

Annual Report 2010-11



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 2011-2016
- Financial Statements 2010/11
- The Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2021 for Rochford District

These documents are available on our website **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: **financialservices@rochford.gov.uk**
Writing to: Council Offices
South Street
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1BW
Phone: 01702 318029

If you would like this information in large print, Braille or another language, please contact 01702 318111

Contents

| | Page |
|--|------|
| 1 Introduction | 3 |
| 2 Facts and Figures about Rochford District Council | 4 |
| 3 Our Councillors | 5 |
| 4 Our Services | 6 |
| 5 Our Vision | 7 |
| 6 Our Objectives | 8 |
| Objective 1 – Making a difference to our people | 9 |
| Objective 2 – Making a difference to our community..... | 10 |
| Objective 3 – Making a difference to our environment | 11 |
| Objective 4 – Making a difference to our local economy | 11 |
| 7 Financial Summary..... | 13 |
| What Rochford District Council spent..... | 14 |
| Where did the money come from? | 15 |
| Summary of Income and Expenditure | 15 |
| Council Tax | 16 |
| Capital Expenditure | 17 |
| What is the Council worth?..... | 18 |
| Delivering Value for Money | 19 |
| Financial Performance | 20 |
| What Next? | 20 |

1 Introduction

We are pleased to introduce this report which will provide an overview of the Council's performance, spending and financial position for 2010/11 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.



