
ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report presents the draft Annual Report for Members' consideration.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Officers have identified areas for inclusion in the appended Annual Report but Members may wish to add to or remove some of these.
- 2.2 All Members will have received a copy of the Quarterly Performance Indicators report which was considered by the Executive on 23 June 2010 and information from that has also been used in the compilation of the Annual Report. Quarterly Performance Statistic Reports for each Division are also available on the Council intranet and website by selecting "Quarterly Performance Reports" from the A to Z of Services – the website address is www.rochford.gov.uk.
- 2.3 The Annual Report includes summarised financial information which was approved by the Council on 29 June 2010. The financial information is currently unaudited as the external audit will not be completed until the end of August. It is therefore proposed that the Annual Report be published on the website initially, with hard copies available on request.
- 2.4 Once the financial information has been audited, a copy of the information presented in the Annual Report will be included in the Autumn edition of the Rochford District Matters in order to give it as wide an audience as possible amongst our residents.
- 2.5 Hard copies of the Annual Report will be available on request, sent to the local libraries and to the media and will also be made available at the Area Committees and at both receptions.

3 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Failure to report on our performance means that we are missing the opportunity to let residents and interested organisations know what the Council has delivered and achieved during the year. The new Coalition Government has announced that it wants to see increased transparency about local authority performance and the Annual Report contributes towards this.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 By restricting production of the Annual report to the website and Rochford District Matters, with hard copies limited to public areas and requests, the cost will be kept to a minimum. The cost is mainly officer time in pulling the report together.

5 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is proposed that Council **RESOLVES** that, subject to any suggestions for changes to the content of the Annual Report made during the meeting and any changes resulting from the audit of the accounts, the Annual Report be agreed for publication.

Yvonne Woodward

Head of Finance

Background Papers:-

None

For further information please contact Yvonne Woodward on:-

Tel:- 01702 546366 Extn 3100

Email:- yvonne.woodward@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.

If you are interested in finding out more detailed information about the Council's performance or our plans, this can be found in the following documents:-

- Corporate Plan 2010-2015
- Financial Statements 2009/10
- The Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2021 for Rochford District Council

These documents are available on our website **<http://www.rochford.gov.uk>**

The Council's Budget Book and Medium Term Financial Strategy are also available on our website.

Any of these documents can be obtained by contacting:

Contact: Financial Services

Email: **financial.service@rochford.gov.uk**

Writing to: Council Offices
South Street
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1BW

Telephone: 01702 318028

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1 Introduction

We are pleased to introduce this report which will provide an overview of the Council's performance, spending and financial position for 2009/10 and aim to show what has been achieved in terms of service delivery and outcomes for our residents.

Over the last year we have been continually working to deliver on our promise 'to make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best quality of life for all who live, work and visit here'. We have been striving to create an environment that is vibrant, safe, sustainable and modern whilst retaining the essential characteristics of the salt marshes, rivers, woodlands, open spaces, villages and market towns that make the district what it is today.

We cannot do this on our own and we have been working hard to develop networks through the public, private and community sectors within the district ensuring that this Council is seen as a credible partner to deliver for the community.

We hope you find the content of this Annual Report useful and informative and we look forward to another successful year.

