

Rochford District

Matters



SPRING 2023

What you need to know
ahead of the May
election - pages 6 & 7

How #OneTeam is
transforming your
Council - pages 8 & 9

Take part in
our survey and
WIN £100
shopping
voucher

2 The Council's Executive Team

Welcome

to the Spring 2023 issue of our Rochford District Matters publication.

Undoubtedly, this is going to be another very busy year for those of us in the Council.

In May, we have our local elections, and this year things will be a little different, including changes in legislation which now require ID checks for residents who go into the polling stations to vote in person. Please go to pages 6 and 7 to check out the new rules and ensure you can use your vote.

Another major change is our growing partnership with Brentwood Borough Council. On pages 8 and 9, Jonathan Stephenson, joint Chief Executive of both councils, explains how the partnership will be driving efficiency and improve the services we provide to residents and businesses in the district.

The past few years have been tough on us all, from Covid to the impact of the Cost of Living crisis.

We know that the current economy is still affecting residents, families and local businesses in the district. That is why we are continuing with our #ByYourSide campaign. Please check our website regularly to find what help is available.

I hope that you enjoy reading this edition of Rochford District Matters and find it informative. We welcome feedback on the content.



CLLR SIMON WOOTTON
Leader, Rochford District Council

Contact us

01702 318111 and 01702 318191
customerservices@rochford.gov.uk
rochford.gov.uk
Customer services opening times:
8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday

Follow us

Rochford District Council
@RochfordDC
@rochforddistrictcouncil

CLLR CHERYL ROE, Deputy Leader



Since the last edition of RDM there have been significant changes within Rochford District Council.

Under our partnership with Brentwood Borough Council, we now have a new Corporate Leadership Team who are settling into their new roles.

I wish them every success for the future as we continue through our journey, ensuring this partnership continues to yield benefits for our residents and local businesses.

I want to say a big thank you to all our staff, both those who are adapting to this new working environment and those that moved on to pastures new.

CLLR DANIELLE BELTON Portfolio holder for Finance, Economy & Climate



Over the past year we have been committed to supporting local business, and I am proud that we were able to put on the first RDC business awards in January.

We remain committed to tackling climate change in the district and continue to work towards our own ambitious target of being carbon neutral by 2030.

CLLR DANIEL EFDE, Portfolio holder for Customer Services, Legal and Leisure



It's going to be an interesting year for local elections with new rules and regulations implemented by the Electoral Commission regarding voting.

The main one is that to be able to vote on polling day you will need to bring photo ID to the polling station. If you don't have suitable photo ID you will have to apply for a voter authority certificate from the Council, or to avoid this hassle you can still apply for a postal vote.

As the portfolio holder for Leisure I would like to hear your ideas on what leisure should look like in our district going forward. Please contact me with your ideas or queries
CllrDaniel.Efde@Rochford.gov.uk

CLLR DAVE SPERRING, Portfolio holder for Environment



Last year Rochford Norse took over the contract for both waste collection and street cleaning in the district. They continue to refine their operation and purchase new equipment to improve the service for residents.

On the open spaces front, we have completed a re-vamp of the lake in Cherry Orchard Country Park, with the support of Essex Wildlife Trust. In Hockley Woods we have completed the refurbishment of the play area, and the car park has been re-surfaced with new fencing put in place.

The first planting of approximately 2,000 whips of various species, under the 'Parks for Nature' programme, has started in Great Wakering, Ashingdon and Fairview.

CLLR IAN WARD, Portfolio holder for Strategic Planning & Assets



This last year has been about preparation for the new Local Plan. Infrastructure planning, in partnership with other organisations, is essential to improving the quality of life.

We will be looking to prioritise development that meets local needs on brownfield land first before considering land in the Green Belt.

Our long-term vision is to be self-sufficient in energy, producing net zero housing for our growing population facilitated by improvements to our infrastructure, and growing the local economy for everyone's benefit.

CLLR ARTHUR WILLIAMS, Portfolio holder for Communities, Housing & Health



As a Rochford District Councillor, I have always believed that the wellbeing of our residents is paramount.

