# Corporate Plan 2007 – 2010











# ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2007 – 2010

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#### INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

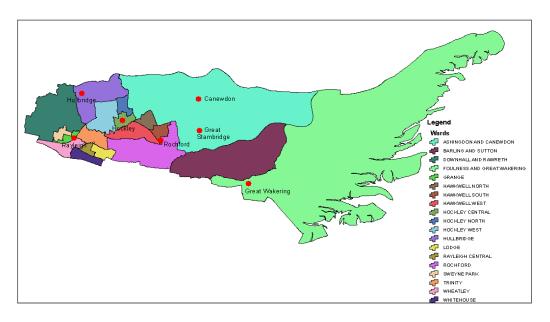
The Corporate Plan provides a clear statement on the Council's short to medium term priorities, in line with the Council's 5 year budget strategy. The Plan does not set out everything the Council does but focuses on areas for development. It will help us make decisions on resource allocation, action planning and setting targets. These are detailed in the Council's Performance Plan which is published in June each year.

The Plan has not been developed in isolation and has taken account of national, regional and local priorities. To inform the Council in setting priorities we use a range of information and intelligence, including the results of public consultation exercises undertaken in the District. Again, the more recent of these are detailed in the Performance Plan

#### ABOUT ROCHFORD

#### The Place

Rochford is a small district located in south east Essex. It is bounded by the River Crouch to the north and the urban areas of Southend and Castle Point to the south. The district has three main towns, Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley. Much of the remaining area is green belt with a large area around Foulness, largely under Ministry of Defence control. London Southend Airport straddles the district's southern boundary with Southend.



# The People

The district has a population of 79,700 people, living in 33,700 households. This is predicted to rise to 80,300 by 2011, with a forecasted large increase of those over the age of 85 years.

The area is relatively affluent, ranking 316 out of 354 most deprived authorities nationally. The most deprived ward, Foulness and Great Wakering East, ranks 2,680 of 8,414. Owner occupied homes constitute 86% of households. This is amongst the

highest in the country. Private renting accounts for approximately 6%. The Council's housing stock is currently 1,755 dwellings, of which 665 are allocated to elderly people. House prices are higher than the average for England and Wales. Unemployment levels are below regional and national averages at 1%.

#### The Council

The Council employs 238 full time equivalent staff, with key services contracted to the private sector, for example, refuse collection, recycling, street cleansing, grounds maintenance, leisure management and the IT service.

The Chief Executive, supported by two Corporate Directors, heads the Council's staff structure. Heads of Service then lead the management of particular service areas. A new organisational structure has been implemented over the past year which sees the separation of external, front line services, from back office support services, including the creation of an Information and Customer Services Division. The intention of this is to provide a clearer focus for the organisation's work.

The Council has 39 elected Members and has a Conservative administration as follows: 31 Conservative; 5 Liberal Democrat; 1 Rochford Residents; 1 Independent; 1 vacancy (as of June 2007).

Until recently, the Council operated a committee system with 5 Policy Committees bearing responsibility for policy and service developments within their remit. The CPA inspection in 2004 identified that the Council's overview and scrutiny process in particular needed improvement. Consequently, in May 2006, a new Review Committee was established following a member led review of the process. It aims to be the 'open door' of the member decision making process to seek out and receive information and representation from the community.

Following on from that change, the political decision making structure has again been reviewed in the context of the Local Government White Paper, "Strong and Prosperous Communities", and emerging legislation. As a result, from June 2007 we are operating a structure with an Executive Board and 3 Area Committees. The chairmanship of the Review Committee has also passed to the main opposition party.

#### What our Residents have told us

The General Satisfaction Survey of all 388 authorities, conducted every 3 years by independent pollsters, aims to find out what people like or dislike about how their Council runs things. The recent residents survey has confirmed that Rochford District Council is in the top 25% for overall satisfaction. The survey places Rochford 2<sup>nd</sup> out of all Essex authorities for overall satisfaction with the Council's performance.

Residents stated in the satisfaction survey that the following are important in making a community a good place to live:

- Level of crime
- Health services
- Clean streets
- Education
- Affordable housing

#### **VISION AND VALUES**

The Council's vision is to make the District "the place of choice in the County to live, work and visit". We're about change for the better, we're about services, we're about communities, we're about the environment, the economy and heritage, we're about the quality of life. We aim to achieve our vision through focussing on our 6 corporate aims around – quality, effective services; creating a safer and caring community; providing a greener and more sustainable environment; encouraging the local economy to thrive; improving the quality of life across the District and enhancing local heritage.