Photos to be added

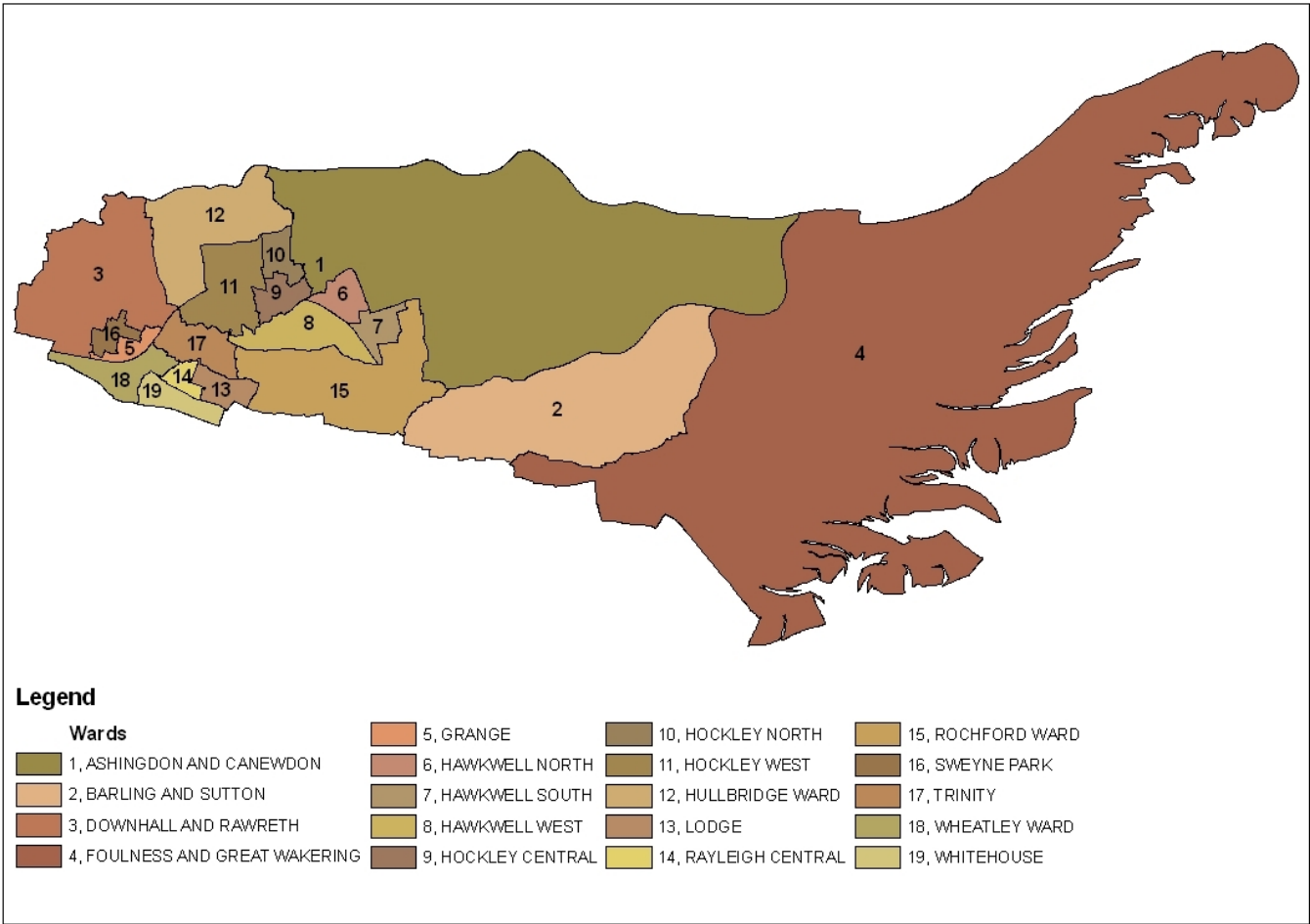
Terry Cutmore
Leader of the Council

Paul Warren
Chief Executive



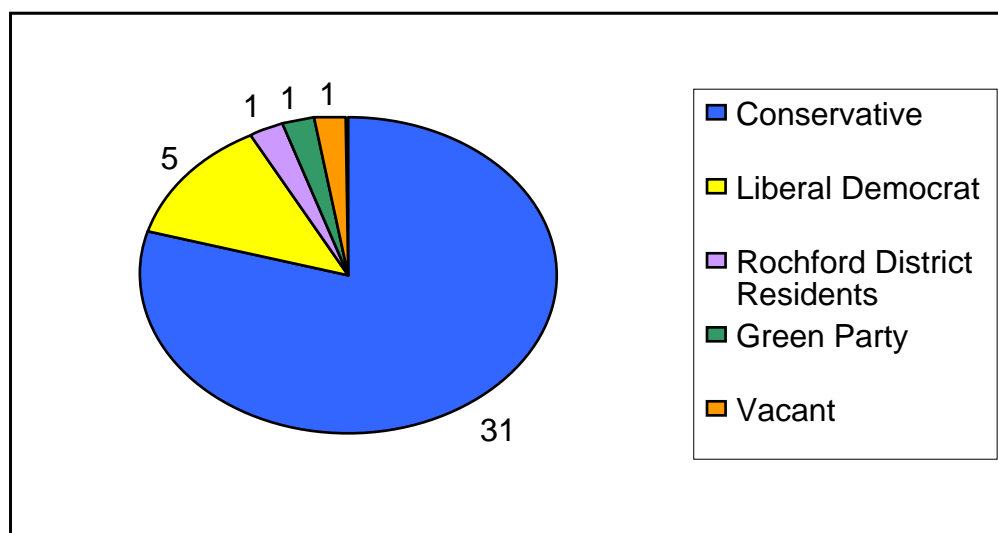
2 Facts and Figures about Rochford District Council

