the delivery of key services. We have turned around weak services into good performers (eg Revenues and Benefits; Planning (?)) and have introduced new services in support of our own and partners' priorities. We are proud of our Handyman/Gardner Service, operated through the Springboard Housing Association. We joint fund (with the County Council) this service which has seen a rapid increase in uptake. Clearly the maintenance of gardens and the exterior of homes reduces the risks of opportunistic crime; similarly such services help to prevent falls in the home and therefore hospital admissions, thus enabling people to stay living in their homes. Thus the service contributes successfully to the national and County Council priorities of crime reduction and independent living.

There follows a brief 'showcase' of improvements to our residents against our priorities to help demonstrate our achievements and improvements:

**Achievement and Improvement against council priorities:**

*[Please note: the showcases are short summaries and in the final electronic document there will be 'hypertext' links to more details]*

**Corporate Objective #1:**

**Provide an excellent cost effective front line service for all our customers:**

**Showcase 1: Revenues and Benefits**

Assessed by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate in 2004 as a 'fair' service with performance measured to process claims as: new claims – 43 days; change of circumstances – 36 days. For 2006-07 performance had improved to 31 days and 16 days respectively and the most recent results are at 23 and 9 days. This was partly achieved by outsourcing the front-office function to Capita and internal changes including a new career scheme linked to competencies which has reduced staff turnover. The service has been awarded a Chartermark for excellence in customer service and has Crystal Mark accreditation for some of its documentation. The service is actively pursuing improvements, including working with McMillan Cancer Care to support claimants at a most stressful time. From a different perspective the service is also a party to the Voice Risk Analysis Pilot to reduce fraud.

In summary, better outcomes for residents who receive better customer care whilst ensuring improved value for money – a success story.

[More ...](#)

**Showcase 2: Planning Service Improvements**

*[BV109 improvements to be added here]*

Also, the Council's Review Committee scrutinised the operation of the planning enforcement service in 2006/07 and made several recommendations for changes to service delivery. One of the recommendations was to submit the enforcement guide for crystal mark accreditation. The guide is intended to provide a readily accessible summary of planning enforcement for the district's residents, and is available in hard copy or for download from the Council's website. The guide obtained Crystal Mark accreditation in March 2008.

[More ...](#)

**Showcase 3: Web site development**

The website has been identified as a major channel for customers accessing information and services online. The Council has made the website a priority investing resources, including a new post of Web Manager, to improve accessibility, navigation and content management.

We sought the opinions of the website users both internally and externally. The website ran a user exit survey for about a year; this gave us feed back on customer likes and dislikes and what features they would like to see in the future. The subsequent redesign of the web site incorporates an overhaul of the navigation system and layout of information to ensure sure accessibility to everyone. The project took just 8 months and a new website was launched in February 2007. An initial user poll that ran for the first 3 months of the new website showed that 80% of users thought that the new website was an improvement.

We continue to improve our new website and launched an online consultation in February 2008 called “Your Website Your Way”. The results from this consultation will form the basis of a website strategy which will look at how we will be taking our website forward over the next 3-5 years.

[More ...](#)

**Corporate Objective #2:  
Work towards a safer and more caring community**

**Showcase 4: Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP)**

Reducing crime is the primary objective the Council’s Community Safety team. For ‘All Crime’, comparing 2004 (which is the time period since our last Community Safety Strategy and Audit) with 2006/07, there is a significant decrease in offences. Complementary to this, there has also been an increase in people feeling safer after dark by 6%.

This achievement was acknowledged by the Government Office for the East of England Home Office:

*“Since April 2004 Rochford has reduced BCS crime by 26.8% against a crime target to March 2008 of 13.5%. This, in % terms is the biggest decrease across the whole of the Eastern Region.*

*This is a monumental achievement and something all the partners should be very proud of.”*

[More ...](#)

**Showcase 5: Southend Road Car Park**

The main concern was that of large groups of young people gathering in the car park causing noise nuisance and anti-social behaviour

The Council tackled this through the implementation of byelaws prohibiting ball games, deploying covert cameras, sending letters to parents of youths acting in an anti-social manner, regular patrols by the police's partnership officer, the relocation of the recycling banks, the installation of bike restricting gates and additional fencing.

This has resulted in a significant reduction in reported anti-social behaviour. There was a standing ovation by residents at a public meeting in recognition of the work done by the Council.

[\*More ...\*](#)

Showcase 6: Homelessness –improved services

**Corporate Objective #3:  
Provide a green and sustainable environment**

Showcase 7: Refuse Collection and Recycling – improved services and increased levels

Showcase 8: Hockley Woods/Cherry Orchard Jubilee Park – development and expansion

Showcase 9: Environmental Campaign – “we love Rochford” -

**Corporate Objective #4:  
Encourage a thriving local economy**

**Showcase 10: Rayleigh Town Centre enhancements**

A successful bid to Thames Gateway resulted in the implementation of an enhancement scheme for Webster's Way and the adjacent public car park. Funding of £700,000 was agreed for the delivery of the project.

The project delivered environmental enhancements along the length of Webster's Way, which provides the main route into the town's largest car park. This included:

- New paving and kerbs
- New wall and railings between the car park and Webster's Way
- Improved street lighting
- Connections to the bus stop for real time information
- New planting scheme
- Improved link between the car park and the High Street
- Link with earlier town centre enhancement works
- Improved access to the car park
- Raised Puffin crossing across Webster's Way
- Extension of existing CCTV network

[\*More ...\*](#)

Showcase 11: Regeneration – Rochford Town Centre

Showcase 12: Business Breakfast Meetings

**Corporate Objective #5:  
Improve the quality of life for people in our district:**

Showcase 13: The Leisure Offer – Rayleigh and Clements Hall Leisure Centres

**Showcase 14: Housing Stock Transfer**

The Council was required to consider how it would ensure that all Council-owned homes would meet, as a minimum, the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) by 2010. This assessment and the proposed solution had to be signed off by the Government Office by July 2005.

A robust stock condition survey was carried out to assess the costs of meeting both DHS and also higher standards which were requested through extensive consultations with tenants. A housing needs study was also carried out. A full appraisal of potential options was completed with assistance from specialist housing finance consultants and with the active participation of tenant representatives. The Council considered the option appraisal outcomes and resolved to transfer all its housing stock to a local housing association, operating within a group structure. A parent group housing association was selected and a formal transfer offer document provided to tenants, followed by a tenant ballot which resulted in nearly 83% of those voting in support of transfer. Throughout the whole process there was extensive communication with tenants. The Council subsequently agreed to the transfer and this was completed in September 2007.

Tenants had the opportunity to express their preferences about the ownership, management and improvement of their homes. Under the new arrangements, tenants have an active role in management and policy through representation on the Board of the new Rochford Housing Association.

The housing association will be investing more than £40 million in major works and improvements over the first 10 years following transfer, with about £27 million being spent in the first 5 years. Over the same 10 year period, the Council would only have been able to spend about £16 million and would have had to make service cuts to spend the money on improvements.

[More ...](#)

Showcase 15: Youth facilities –improvements

**Corporate Objective #6:**  
**Maintain and enhance our local heritage:**

Showcase 16: Rayleigh Windmill restoration

Showcase 17: Conservation Area Appraisals

Showcase 18: Heritage Awards