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

- Act with integrity
- Be open and transparent about what we do
- Respect others and treat people courteously and equally
- Be responsive to customer needs and requests
- Always try and improve on what we do
- Work with others to improve what we do, both directly and through partnership working

This vision and our 6 corporate aims translate into the things that we do – our key strategic documentation such as this Corporate Plan, the Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework; the services we deliver and the facilities we provide. They also fit well with our original Community Strategy, which was produced with partner organisations in 2004 and is outlined in the next section. The vision and the 6 corporate aims are to be found in our badging, our committee agendas and paperwork and our website etc.

We're also part of the Thames Gateway initiative, the largest regeneration project in Europe and within that context, we're establishing ourselves as the "green" part of the Gateway. In the context of the Gateway, what does "green" mean? It means green belt; it means woodlands; coast and areas for outdoor recreation and leisure; it means quality built up areas; it means cleanliness; it means good parks and open spaces; it means a safe and healthy district; in other words, these aspirations fit well with our overarching vision.

#### PLANS AND PRIORITIES

# Rochford's Community Strategy

In 2004, a Community Strategy for the district was published. The strategy was put together by a partnership of the District Council, the County Council, the Parish and Town Councils, the Health Service, Police, business and voluntary sectors, as well as education and training providers in the area. This grouping is called the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The key themes within the Community Strategy revolve around:

- Feeling safe
- Looking after our environment
- A good education, good skills and good jobs
- Healthy living
- Getting around
- An inclusive community

The Community Strategy also recognises the district's location within the Thames Gateway, a national priority are for regeneration identified by Central Government. For Rochford, our long-term ambition is to be the green part of the Gateway, developing the area for leisure, recreation, culture and tourism.

# Local Area Agreement

In April 2006 the Council signed up to the Essex Local Area Agreement (LAA) which sets a shared agenda for local service providers. Over fifty public organisations have come together as partners to focus on fourteen shared priorities grouped together under the following four blocks:

- Children and Young People
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Economic Development

By combining funds and agreeing a way forward, the LAA will increase efficiency and effectiveness. The LAA offers local government, the NHS, education providers and others the chance to leave behind organisational based working patterns and adopt common objectives. By focussing on these objectives we will improve the experience of our citizens and improve the way we work together. By adopting this approach we will target services towards those in greatest need and achieve better value for money across Essex's public services as a whole.

# The Council's Corporate Aims

As outlined earlier, the Council has 6 corporate aims that directly support the Community Strategy themes, reflect our areas of responsibility and seek to improve Council services:

- Provide quality, cost effective services
- Work towards a safer and more caring community
- Provide a green and sustainable environment
- Encourage a thriving local economy
- Improve the quality of life for people in our district
- Maintain and enhance our local heritage

In agreeing our priority areas we have to reconcile different expectations, in particular the needs and views of the people of the District, national priorities identified by central government and partnership priorities which have been agreed as part of the Community Strategy or LAA processes.

Our plans for delivering on each of our priorities are set out in the following pages and are integrated into our business planning framework. Detailed actions and performance information are published in the Performance Plan on an annual basis.

# Priority One - Provide quality, cost effective services.

# Why is this a Priority?

The Council has to provide effective community leadership for the district and provide a range of services for local people. We are judged on how well we carry out these roles - by our customers through satisfaction services and by our external auditors through a programme of inspections.

In our 2004 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) the Council was judged as being "weak" by the Audit Commission. We are tackling the areas for improvement that were identified through CPA. Since then we have had a follow up CPA progress report from the Audit Commission. It found that the Council is progressing well and is working with partners to improve local services, such as recycling. Some previously poorly performing services have been improved, including the Benefits Service and Homelessness.