- The latest figures released by the Office of National Statistics give us an estimated population figure for 2008 of 83,000
- The area is fairly affluent, ranking 314 out of 354 authorities nationally (1 is the most deprived and 354 the least)
- Owner occupied homes constitute 86% of households
- Private renting accounts for around 6% of households
- House prices are higher than the average for England & Wales
- Rochford Council has 205 full time equivalent members of staff
- The Council Tax base was 31,225 and the average Band D Council Tax bill was £1,487
- The annual revenue budget is £11.3m



3 Our Councillors

Rochford District Council has 39 Councillors representing the 19 wards across the district. Currently, the political composition of the Council is –



(A by-election is due to be held for the vacant post, however this is occurring after this report has been finalised.)

The Current Chairman of the Council for 2010/11 is Cllr Derrick Stansby and the Vice Chairman is Cllr Simon Smith.

Some Members have specific areas of responsibility:

- Leader, Chairman of the Executive and Portfolio Holder for Overall Strategy & Policy Direction – **Cllr Terry Cutmore**
- Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Service Development & Improvement and Performance Management – **Cllr Mavis Webster**
- Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transportation – **Cllr Keith Hudson**
- Portfolio Holder for Environment – **Cllr Mike Steptoe**
- Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Tourism, Heritage, The Arts, Culture & Business – **Cllr Keith Gordon**
- Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources – **Cllr Colin Seagers**
- Portfolio Holder for Council Tax Collection, Benefits & Strategic Housing – **Cllr Tracey Capon**
- Portfolio Holder for Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care and well-being, Health & Community Safety – **Cllr Lesley Butcher**

4 Our Services

Local Government in Essex is structured into what is commonly termed ‘two-tiered’. This means that the responsibilities and service provision is shared between district and county councils.

For Rochford, the Council works together with Essex County Council and the town and parish councils to provide a large range of services to the public.

Rochford District Council includes:

Environmental Services which includes: Refuse collection, recycling, public open spaces, environmental health and licensing.

Community Services which includes: Leisure and culture, benefits, Council Tax and strategic housing

Planning & Transportation Services which includes: Development management, building control, spatial planning policy, planning enforcement, taxi licensing and car parking

Legal, Estates and Member Services which includes: Committee services, legal, asset management, land charges and burials

Information and Customer Services which includes: Elections, customer services, communications and information and communications technology

Finance which includes: Audit, financial services and performance management

Corporate Services which includes: Corporate policy, community safety, economic development and emergency planning

5 Our Vision

Our vision is:

“to make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best quality of life for all who live, work and visit here ”

We want to create an environment that is vibrant, inclusive, safe, sustainable and modern whilst retaining the essential characteristics of the salt marshes, rivers, woodland, open countryside, villages and market towns that make Rochford what it is today. We see the District as a place with high quality natural and built environments that retain their distinctiveness, foster civic pride and where all have access to quality accessible services.

We want to improve the quality of life for the people in our communities and play a full role in the sustainable growth and prosperity of our county. In particular, we wish to utilise our position within Thames Gateway South Essex to promote the district as the ‘green part’ of the sub-region.

We see ourselves developing our services and improving their access to meet the changing needs and expectations of our communities. Our emphasis will be on quality and cost effectiveness whilst ensuring that Rochford District will remain one of the safest places in the country and the fear of crime will be reduced.