The cost of living crisis is affecting many residents and businesses and that is why we have launched the #ByYourSide campaign. We are committed to helping people get through these challenging times, working closely with our partners in the local community and across Essex.

An online version of this newspaper is available at www.rochford.gov.uk/rdm

Weddings at The Old House and Windmill

We're proud to have two beautiful venues within our district that are the perfect setting for your intimate ceremony.

The Old House in Rochford and the Rayleigh Windmill will make any day a truly unforgettable experience with their stunning rooms, quaint gardens, and historic architecture.



Find out more on booking your special day. T: **01702 318120**
E: celebrations@rochford.gov.uk or go to www.rochford.gov.uk/weddings

We want to talk to you

How do you get information about Rochford District Council? Our e-newsletters? Our website? Local media? Social media like Facebook and Twitter?

We want you to tell us how you currently learn what the council is doing - and how you would like us to communicate with you.

Simply go to www.rochford.gov.uk/CommsSurvey to fill in the short survey.

Don't have access to the internet?

We still want to hear your views. Call our Customer Services on 01702 546366, and one of our team will fill in the short survey over the phone for you. Survey closes 31st March 2023.

Complete our survey - either online or by phone - and you will be able to enter into a prize draw for a Prezzy £100 gift card, redeemable at supermarkets and other retailers.

Meet you at the Mill

The Mill Arts & Events Centre was reopened in September 2022, with its large hall, upstairs lounge, and meeting room available for hire.



Since reopening, we have hosted a variety of public and private bookings,

including regular exercise classes, craft fayres, birthday parties, wedding receptions, dance competitions, and various performances.

The Mill is open 9am-5pm Monday to Friday and open for bookings on evenings and weekends.

To book your event or special occasion contact **01702 963328** or email leisure@rochford.gov.uk

To find out about upcoming events: www.rochford.gov.uk/themill

Business Awards 2023

Rochford District Council in association with **Toomey MOTOR GROUP**

It was great to see so many local businesses attend the Rochford Business Awards, organised in association with Toomey Motor Group, and held at Apton Hall in Rochford.

More than 60 businesses were nominated across the 10 categories which celebrated and recognised the value of our local business community at every level.

Congratulations to our winners!!

For the full list of winners, go to www.rochford.gov.uk/BusinessAwards

An online version of this newspaper is available at www.rochford.gov.uk/rdm

Planting for the future

The Council has been busy adding to our district's natural beauty

A lasting tribute to the late Her Majesty The Queen was created at Cherry Orchard Country Park last year.

The avenue of 70 new trees was planted to mark the Monarch's 70th year as head of state, part of the nationwide 'Queen's Green Canopy'.

An ambitious programme of environmental improvements was undertaken at the lake in Cherry Orchard Country Park. The works, carried out by the Council and Essex Wildlife Trust, provide a healthy wetland habitat for wildlife and protect the future of the lake as well as improve water quality and increase biodiversity.

In November the Council's Open Spaces team began planting more than 2,000 saplings as part of the Parks for Nature project. The plantings at Fairview, Ashingdon and Great Wakering are part of the initiative to create new woodland areas and help the Council achieve its commitment to being carbon neutral by 2030.

There was new investment in play spaces in Hockley Woods with brand new inclusive equipment. The programme also saw improvements to the car park at the woods and accessible picnic benches. The Friends of Hockley Woods group donated a set of wonderful carved animals which are on display within the woodlands.



New fleet for refuse collection

A new fleet of refuse collection vehicles from the Council's new waste contractor Norse Group, arrived in Rochford last year.

The new fleet has been equipped with state-of-the-art safety, monitoring, and telemetry technology as well as live camera recording systems, reverse radar, cyclist safety warning, anti-roll away and theft prevention systems, and LED Caution boards.



An online version of this newspaper is available at www.rochford.gov.uk/rdm

Reduce your footprint

Rochford Environmental Business Alliance (REBA) is a new business network bringing together businesses and individuals looking to reduce their carbon footprint and make their operations more sustainable.



The Council has worked with local businesses to set up REBA as a forum for business people in the district who want to collaborate, learn, and share best practice on carbon, energy, waste and sustainability.