#### What We Will Do

#### Develop our Workforce

The Council has agreed a comprehensive Workforce Development Plan which addresses the following 5 areas that are seen as being critical to improvement and the delivery of customer focussed services:

- Developing leadership capacity
- Developing the skills and capacity of the workforce
- Developing the organisation
- Resourcing good practice in employment
- Pay and rewards

# Provide Strong Leadership and Effective Partnerships

The Community Strategy, which the Council has played a leading role in developing along with its partners in the LSP, sets the local context for the work of key agencies within the district. The Council has the lead role in ensuring that the partnership is effective and that the Strategy remains fit for purpose. The development of Local Area Agreements, the need to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF) and the move towards Sustainable Community Strategies mean that it will be appropriate to review our Community Strategy during 2008. To be effective this review will need the full engagement of partners and the Council will work closely with them to ensure this happens. The LAA will also be renewed in 2008 and we need to ensure that we can influence this for the benefit of Rochford.

To ensure there is strong leadership and accountability at a local level, the Council has changed its political management arrangements and appointed an executive board. In addition, three Area Committees have been established. These will enable the Council to develop more localised arenas for debate and discussion about issues of concern to people.

#### Make Best Use of Resources

We must demonstrate that we are providing value for money and the 'best value' for the residents of Rochford District through services that are efficient, economic and effective and which meet people's needs. We will continue to take steps to continuously improve our services.

To ensure that the Council continues to strive to achieve best value for money, we will:

- Review services to ensure they are efficient, effective and economic, including benchmarking against other organisations to identify best practice
- Review and update our procurement strategy
- · Continue to improve levels of attendance
- Further embed our performance management systems
- Continue to promote the Council's activities
- Continue to promote anti-fraud initiatives, in conjunction with other agencies, to ensure that taxpayers' money goes only to those with entitlement
- Identify opportunities for external funding to assist with achieving our priorities and objectives
- Ensure that there is a robust Business Continuity Plan to protect buildings and assets and provide access to services in the event of an emergency

# Improve Access to our Services

The development of our Access to Services Strategy will ensure that we consider the needs and preferences of all sections of our community when designing and delivering services. The Strategy, which is being developed during 2007, will be based on consultation with service users and non-users as well as the traditionally hard to reach groups. We will ensure that our management structures are appropriate for the delivery of customer focussed services and we are committed to using new technologies where they improve access to services, but nevertheless will ensure that those in our community who require personal contact continue to receive the services they need.

#### Priority 1 - Measures of Success

Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating
Best Value Performance Indicator Residents Survey overall satisfaction levels
Staff Survey data
Use of Resources Assessment level
Performance Indicator trends and targets

# Priority Two - Work towards a safer and more caring community

# Why is this a Priority?

In order to achieve the Council's vision to make the District the place of choice to live, we recognise that we must have an inclusive community where residents are not only safe but feel they are safe. Although the District already has a very low crime rate compared to the rest of the Country and other parts of Essex, the Council aims to make the District even safer by actively playing its part in the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), which involves a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies. The Council also appreciates the link between high levels of community involvement and the feeling of safety and is therefore keen to promote vibrant communities.

#### What We Will Do

# Reduce Crime and Disorder

The Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy aims to:

- Achieve sustainable crime reduction by tackling crime and addressing the causes of crime
- Ensure crime and disorder does not have a disproportionate affect on vulnerable groups
- Tackle specific crime and disorder problems and problem areas
- Tackle miscellaneous issues, such as graffiti, that can affect residents' quality of life

We have carried out a survey of local residents who raised concerns about traffic and youth nuisance. This information helped the CDRP develop priorities for putting more police on the beat, enforcing anti social behaviour measures, developing initiatives for young people and tackling drugs and alcohol abuse.

Specific targets have been set for reducing a number of crimes, including violence and burglary, as well as dealing with anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, drugs and alcohol. It is recognised that the aims of the CDRP will only be achieved with the cooperation of residents in reporting crimes or incidents of disorder. It is indicative of the work being carried out that the decrease of recorded crime in Rochford over the past year across a range of indicators is the biggest in the region.

The Council has also supported the district wide Gardening Service currently provided by Springboard Housing Association which is aimed at preventing elderly vulnerable residents becoming the victims of crime. The service will be reviewed in 2007/08, and additional funding provided in order to increase the availability of the service.

# Improve Community Inclusion

Whilst there are certain initiatives in place to address equalities and diversity, eg. the Corporate Equalities Strategy and the Social Inclusion Policy, the Council recognises that it needs to improve and extend our knowledge and understanding of the specific needs and preferences of all community groups. A comprehensive plan for consultation with all sections of the community has therefore been developed which will particularly focus on those groups of people who do not normally engage with the

Council. In addition it will seek to engage with younger residents who are frequently missing from consultation exercises.