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

- 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.

During the year, we were the subject of an Audit Commission Assessment and we were delighted to receive a score of 3 out of a possible 4. This equates to us being an organisation that exceeds minimum requirements-we perform well. The level 3 put Rochford in the top 26% of local authorities.

6 Our Objectives

We want to achieve Value for Money and this underpins the Council's four main objectives:

Making a difference to our people

A key challenge for the Council is to continue to meet the increasing and changing expectations of our customers. For many, there is no choice but to use the service on offer and therefore it is important that we deliver our services in the most cost effective way.

Making a difference to our Community

We recognise that we must have an inclusive community where residents are not only safe but where they feel safe. The District already has a low crime rate compared to the rest of the country but we aim to make the district even safer by playing our part in the Community Safety Partnership which involves a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies.

The Council also aims to progress services and initiatives which deal with the more vulnerable sections of our community.

Making a difference to our Environment

We are committed to looking after the District's environment; protecting the amenities and preparing plans for future development that are well designed and sustainable.

We have a growing awareness of the impact of climate change and so, the work we do and the plans we make must be very carefully considered, must be sustainable and also balance the needs of residents, workers and visitors against our long term ambition to protect and enhance the environment.

Making a difference to our Local Economy

The Council seeks to work with partners to support local businesses through the recession and beyond and will seek to maximise and encourage growth for the benefit of the communities in the area.

The following pages highlight some of the work done by the Council during the year.

Objective 1 – Making a difference to our people

- The Council implemented a Play Strategy in 2008/9 and, with help from the £200,000 funding received from the Big Lottery, the Play Ranger service was again implemented during the summer holidays. Positive feedback was received with one grateful mum saying the staff were 'Excellent-really involved with children, helpful and friendly'
- The temporary ice rink was, once again, a great success with around 1,000 skaters enjoying the free facility at the various locations around the District.
- The speed of processing new benefit claims reduced from 23 days in the first quarter of the year to only 9 days in the last quarter even though the number of claims increased by 22%.
- By making a difference to our people we include our staff, their health and wellbeing are important if we are to continue to provide an excellent service. Our staff sickness levels are still amongst the best nationally and the average number of days lost per full time employee is 3.8 days less per year than the public sector average.
- The Council website was again awarded '3 star' status which means the website offers a 'compelling user experience' because of its accessibility, completeness, thoughtfulness and coherence.
- We aim to provide a first class service to our residents and other customers when contacting the Council. We identified a need to improve resolution of customer enquiries and reduce the number of lost calls and so the telephone switchboard and reception were separated. In

addition, we reorganised the Customer Service Team and strengthened the focus on delivering first line response to customers and provide separate back office support.

- The Council was presented with a Disability Symbol by Jobcentre plus. The 2 ticks symbol is awarded to organisations which can demonstrate and agree to continue to meet five commitments regarding the recruitment, employment, retention and career development of disabled people.
- With the closure of Eon in Rayleigh and the loss of so many jobs, we attended 2 job fairs targeted specifically for ex Eon workers and we gave redundancy support advice, produced a fact sheet and promoted current vacancies at Rochford and also within local businesses in the district. We continue to recognise the unique and important local role that the Council can play in terms of economic development within the district.
- Our Revenues & Benefits department retained the Charter Mark accreditation following the annual health check that was carried out in January. The assessors' report recommended full compliance against every assessment criteria.