Businesses can join REBA to show their customers, suppliers and partners that they are taking active steps to making their business more sustainable.



All Rochford district businesses are welcome to join REBA.

The easiest way to join is via our website:
www.rochford.gov.uk/TellMeMore or go to
www.rochfordeba.co.uk

FREE business support

The Council is partnered with not-for-profit enterprise support agency Colbea to provide FREE 1 to 1 business support for residents and businesses in the district.

Support includes business resilience and start-up advice, help with importing and exporting and guidance on diversifying your business into new markets. Please visit: www.colbea.co.uk

We also fund Colbea to deliver a Low Carbon Sustainability Programme, helping local businesses understand the jargon and create their own carbon reduction plan, reducing running costs, specifically tailored to their organisation for free.

To book a place on the Low Carbon Sustainability Programme, or for more information call **01206 548833** or email enquiries@colbea.co.uk



Rochford launches 'Earn as you Learn' scheme for taxi drivers

A pioneering scheme, introduced by Rochford's licencing team, has increased the number of registered taxi and private hire drivers operating in the district.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a decline nationally in the number of drivers working in the sector.

The Council has worked with the main four operators in its district to develop the 'Earn as you Learn' scheme. New drivers can operate as a hire driver while they complete their course. Each driver is assigned a mentor and closely monitored throughout the training process.



To learn more about the scheme go to www.rochford.gov.uk/taxi

6 The May election

What you need to know to vote this May

In May this year, we will be going to the polls for the Local Elections.

However, with this coming election there are important changes. New legislation has been introduced by the Government.

Please make sure you read and understand the changes and ensure you can cast your vote this May.



New photo ID rules

New legislation now requires that all voters must show a photo ID at polling stations before they can be issued with a ballot paper

Photographic identification that can be used to vote include:

- ✓ Passport
- ✓ Driving licence
- ✓ Immigration document
- ✓ A PASS card
- ✓ Ministry of Defence Form 90
- ✓ Concessionary travel pass (excluding railcards)
- ✓ National ID card

If your photographic identification document has expired it will still be accepted so long as the photograph is still a good likeness of you

Please remember to bring one of these documents to the polling station with you when you vote.

You will not be able to cast your vote without them.



Documents that CANNOT be used to vote:

- ✗ Work/student passes
- ✗ Railcards
- ✗ Photocopies of identification documents
- ✗ Pictures on mobile phones

What if I don't have photographic identification?

Don't panic. Voters can check whether they have the correct photographic identification on the Gov.uk website, and, if not, they can apply for free on that site for a Voter Authority Certificate.

Alternatively, residents can come into reception in the Council offices and our staff will be able to complete their application for ID.

You need to apply for the certificate by Tuesday 25th April.

Voting arrangements if you are a EU citizen

British, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizens

If you hold British, Irish or Commonwealth citizenship, you can vote in all elections that take place.

EU citizens

If you hold EU citizenship (other than the Republic of Ireland, Malta or Cyprus) you can vote in most elections that take place. You can't vote in UK Parliamentary elections.

An online version of this newspaper is available at www.rochford.gov.uk/rdm

Election 2023

On Thursday 4th May, there are elections taking place to elect one Rochford District Councillor in each of the 13 district wards.

These wards are Downhall & Rawreth, Foulness & The Wakerings, Hawkwell East, Hawkwell West, Hockley & Ashingdon, Hockley, Hullbridge, Lodge, Roche North & Rural, Roche South, Sweyne Park & Grange, Trinity and Wheatley.

Elections will also take place to elect Parish Councillors to Ashingdon, Barling Magna, Canewdon, Foulness Island, Great Wakering, Hawkwell, Paglesham, Stambridge and Sutton Parish Councils, if contested.

Look out for polling cards which will be hand delivered to you from the end of March/early April providing full details, including the location of your local polling station.