Terry Cutmore
Leader of the Council

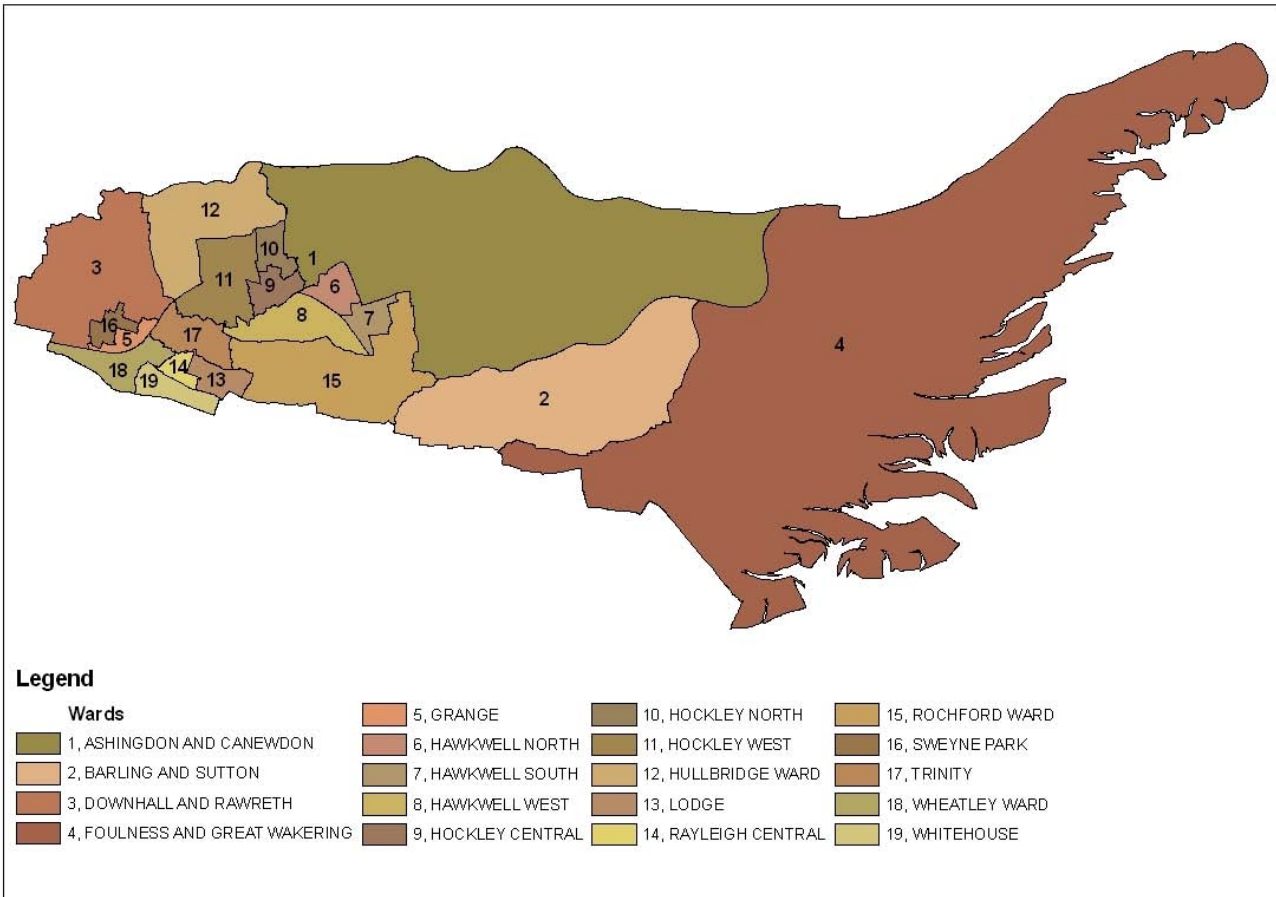


Paul Warren
Chief Executive



2 Facts and Figures about Rochford District Council

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2009 mid-year population estimates showed Rochford District as having a population of 83,100.
- 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 207 full time equivalent members of staff
- The Council Tax base was 31,399 and the average Band D Council Tax bill in 2010/11 was £1,519
- The annual revenue budget was £11.5m

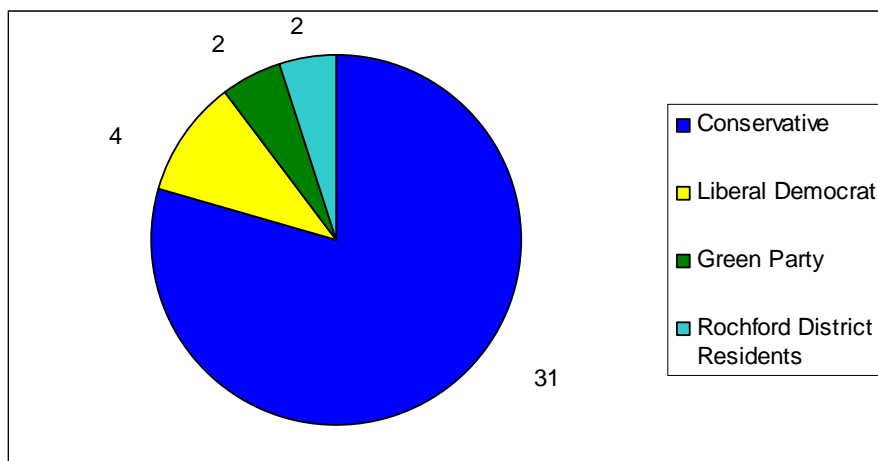


3 Our Councillors

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

The Chairman of the Council for 2010/11 was Councillor Derrick Stansby and the Vice-Chairman was Councillor Simon Smith.

For further information about the Council, please visit our website – www.rochford.gov.uk



4 Our Services

Local Government in Essex is largely 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, Community Safety and Strategic Housing

Planning & Transportation Services

which includes: Development Management, Building Control, Spatial planning policy, Planning Enforcement, Taxi Licensing, Car Parking and Economic Development and Regeneration.

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, Office Support and Information and communications technology

Finance which includes: Audit, Financial Services and Performance Management

Chief Executive Services which includes:

Human Resources, Policy Development, Partnerships, Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, Internal and External Communications and Staff Engagement.

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 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.

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, to a standard which is recognised as excellent.