Objective 2 – Making a difference to our community

- We continue to give around £80,000 per year to the Citizens Advice Bureau who provide essential assistance and advice from their offices in Rayleigh and Rochford.
- Hot on the heels of its 200th birthday, Rayleigh Windmill has been given Museum Accreditation, been shortlisted in the Essex Tourism Awards, won 'Best Project' Essex Museums Award, received a special mention for the Sails in the Wind project in the Essex Museums Award and been accredited as a Quality Assured Visitor Attraction.
- Reducing crime and disorder continues to be the main objective of the Council's Community Safety Team and the Rochford District Community Safety Partnership (CSP), formerly known as Rochford District Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). Since 2004 there has been a significant decrease in offences and, for the second year running, Rochford District has had the highest percentage decrease in overall crime compared to the other authorities in the Eastern Region. Overall crime for the Rochford District for 2009/10 now stands at 5% lower than that recorded for 2008/09 and reports of anti-social behaviour are down 4% compared with 2008/09. Rochford District CSP is continuing to fund a number of projects and initiatives throughout the District against priorities identified in the annual Strategic Assessment. These include funding diversionary activities for young people, targeted campaigns to reduce theft from motor vehicles and working with the Neighbourhood Watch Team to implement a cycle tagging scheme to reduce the number of pedal cycle thefts.
- The average length of stay in hostel accommodation reduced further in 2009/10 from 8 to 6 weeks. We have seen an increased number of people contacting the Council for housing advice and in particular in respect of homelessness prevention.
- Since the transfer of our housing stock to the Rochford Housing Association (RHA) we have continued to hold liaison meetings with them so that we can ensure that residents are happy. A recent survey of 239 residents who had used the repairs service showed that 90% rated the service as good or excellent.
- Rochford Council is one of the partners involved in the setting up of the teen café in Great Wakering. The café runs for two evenings a week and offers various activities for young people. There are approximately 20 members at present but further expansion is planned to include older age groups.
- The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is, in effect, a partnership of partnerships with the main statutory agencies being the District Council, Essex County Council, South East Essex Primary Care Trust and Essex Police. Along with these, the voluntary and business sectors and key interest groups also work together to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the District. The LSP's work has continued this year and some of the varied work supported and funded by the partnership include: Careline, Blues BodyCare Fit for Life, Healthy Chance and the recruitment of a Domestic Abuse Reduction Officer.

Objective 3 – Making a difference to our environment

- Our recycling rate is now around 65% and so we are still amongst the top performing councils. In addition, the scheme has been rolled out to flats and now includes a weekly textile collection. We gained national recognition after winning a national recycling award in the Local Authority Target Success category on the back of the work we have done.
- Over the past year, the Council has been working in partnership with South Essex local authorities to secure funding to deliver the TGSEP Leading a Low Carbon Economy business support project. Rochford has allocated funding and staff time to this programmes which is then match funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The funding bid was approved in October 2009 with delivery commencing in March 2010. This programme will provide practical support for businesses wanting to reduce their carbon emissions and increase resource efficiency.
- During the year the 'Friends of Sweyne Park' and the 'Friends of Cherry Orchard' groups have been set up. Both groups have met with the former having organised a couple of litter picking events and also an RSPB bird walk. The latter group have a committee of 18 so far and will start organising events after their next meeting.
- We have developed a Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy which aims to get every person and organisation within the district to use resources, live and operate sustainably and to make a positive contribution to the environment.
- In 2008/9, our carbon footprint was 569 tonnes which included 467 tonnes for the SITA contract and so we can now put together some measurable targets which will aim to reduce this figure next year.
- The Council has developed its own Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy for the period 2008-2013 in an effort to identify the risks and opportunities it faces. The resulting action plan – Climate CO₂de – was adopted in May 2009. The code sets out the Council's priority actions to address climate change internally as well as across all sectors of our community.

Objective 4 – Making a difference to our local economy

The Council seeks to work with partners to support local businesses through the recession and will seek to maximise and encourage economic growth for the benefit of the communities in the area.