Candidates

The details of the candidates standing for each of the district wards will be published on our website as soon as possible after nominations close on Tuesday 4th April 2023 and can be found at www.rochford.gov.uk/elections

Important dates

The deadline to register to vote for the May 2023 elections is:
Monday 17th April

The deadline to apply for a postal vote is 5pm on:
Tuesday 18th April

The deadline to apply for a proxy vote (whereby somebody can vote on your behalf) is 5pm on:
Tuesday 25th April

The deadline for receipt of Emergency proxy is 5pm on:
Thursday 4th May

Please register to vote

To have your say, you need to be registered on the electoral register. You can now register online, please visit: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote and note that the deadline to register is **Monday 17th April 2023**

Voting by Post



Voting by post is an easy and convenient way of voting.

Anyone who is registered can apply for a postal vote. You do not need a reason to vote by post.

Get your postal vote application in as soon as possible. The Returning Officer must receive your application by 5pm on Tuesday 18th April. To apply to vote by post you need to download a postal vote application form or call **01702 318187** to get a copy sent to you. For more information visit www.rochford.gov.uk/elections



Register to vote in paper form

It's simple to vote in the upcoming elections. You can either register online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote, email elections@rochford.gov.uk or request a paper copy from the council's elections team on 01702 318187 and **send it back to us by Monday 17th April 2023.**



YOUR VOTE MATTERS

DON'T LOSE IT

An online version of this newspaper is available at www.rochford.gov.uk/rdm

Taking on the #OneTeam Challenge

Since early 2022, I have been Chief Executive of both Rochford District Council and Brentwood Borough Council.

Following the retirement of Rochford's previous Chief Executive, Cllr Simon Wootton, Leader of Rochford and Cllr Chris Hossack, Leader of Brentwood, decided to form a unique partnership that would develop a strategic alliance between their councils.

These are two councils and two areas of Essex that have their own distinct voice and character. However, they also share many of the same qualities and the same values, and that is what we have tried to build on.

Both councils are members of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) which works to improve prosperity and wellbeing in our region by closer cooperation, so that spirit of partnership was already there.

As Chief Executive, one of my key objectives is ensuring that we are providing the best possible value for money in terms of serving our communities. At a time when money is tight, how can we ensure that we are focusing our budgets on delivering the services and support that residents need and deserve.



Part of this partnership initiative is about sharing operational service delivery. In our 'back office' operations we have two teams often undertaking similar tasks. By reviewing these services, we can improve the quality of output and seek to make savings which can then be invested into frontline services.

Crucially we are doing this while retaining each council's independence and the sovereignty of local decision-making, and maintaining our individual identity for residents.

However, this partnership is not simply about financial savings and sustainability. It has to be driven by long-term strategic vision and purpose. It has to make us both better, stronger and raise our profile in a way that we could not do alone. It will also make us more attractive for inward investment helping both areas to thrive.

This has been an amazing and deeply rewarding challenge. As we move forward with our #OneTeam approach we believe we are creating a strong alliance which will benefit residents in both districts and make greater use of the talents and creativity of our staff.

Jonathan Stephenson
Chief Executive

What does #OneTeam mean for my services?

Q: What is the council doing?

A: Since 2022 Rochford District Council and Brentwood Borough Council have had a joint Chief Executive in Jonathan Stephenson. This was the first step in a strategic plan for closer cooperation between the two councils, to create a dynamic partnership which boosts both councils and their services to their communities.

Q: Why are you doing this?

A: There are obvious savings on operational costs to be made by unifying some of our 'back office' operations. This will free up money in the annual budget of each council which can then be used to improve and enhance the local services we provide directly to our residents.

But there are other benefits as well. By working in unison, the two councils can have a stronger voice in the county and make long term strategic decisions on how best to improve our individual districts and make the lives of our residents better and support our local businesses.



Q: Does this mean power is moving from Rochford to Brentwood?

A: Absolutely not. Each council will still have its individual governance arrangements made up of democratically elected councillors who will continue to steer the direction of their council and work in what they believe are the best interests of their constituents.

Q: Does this mean the name of the district is changing?

A: No. Each council retains its independence and the sovereignty of local decision-making, and we maintain our individual identity for our residents. We know many of you are proud to live in Rochford and that will not change.