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

- This year we became one of only 297 UK organisations to have been awarded Gold status by Investors in People (IIP) by demonstrating a commitment to learning and development of our employees and achieving best practice in people management.
- We have also been awarded the Charter for Elected Member Development. The external assessment team were impressed with the Council's top political and managerial commitment to the development of its Members and the clear link between the Member training programme and the Rochford District Council's aims and priorities.
- In addressing the cuts in public spending and preparing for the impact of the reduction in Government funding, we managed to achieve savings of approximately £900,000 whilst maintaining essential services to our residents.
- Significant progress has been made towards the Excellence standard for the Equality Framework for Local Government.
- We continue to improve service access and delivery, with 5 public information days being held.
- Our good performance in determining planning applications within legislated timelines continues and the number of successful appeals against refusal of planning permissions has reduced.
- We have agreed provision of some shared services for other Councils, including fraud investigations and winning the contract to provide the payroll service for Castle Point Borough Council.
- Our Revenues and Benefits department gained accreditation in the new Customer Services Excellence inspection, with 100% compliance. This has been gained at a time when the staff have been dealing with a higher volume of benefit claims, but no increase in staff numbers.
- The overall average time to process and deliver Disabled Facilities Grants and complete the works has reduced from 52 to 40 weeks.
- In February 2011 we adopted the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. There are currently over 400 food businesses in the District that have been rated – these can be found on the national website at <http://ratings.food.gov.uk/>. On the scale of 1 to 5 (5 being very good), 92% of the premises in the District have been rated 3 and above. 60% have a rating of 5.
- In September 2010 we achieved two further awards from the RSPCA – a Silver level in the Animal Welfare Principles Footprint for our commitment to animal welfare and the Stray Dogs Footprint Award.
- In March 2011 we introduced new automated payment kiosks in our two reception areas. We appreciate how valued this facility is to our residents and it has now been extended to provide the facility to pay by cash (change is given if the correct money is not available) or credit/debit card.

- A new Customer Services Team has been created, to serve our residents. The team deal with queries and provide as much information as possible at the initial point of contact, whether this is by telephone or in person at our Receptions.
- During 2010/11, officers dealt with 403 Freedom of Information requests, an increase of 89% on the previous year.
- The Council received 128 complaints and 150 compliments during the year.



- Affordable sports and arts activities for children aged 0 to 16 are provided across the District during school holidays, delivered in partnership with Virgin Active and Rochford Extended Schools. This is a one-stop shop for parents, guardians and carers.

Objective 2 – Making a difference to our community

- Overall crime levels have reduced by a further 9%. There has been a 65% reduction in robbery and 39% reduction in the theft from motor vehicles.
- There has been a 38.5% reduction in the number of repeat incidents of domestic violence and we continue to raise awareness of reporting domestic violence crimes.

- The dispersal order in Market Square, Rochford has been successful and renewed for a further 6 months.
- New mini and junior football pitches to the rear of Rayleigh Leisure Centre have now been completed.
- The Council started publishing details of all invoices paid with a value of more than £500 and this is done on a monthly basis.
- Rayleigh Windmill has now achieved Quality Visitor Attraction status from Visit England. We host touring exhibitions and installations featuring local artists and will also be celebrating the London 2012 Olympic Games.
- Rayleigh Arts Festival provides a platform for local artists and groups to promote their work and for local people to engage in high quality arts activities. This year 40 artists, 30 local groups and business and 100 young people took part and 1,250 people attended.
- The Rochford Art Trail was held for the second time, with increased artists (65) and venues (32) taking part.
- Our Wild Woods Day is a key event in our calendar, promoting arts, sport and play. Our Leisure, Woodlands, Recycling and Environmental Teams work closely together with local groups, businesses and charities to run activities to promote their work.
- We work in partnership with Extended Schools, Virgin active, and others, on 'activerochford', to create, develop and promote opportunities for local people to take part in sport, physical activity and well-being opportunities in the Rochford District. We have been successful in securing £26,000 of funding from Sport England.