- For the first time in 2009, the Council, working in partnership with Enterprise in Education, staged the Young Entrepreneur Programme. Groups of students were brought together to take part in a business challenge day. The day gave the students an insight into setting up their own business, raised awareness of the skills they need to develop this successfully and embed some key work ethics like team building.
- We are aware that many local businesses have suffered as a result of the economic instability and so during 2009/10 87% of local suppliers were paid within 10 days of receipt of an invoice. 99% of all invoices were paid within 30 days if undisputed.
- The Council once again brought in free parking charges for all of its District car parks in the four Saturday mornings leading up to Christmas to encourage people into the town centres. Saturday afternoon parking has been free for many years to help encourage local shopping.
- The Council continues to provide grant funding to the Chambers of Trade, which is to be used for the benefit of the three main town centres of Hockley, Rayleigh and Rochford. In 2009 funds were used to produce membership packs, exhibition stands and leaflets to help raise their profile in the community and help achieve a more professional appearance.
- The Rochford Business Network was set up in 2009 and, to date, just over 300 businesses have signed up. As part of this network we have run business breakfast events which have been extremely well attended. In addition, we have published two editions of 'Business News'. These publications contain key information, advice and references to key support services.
- Rochford Council led the set up and delivery of 'Shop at my Local', a keep trade local campaign for the District. This had been hailed as a real success and has been shortlisted for a national award from the Local Government Information Unit. 328 local businesses have signed up and over 250 residents who benefit from a range of vouchers and offers which are available on the website.
(<http://www.shopatmylocal.co.uk/>)

7 Financial Summary

This Annual Report provides a summary of the Council's statutory Statement of Accounts for 2009/10. The Statement of Accounts runs to over 60 pages and its content is largely prescribed by accounting standards that apply to all local authorities. The figures in this summary were originally compiled in line with proper accounting practice. This summary information is produced in the hope that it will give the reader a brief and uncomplicated picture of the main features of the Council's financial results for 2009/10.

The Statement of Accounts was approved by Full Council on 29 June 2010 and will be audited by the Audit Commission's appointed external auditors, PKF (UK) LLP.

The audited Accounts will be available from 30 September 2010 by contacting:-

Contact: Financial Services

Email: **financial.service@rochford.gov.uk**

Writing to: Council Offices
South Street
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1BW

Telephone: 01702 318028

This is the third year that we have presented the financial performance of the Council in this way and we would be very interested in your comments and views on both the content and format of this report, so that we may continue to improve how we communicate with you. Please use the above contact details and let us know what you think about this Annual Report and its contents.

Yvonne Woodward CPFA FMAAT
Head of Finance

What Rochford District Council spent

The Council produces a detailed Income and Expenditure Account, which can be found in the Statement of Accounts and is set out in a prescribed manner. The account below shows the cost of services in 2009/10 under each of our Corporate Objectives and the amount left to be financed from local and national tax income.

	Net Expenditure 2009/10 £000s
Making a difference to our People	
Elections	
Local Land Charges	
Cemeteries & Churchyards	
Licensing	
Public Conveniences	
Democratic Services	2,813
Making a difference to our Community	
Collection of local taxes	
Council Tax and Housing Benefits	
Emergency Planning & Health & Safety	
Leisure Premises	
Sports Development & Promotion	
Concessionary Fares	
Housing Services & Homelessness	5,039
Making a difference to our Environment	
Mill Tower Windmill	
Woodlands, Parks and Open Spaces	
Planning and Building Control	
Environmental Health	
Street Cleansing	
Recycling	6,198
Making a difference to our local Economy	
Economic Development	
Car Parks *	(134)
Net Cost of Services	13,916
LESS Internal capital charges for running the Council's Services	(985)
LESS Income from cash investments	(209)
LESS Money put into reserves for future use	(2,889)
Cost of local services to be met by local and national taxes	9,833

*Note: We received more in income from car parks than we spent out..

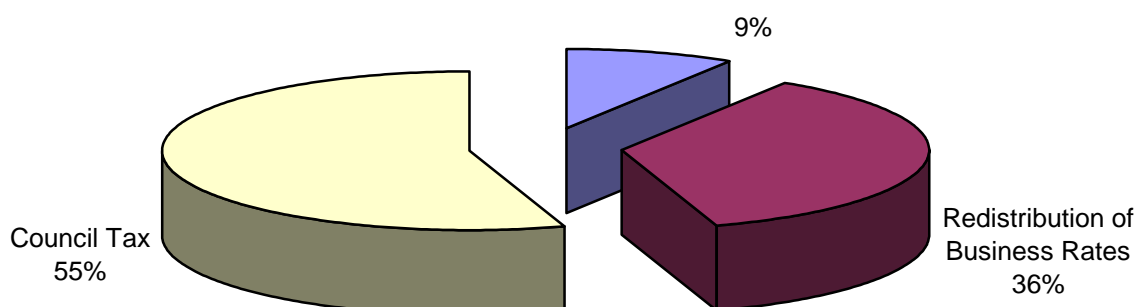
The Net Cost of Services last year (2008/09) was £13.9m shown by Corporate Objective as follows:-