The Council is also actively improving its approach to equalities & diversity in general and has undertaken impact assessments across all its services. These will be the basis of consultation with residents and will inform future service provision.

Priority 2 - Measures of Success

Equality Standard for Local Government CDRP Crime figures and performance indicators Residents' perception of safety

# Priority Three - Provide a green and sustainable environment

# Why is this a Priority?

We are committed to looking after the environment of the district, protecting the amenities of residents and preparing plans for future development that are well designed and sustainable.

Growing awareness of the impact of climate change means that the work we do for the benefit of the district and the plans we prepare for the future must be carefully considered, be sustainable, and balance the needs of residents, workers and visitors against our long-term ambition to protect and enhance the environment.

#### What We Will Do

#### Deal with Waste in a Sustainable Way

The Council is responsible for street cleansing, refuse collection, verge maintenance, graffiti removal, clearing fly tips and generally ensuring that the district is clean and attractive for residents and visitors.

During 2007 we will be working on arrangements for the renewal of our waste management contract, due start in April 2008. A key element of the new contract will be the introduction of improved arrangements for recycling domestic refuse, in a way best suited for our residents. Maximising the opportunity for recycling by the collection of additional materials and reducing the amount of waste entering the landfill stream will enable the district to meet its recycling targets. However, whatever proposal comes forward, it is important that the costs involved are affordable by the Authority. Other contracts up during the year, along with the waste collection contract, include street cleansing and grounds maintenance. Clearly, successful outcomes in these will help the Authority maintain and continue to enhance its standards in these areas.

#### Set a Planning Framework for the Future

The Local Development Framework comprises a folder of policy documents intended to guide the form and character of new development in the period to 2021.

The Rochford Core Strategy informed by the Sustainable Community Strategy will set out the broad policy framework against which detailed development proposals will be judged. The draft Core Strategy includes a vision for the district in 5, 10 and 15 years' time. In 5 years it is expected there will be further provision and upgrade of our green spaces, enhancement of heritage sites, better designed and sustainable housing linked to open spaces, improved access to the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park as well as a range of other improvements. In broad terms, the vision for the district is one that makes a positive contribution to the promotion of a green and sustainable environment.

#### Priority 3 – Measures of Success

Waste Recycling and Composting levels Award of contracts and improved performance levels Enhanced public satisfaction with environmental activities Completion of LDF by 2009

# Priority Four - Encourage a thriving local economy

# Why is this a Priority?

The Council seeks to work with partners to maximise and encourage economic growth for the benefit of the community in the area.

The district of Rochford is located within the Thames Gateway South Essex sub region. National and regional government has earmarked the Thames Gateway as the single largest regeneration project in Britain. Within South Essex, considerable change to the economy and social environment is planned with an increase of 55,000 net additional jobs across the sub region by 2021 – approximately 20%. There are currently 21,000 jobs in the District and very low rates of unemployment. However, outward migration is high, with 68% of workers commuting out of the District to work.

To meet the aspirations of the community and to begin to sow the seeds for more dynamic and sustainable employment locally, we need to further develop the regeneration of our employment areas and town centres. This in turn will help make the district a location of choice for employees and businesses and so help us play our part in the regeneration of Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE).

#### What We Will Do

# <u>Deliver our Economic Development Strategy</u>

Considerable progress has been made in recent years, particularly in putting in place effective partnership working between the business community and the Council. The Strategy aims to build on what has been achieved so far and focus more on creating quality employment opportunities through:

- Raising the profile of Rochford
- Supporting the needs of the business community in the area
- Developing the skills of the local workforce
- Developing tourism and heritage initiatives
- Seeking to improve town centre vitality and supporting town centre and industrial estate enhancements
- Supporting sustainable use of resources

#### Undertake a Joint West Rochford Study

London Southend Airport is recognised as a key driver for economic change in the TGSE sub-region. To the west of the airport is the Aviation Way Industrial Estate which is also of significant importance for employment with particular emphasis on skilled jobs, apprenticeships and innovative industries. Some of the businesses on the estate are closely tied to the maintenance, repair and overhaul businesses at the airport.