Objective 3 – Making a difference to our environment

- Rochford has again increased its recycling rate in 2010/11 and it now stands at 65.4% (unaudited). This means that Rochford is the number one recycler in Essex and the Eastern Region and is one of the top recyclers in England. Our success is due the active participation of residents with our “Maximise Recycling Scheme.” It is designed for ease to use and in 2010/11, diverted over 21,200 tonnes of waste from landfill, so helping the environment.
- In November 2010 we won a Green Apple Award for the “Maximise Recycling Scheme”. This was a silver award in the Environmental Best Practice category.
- Further refurbishments have been carried out to our open spaces including – fencing at Hockley Woods, drainage at Sweyne Park, new play facilities at Bedford Close and skateboarding ramps adjacent to Rayleigh Leisure Centre.
- There is a significant reduction in the level of detritus on public land and highways – down from 23% to 14%.
- Progress has been made on our Core Strategy (the document that will set out how the District is to develop over the next 15years) and the examination process, including updating the document to account for the latest position in respect of housing need
- We have developed an initial draft of the Allocations Development Plan following extensive public participation – obtaining over 8,000 representations from local residents and other groups on the potential future allocation of land for a variety of uses.

- We have progressed future development management policies, to ensure sustainable development of the District, identifying preferred options and undertaking public consultations.
- We have successfully defended two appeals for separate developments in the Green Belt, each involving more than 300 dwellings, through public inquiries.
- In July 2010 we won a “Good Egg Award” for our commitment to use only free range whole eggs in any catering supplied to or by the Council. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Terry Cutmore, collected the award at the LGA Conference in Bournemouth, from poet Pam Ayres.
- Access to Cherry Orchard Country Park has been improved, with provision of a lovely new car park and play facility on Cherry Orchard Way.

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.

- We are aware that many local businesses have suffered as a result of the economic instability and so during 2010/11 93% of local suppliers were paid within 10 days of receipt of an invoice. 98.18% 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 Rochford Business Network was set up in 2009 and continues to grow, with over 360 businesses signed up. As part of this network we have run business breakfast events which have been extremely well attended. In addition, we have published 7 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 was shortlisted for a national award from the Local Government Information Unit. 406 local businesses have now signed up as well as 545 shoppers who benefit from a range of vouchers and offers which are available on the website.
(<http://www.shopatmylocal.co.uk/>)

- We are progressing area action plans for the regeneration and enhancement of Rochford, Rayleigh and Hockley centres, identifying potential options and undertaking community involvement.

In October 2010 the Council, working in partnership with Enterprise in Education, staged the finals of the Young Entrepreneur Programme. Groups of students from local schools and academies were brought together to take part in a business challenge to design a chocolate bar that could be sold to generate funds for Shop at My Local. The programme is designed to give students an insight into setting up their own business, raise awareness of the skills they need to develop this successfully and embed some key work ethics, such as team building. This year's winners were King Edmund with the Mellow bar.

7 Financial Summary

This Annual Report provides a summary of the Council's statutory Statement of Accounts for 2010/11. 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 2010/11.

The Statement of Accounts was signed off by the Head of Finance on 22 June 2011 and have been audited by the Audit Commission's appointed external auditors, PKF (UK) LLP.

The audited Accounts are available by contacting:

Contact: Financial Services
Email: financialservices@rochford.gov.uk
Writing to: Council Offices
South Street
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1BW
Phone: 01702 318029

This is the fourth 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 2010/11 under each of our Corporate Objectives and the amount left to be financed from local and national tax income.

| | Net Expenditure 2010/11 £000s |
|---|--|
| Making a difference to our People | |
| Elections | |
| Local Land Charges | |
| Cemeteries & Churchyards | |
| Licensing | |
| Public Conveniences | |
| Democratic Services | 3,336 |
| 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 | 5,453 |
| Making a difference to our Environment | |
| Mill Tower Windmill | |
| Woodlands, Parks and Open Spaces | |
| Planning and Building Control | |
| Environmental Health | |
| Street Cleansing | |
| Recycling | 6,205 |
| Making a difference to our local Economy | |
| Economic Development | |
| Car Parks * | 6 |

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Net Cost of Services | 15,000 |
| LESS Statutory Accounting Adjustments, including capital charges | (2,293) |
| LESS Income from cash investments | (43) |
| PLUS Money put into reserves for future use | 125 |
| Cost of local services to be met by local and national taxes | 12,789 |