What did we spend last year:	Net Expenditure 2008/09 £000s
Making a difference to our People	3,044
Making a difference to our Community	4,551
Making a difference to our Environment	6,606
Making a difference to our local Economy	(265)
Net Cost of Services for 2008/09	13,936

Where did the money come from?

The £9.8m that we spent on providing local services, after contributions from reserves and income raised from various fees and charges, came from local and national taxes and redistributed business rates.

Our total income for the year was £11.2m, which was split £963,000 Government Grant, £4.07m from national business rates returned to the Council and £6.2m from Council Tax from residents as shown below.



Summary of Income and Expenditure

Revenue Account Surplus	2009/10 £000s
Total Income	(11,197)
Total Cost of Services	9,833
Surplus for the year	(1,364)

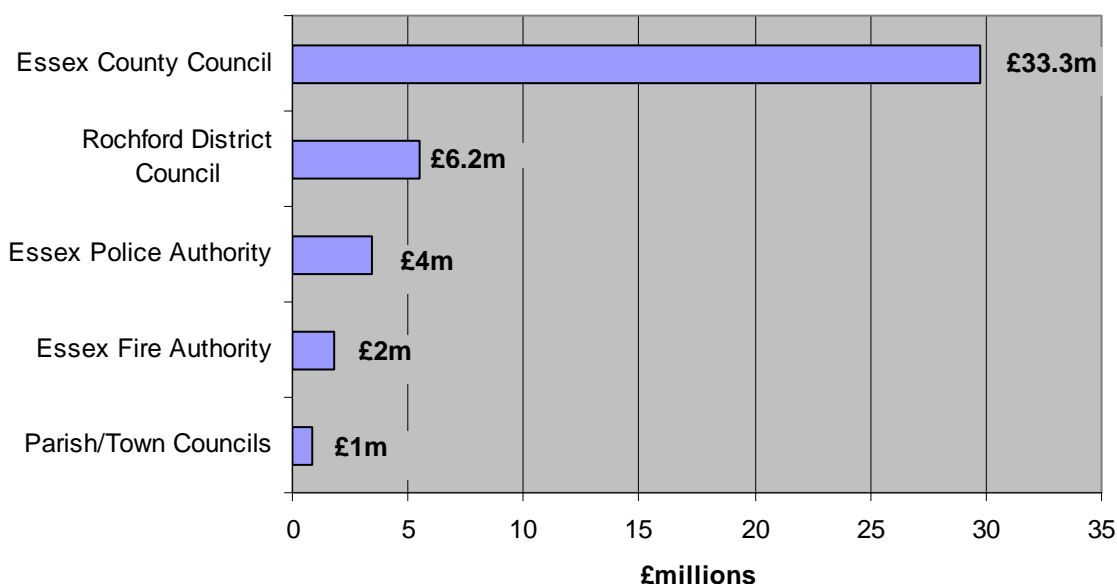
The Council is using balances built up over previous years to pay for the investment in the improved recycling service and cover reductions in income streams.

The Council recognises that these balances won't last and has plans to continue to reduce expenditure over the next 3 years

Council Tax

The Council was responsible for collecting £46.4m of Council Tax last year, but we only kept £6.2m, equivalent to 13p in every £ collected. The majority of what's collected is paid to others as shown in the graph below:

Amount of Council Tax collected for each organisation



The average Council tax for Band D property for 2009/10 was made up as follows:-

	2009/10
Rochford District Council	£197.28
Essex County Council	£1,066.50
Essex Fire Authority	£64.62
Essex Police Authority	£128.25
Town/Parish Councils (average)	£30.05
Total	£1,486.70

The national average for Council Tax for 2009/10 was **£1,465**. From Government Grant and redistribution of business rates, we received £61 per head, compared to a national average of £78.99

Capital Expenditure

We also spend money on improving land and buildings in order to continue delivering excellent cost effective services for all our customers. Capital Expenditure is the money spent on the purchase and improvement of buildings, vehicles, equipment and computer software. It is called capital expenditure as it results in assets which the Council and the community can use for more than one year. Capital Expenditure does not directly affect the Council Tax.