TWO COUNCILS ONE TEAM



Reaching the Peaks

Last year teams from Rochford District Council and Brentwood Borough Council united to take on the daunting Three Peaks Challenge in Yorkshire and raised money for local charities.

The Yorkshire Three Peaks route is 38.6km (24 miles) and includes 1585m (5200ft) of ascent. The challenge means taking on the peaks of Pen-y-ghent, Whernside and Ingleborough in under 12 hours.

The group managed to raise more than £11,000 which will be split between charities in both areas, including those supported by the Chairman at Rochford; Trust Links and Achievement Through Football.



The challenge was an incredibly difficult hike but well worth it. It was a great way to meet the team at Brentwood and to see everyone work together and support each other throughout - it had that real 'one team' feel to it!"

Jess Peck, Community Engagement Officer, Rochford



An online version of this newspaper is available at www.rochford.gov.uk/rdm

10 The Chairman's year

Message from the Chairman



The defining memories of my year as Chairman for Rochford District Council are related to Her Majesty The Queen.

I had the great honour of lighting the Rochford District Beacon in June, as part of the national celebrations marking Her Majesty The Queen's 70th Year as Monarch.

It was wonderful to play a small role in marking this historic achievement. It was also a delight to see so many of our residents, entire streets and local communities around the district come together to hold their own celebrations of The Queen's long reign.

I was immensely proud to represent our district in the national mourning for Queen Elizabeth II. For many of us, Her Majesty was a constant and much loved presence in our lives.

One of the joys of being Chairman is the opportunity to raise funds for charities working hard for our communities.

This past year, I have been delighted to support Trust Links, a local independent charity for mental health, wellbeing and the environment, and Achievement Through Football, which works with communities at risk of exclusion, helping develop safe environments that increase opportunity, aspiration and achievement.

I chose these charities because they are a great source of help to young people.

A special thank you to the teams of staff from Rochford District Council, and Brentwood Borough Council, who took on the tough Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge to raise money for charities, including Trust Links and Achievement Through Football.

Cllr Mike Steptoe, Chairman,
Rochford District Council



An online version of this newspaper is available at www.rochford.gov.uk/rdm

DID YOU KNOW?

The Council does more than just empty your bins. Our staff are working every day to help and support residents, businesses and make our district better.

Here is just a snippet of what we've been doing over this past year:

From Street parties to firework events to carollers, we've dealt with

96

temporary event notices submitted



We awarded approximately

£7.2 million

in various Business Rates reliefs to local businesses



More than

1,800 attendees

took part in our weekly wellbeing walks



92

weddings were celebrated at our amazing venues



Our Customer Services team have dealt with

99,200 phone calls

9,303 live chats and

43,297 email requests from our residents



Our new Council Tax support scheme now only takes

3 days for approval,

helping residents get the support they need quicker.



We've logged

1,027

environmental protection requests to date



112

New affordable rental units

were built and occupied in the last 12 months



118

Households were helped from being homeless since 1st April 2022



#ByYourSide



We are committed to helping you, your family and community as the cost of living increases. Visit our website for information, advice and support from us and our service providers.

Visit our website:
[Rochford.gov.uk/cost-of-living](https://www.rochford.gov.uk/cost-of-living)



It cost 29p per household to prepare, print and send you this magazine. It is made with recyclable paper, so please put in your recycling bin after reading. We have used local printers.

An online version of this newspaper is available at www.rochford.gov.uk/rdm



BOOK NOW

to have your event or special occasion
at The Mill Arts & Events Centre

Available for hire:

Main Hall:

Suitable for large events, craft fayres, birthday parties, wedding receptions, dance competitions, stage for various performances and shows

Bar Lounge:

Medium sized hall, suitable for birthday parties, wedding receptions, exercise classes, presentations

Meeting Room:

Small room for meetings, clubs, presentations

Weekly and monthly bookings at The Mill include:

- Exercise classes for all ages
 - weight management
 - dance classes
 - craft fayres
- U3A meetings.

For more details and a list of regular and upcoming events, see:

www.rochford.gov.uk/themill

For more information:

01702 963328

leisure@rochford.gov.uk

www.rochford.gov.uk/themill

Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 7ED

 **Rochford**
District Council