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

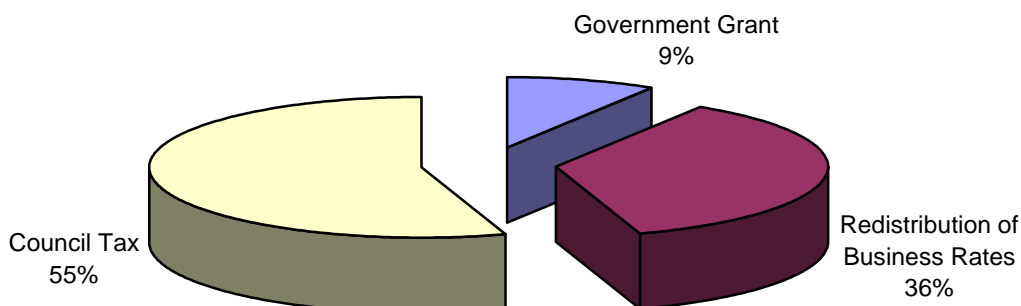
The Net Cost of Services last year (2009/10) was £14.8m shown by Corporate Objective as follows:

| What did we spend last year: | Net Expenditure 2009/10 £000s |
|--|--|
| Making a difference to our People | 3,668 |
| Making a difference to our Community | 5,111 |
| Making a difference to our Environment | 6,135 |
| Making a difference to our local Economy | (134) |
| Net Cost of Services | 14,780 |

Where did the money come from?

The £12.8m 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 £11.6m, which was split £718,000 Government Grant, £4.47m from national business rates returned to the Council and £6.4m from Council Tax from residents as shown below.



Summary of Income and Expenditure

| Revenue Account Surplus | 2010/11 £000s |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Total Income | (11,558) |
| Total Cost of Services | 12,789 |
| Deficit for the year | 1,231 |

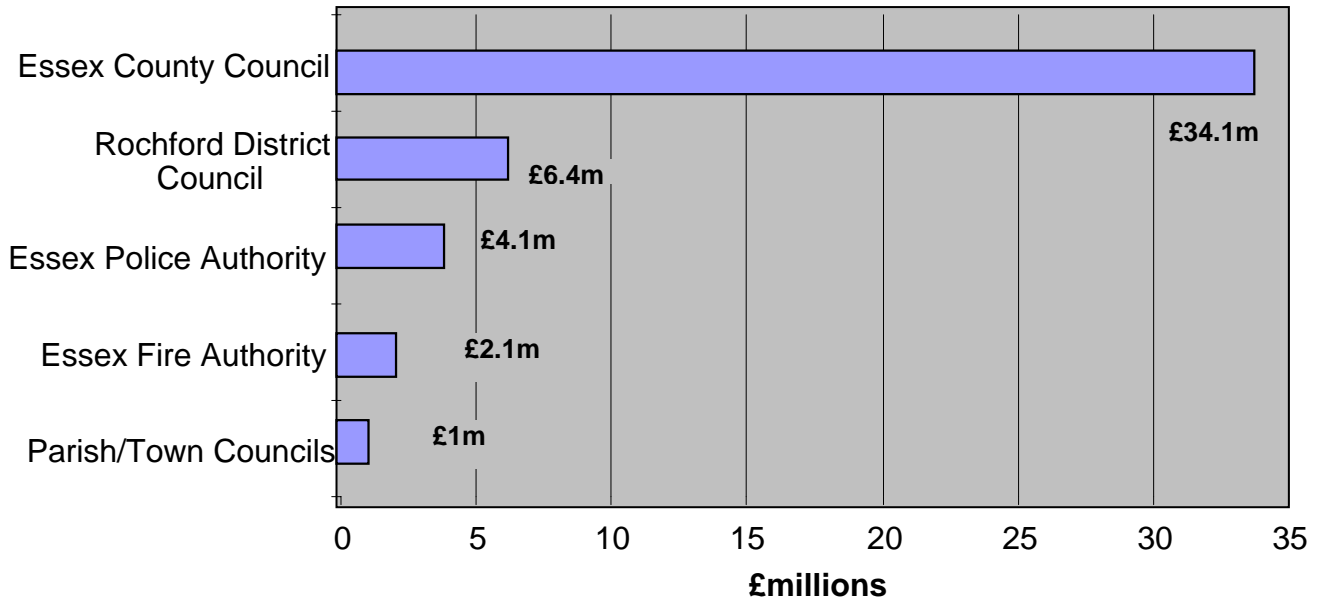
The Council is using balances built up over previous years to pay for the investment in the improved recycling service and cover reductions in income streams.