For 2009/10 our expenditure on capital compared to what we planned to spend was:-

What we spent:	Planned £000s	Actual £000s
Vehicles and Equipment	194	110
Hall Road Cemetery extension	249	7
Leisure and Play Facilities	651	447
Private Sector Renewal Grants	107	131
Disabled Facilities Grants	196	199
Depot building improvements	34	38
IT infrastructure	81	78
Council offices	181	92
Public conveniences	39	39
Totals	1,731	1,141

Some of the projects not completed in 2009/10 will be rolled forward into 2010/11.

The £1.1m which was spent on our land and property assets was paid for by capital receipts from the sale of property, grants and from revenue.

How we paid for Capital Expenditure	2009/10 £000s
Grants and Contributions	264
Capital Receipts	877
Total	1,141

What is the Council worth?

At the end of each financial year, 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010, the Council draws up a balance sheet that shows how much our land and buildings are worth, what is owed to others (i.e. invoices that were unpaid as at 31 March 2010), what others owe us (e.g. businesses which owe rates and residents who owe Council Tax) and how much cash we have.

Net Assets	31 March 2010 £m
Value of land and property	38.9
Cash in bank and cash investments	5.7
Money owed to Rochford	4.3
Less Money owed by Rochford	(5.2)
Net Assets	43.7

Revenue Reserves and Balances	31 March 2010 £m
Working Balances	2.2
Earmarked Reserves	2.3
Total Revenue Reserves	4.5

Rochford's net worth is £43.7m. This is represented by capital reserves of £39.2m and revenue reserves of £4.5m.

Delivering Value for Money

The Council planned to make savings during the year of £378,000. We were delighted to report savings of £485,000 for 2009/10.

This has been achieved by more efficient service and better organisation – not by a lower quality or reduction in services and Rochford District Council staff are working harder than ever to ensure it offers its residents value for money.

Some examples of savings are:-

- Improvements to postal and delivery methods (£26,000)
- Reducing the costs of training by using partnerships and on-line training (£6,000)
- Reducing the costs of printers and telephones (£10,000)
- Reducing the cost of recruitment by using on-line applications (£26,000)
- Reduction in the cost of repairs and maintenance of council land and buildings (£30,000)

The Council is determined to deliver high levels of performance. Rochford has shown that, despite having one of the lowest government grant funding levels, it continues to save money and reduce spending. We will continue to keep close scrutiny over Council money.

Over the last five years, the Council has saved £1.6m. This money has been reinvested in improving services. The main areas of investment are the new environmental contracts for recycling, street cleansing and grounds maintenance and meeting the additional costs of the Concessionary Fare scheme.

Further information on the Council's 2010/11 budget and five year Medium Term Financial Plans are available on the website, <http://www.rochford.gov.uk>.



Financial Performance

Rochford District Council is top in Essex and one of the best in the country when it comes to collecting Council Tax. The Revenues and Benefits team collected 98.9% of the £46.4m Council Tax due last year. We also collected 97.2% of business rates due last year (97.5% in 2008/09).

Collecting income in the current economic climate is challenging but staff have offered as much support and advice as possible to help local residents and businesses to pay their bills.

The Council achieved investment rates for the year averaging at 3.5%% compared to the benchmark of 0.42%.

What Next?

The Council's plans for 2010 onwards are set out in the Corporate Plan which is available from the contact details at the beginning of this Annual Report.

The Council would be very interested in your comments and views on both the contents and layout of this document so that we can continue to improve how we communicate with residents and partners. Please use the contact details below and let me know what you think about this Annual Report and what other information you would like to see included.

Yvonne Woodward CPFA FMAAT **Head of Finance**

Contact: Financial Services

Email: **financial.service@rochford.gov.uk**

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South Street
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