The Airport and its environs straddle the boundary of Rochford District Council and Southend Borough Council and it has therefore been agreed that a Joint Action Area Plan be developed which recognises the importance of the sites to the wider subregional economy.

# Master Plan our Town Centres

Creating vibrant town centres is seen as being key to developing the district's role within the TGSE area. In particular, the towns of Hockley and Rochford would greatly benefit from regeneration.

The Council has agreed to provide funding to enable a major planning exercise to be undertaken which will consider ways to improve the variety of shops, the design quality of future development, increase the potential for residential accommodation and examine access and movement within the two centres. The outcome of the exercise will feed into the process for developing the new Local Development Framework.

Priority 4 - Measures of Success

Increased number of jobs within the district Reduced levels of employment out-migration Number of VAT registrations Revitalised Employment Areas and Town Centres

# Priority Five - Improve the quality of life for people in our district

# Why is this a Priority?

Nationally and locally, emphasis is placed on local government's role as community leader in supporting citizens, communities and local organisations to improve the quality of life for both present and future generations.

The Council can contribute to improving quality of life for people in the district in a number of ways. Over the last few years, a wide range of initiatives and specific projects has been implemented that have produced a very positive impact on the quality of life. These have been provided either directly by the Council, in partnership with other local organisations, or by adopting a facilitator role in assisting local organisations and volunteer groups.

It is the intention of the Council to continue this approach to the nature of provision, in order to maximise available resources and encourage participation.

#### What We Will Do

#### Provide New Opportunities for Leisure

We will submit a planning application for the change of use of additional land in order to extend Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park, as identified in the Local Plan. If successful we will purchase this land and further develop the Country Park in consultation with residents. At Sweyne Park we will progress the development of the land to the rear of Rayleigh Leisure Centre for use as junior football pitches and provide linkage of this land to the adjacent Sweyne Park. The project will involve ground preparation, seeding and fencing works as well as the need to determine layout and the future management arrangements of the pitches and associated facilities which are expected to come into use September 2009.

#### Provide for Those Who Need it Most

The Council has provided funding in this year's budget for an initiative to benefit the youth of Great Wakering. In the first instance the project will be scoped with potential partner organisations, developing specific options for consideration and decision, and then commencing its implementation. The Council has provided additional monies for the development of its successful Handyperson / Gardening Scheme. This will involve completing a Value for Money study and developing options for the most beneficial way of expanding the current scheme (see reference in Priority 2).

#### Improve Housing Opportunities

Work will continue on developing proposals for the setting up of a Choice Based Letting Scheme, on a sub-regional basis, covering the five local authority areas within Thames Gateway South Essex. The aim is that this scheme will be implemented by December 2008. We will also continue to progress the agreement between the Council and Rochford Housing Association, in moving towards the transfer of the Council's housing stock and associated staff, in July 2007. This transfer will then have a positive impact on the ability to meet Decent Homes Standard 2010 and will

trigger investment of £40million in the transferred housing stock over the next 10 years.

# Improve the Environment

Through the application of regulatory functions the Council will ensure that environmental standards are maintained in respect of air quality, land contamination and water quality. We will investigate environmental issues of concern to local residents and address them using available legal remedies in a fair, transparent and graduated way. We will act as an exemplar in managing our own environmental impact and seek to influence others in this regard

# Priority 5 – Measures of Success

Housing stock transferred and investment programme underway Low levels of homelessness Increased numbers of affordable houses for local people Completion of Cherry Park and Sweyne Park schemes Implementation of successful initiative at Great Wakering More people using the handyperson/gardening scheme Usage figures of leisure facilities

# **Priority Six - Maintain and enhance our local heritage**

# Why is this a Priority?

The District of Rochford covers an area of 65 square miles and is rich in heritage and natural beauty. There are more than 200 sites of archaeological interest, 14 ancient woodlands, several nature reserves and its towns and villages are diverse in character, reflecting their history, location and size.

The District contains examples of traditional Essex heritage and this has been identified by the Thames Gateway Partnership which recognises "the potential to develop those themes which link to the vision in Southend, in particular developing the area for leisure, recreation and tourism activity." In addition, the District is keen to promote itself as "the green part of the gateway" and therefore these factors provide significant opportunities for Rochford to benefit from the regeneration of the Thames Gateway area.