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 £47.6m of Council Tax last year, but we only kept £6.4m, 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 2010/11 was made up as follows:

| | 2010/11 |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Rochford District Council | £201.15 |
| Essex County Council | £1,086.75 |
| Essex Fire Authority | £66.42 |
| Essex Police Authority | £132.12 |
| Town/Parish Councils (average) | £32.19 |
| Total | £1,518.63 |

In 2010/11 the national average for Council Tax was **£1,495**. From Government Grant and redistribution of business rates, we received £61 per head, compared to a national average of £79 in 2010/11

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 2010/11 our expenditure on capital compared to what we planned to spend was:-

| What we spent: | Planned £000s | Actual £000s |
|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Vehicles and Equipment | 169 | 73 |
| Hall Road Cemetery extension | 200 | 168 |
| Leisure and Play Facilities | 365 | 767 |
| Private Sector Renewal Grants | 108 | 351 |
| Disabled Facilities Grants | 250 | 262 |
| IT infrastructure | 59 | 56 |
| Council offices | 107 | 64 |
| Public conveniences | 31 | 12 |
| Totals | 1,289 | 1,753 |

Some of the projects not completed in 2010/11 will be rolled forward into 2011/12. The actual overspend is due to projects that went ahead with external funding after the budgets were agreed.

The £1.753m 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 | 2010/11 £000s |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Grants and Contributions | 966 |
| Capital Receipts | 787 |
| Total | 1,753 |

What is the Council worth?

At the end of each financial year, 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011, 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 2011), 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 2011 £m |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Value of land and property | 39.0 |
| Cash in bank and cash investments | 5.4 |
| Money owed to Rochford | 2.7 |
| Less Money owed by Rochford | (4.1) |
| Net Assets | 43.0 |

| Usable Reserves and Balances | 31 March 2011 £m |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Capital Grants and Receipts | 2.6 |
| Working Balances | 0.9 |
| Earmarked Reserves | 2.5 |
| Total Revenue Reserves | 6.0 |

Rochford's net worth is £43m. This is represented by unusable reserves of £37m and revenue reserves of £6m.

Delivering Value for Money

The Council planned to make savings during the year of £750,000. We were delighted to report savings of around £900,000 for 2010/11, compared to £485,000 in the previous year.

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:-

- Reducing the use of Environmental Health contractors (£9,000)
- Reducing staff advertising, training and recruitment costs (£44,000)
- New arrangements for funding the Springboard scheme for Handy Person/Gardening for the Elderly (£25,000)

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 six years, the Council has saved £2.5m. This money has been reinvested in improving services. The main areas of investment are the new environmental contracts for recycling and street cleansing and grounds maintenance.

Further information on the Council's 2011/12 budget and five year Medium Term Financial Plans are available on the website, www.rochford.gov.uk

- A one-off saving from a review of our current IT contract (£90,000)
- £276,000 in additional income from recycling credits and reductions in the cost of the recycling contract.



Financial Performance

Rochford District Council is amongst the best in Essex and the country when it comes to collecting Council Tax. The Revenues and Benefits team collected 98.9% of the £47.6m Council Tax due last year (2010/11). We also collected 96.8% of business rates due last year, compared to 97.2% in 2009/10. This was due to two increased rate assessments concluded in late March 2011, which resulted in two new debts which could not be collected in year and are carried forward. Without these two items the collection rate would have again been 97.2%

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 1.3% compared to the benchmark of 0.43%.

Also during the year, as a result of a landmark court case, Rochford District Council successfully claimed repayment of VAT dating back to pre 1996. Our staff worked hard to put the information together and achieved a refund of £89,000.

What Next?

The Council's plans for 2011 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: financialservices@rochford.gov.uk

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