#### What We Will Do

# Make Best Use of our Historical Links and Heritage

A number of issues have been identified for further development and / or implementation. These include:

- The staging of an annual event to celebrate St Georges Day.
- Further research to be undertaken into the various heritage / historical related proposals, to identify which are practical to achieve and provide the greatest benefit to the community.
- Explore the possibilities of external funding streams to employ a heritage officer who would have the capacity to develop and maximise the district's cultural offer

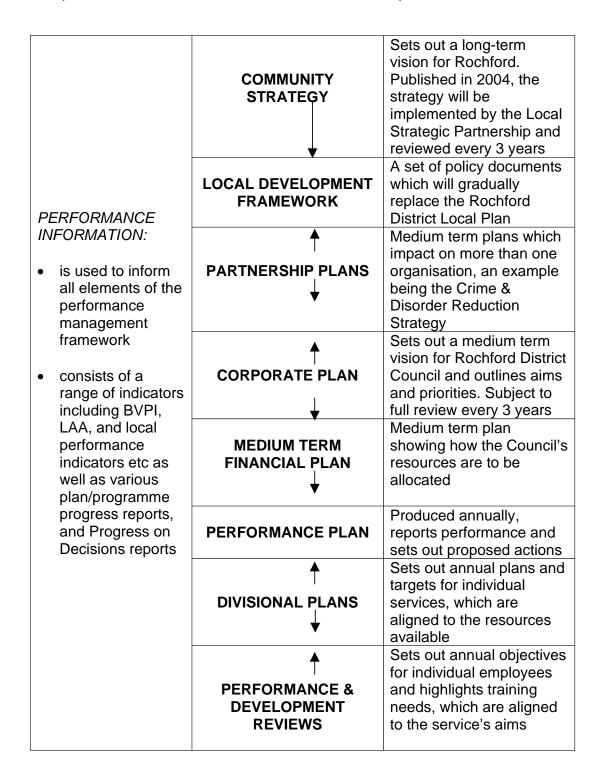
Further heritage development is planned for Rayleigh Windmill. Following the extensive refurbishment of the windmill, the Council will continue to develop the value of this facility to the local community and visitors working in conjunction with its partners: the National Trust, Rayleigh Historical Society and the team of volunteers who staff the facility. This further development will result in the extension of the opening hours and the lengthening of the opening season as a result of demand. It is also intended to develop the potential of the windmill for weddings / civil ceremonies.

Priority 6 – Measures of Success

Increased usage of Windmill facility
Number of heritage related events in the district
Public recognition of key local heritage sites

# HOW THE THEMES AND PRIORITIES FIT TOGETHER

The Council has a performance management framework that ensures there is a clear thread between the vision, themes and priorities which link the Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan, Divisional Plans and Personal Development Review.



The Corporate Plan is a three-year plan, which sets out the Council's corporate priorities. The Council's Performance Plan sets out the complete performance results for the each financial year, and detailed targets.

# For further information please call:

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If you have any comments or queries about the Corporate Plan, or would like to receive this document in a different format, please email as above, or write to:

Rochford District Council Council Offices South Street Rochford Essex SS4 1BW

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#### Gujarati

તમને આ માહિતી મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરો માં, બ્રેલ(અંધલિપિ) ચા બીજી ભાષા માં જોઈતી હોચ તો મહેરબાની કરી સંપર્ક કરો 01702 546 366

#### Spanish

Si desea esta información impresa en letra grande, Braille o en otro idioma, por favor llame al teléfono 01702 546 366

#### Urdu

اگر آپ یہ معلومات بڑی چھپائ میں، بریل(اندھو کا رسم الخط) یا کوئی اور زبان میں چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم رابطہ کیج 366 546 01702

#### **Portugese**

Caso necessite desta informação em impressão maior, em Braille ou noutra língua, por favor contacte 01702 546 366

#### Bengali বাংলা

আপনি যদি এ তথাগুলি বড় মুদ্রাক্ষরে, বেইলি হরফে অথবা অন্য কোন ডাষায় পেতে চান ভাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে 01702 546 366 নদরে ফোন করন।

#### Shona

Kana uchida ruzivo, kana tsananguro iyi yakanyorwa nemavara makuru, kana kuthi yakanyorwa nerurimi rwemapofu, kana nerumwe rurimi, kana umwe mufauro sununguka kuti taurira parunare ronoti 01702 546 366 If you would like this information in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 546 366