

## Accessible version of the Annual Review

1. Rochford Business Plan 2020 to 2023. Working to help you shape your future. 2021-2022 Annual Review.
2. Welcome from Councillor Simon Wootton, Leader of the Council. I'm delighted to present Rochford District Council's 2021-2022 Annual Review of performance across the Council with details of key interventions that support the Council's Business Plan 2020-2023 outcomes. As we emerge after two years of the COVID-19 pandemic it feels right to reflect on how the Council has performed in those extreme circumstances and to consider how we might continue to improve and support communities as we move forward through recovery towards a healthier sustainable future. I am committed to ensure that the Council continues to deliver high quality services and continues its journey to becoming a 21st century organisation supporting residents, communities and businesses to thrive. Going forward, this is a council with vision, ambition and real opportunity. We encourage residents and businesses to take part in consultations by Rochford District Council and Essex County Council which can be found at Rochford District Council: [www.rochford.gov.uk/Consultations](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/Consultations) and Essex County Council: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/> You can also sign up to the Rochford District Council Tell Me More service to keep informed of latest District News: [www.rochford.gov.uk/TellMeMore](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/TellMeMore)
3. Our Key Priorities are
  - a) Financially sustainable. We are continuing our transformation into a modern, accessible and financially sustainable council
  - b) Early intervention. We are working with partners through early intervention; we are facilitating safe, healthy and active communities
  - c) Maximise our Assets. We are playing our part to develop a thriving economy, enhancing skills and employment opportunities and maximising use of the Council's own assets
  - d) Enable Communities. We are working with communities to protect, enhance and promote our district
4. Rochford District is home to around 87,000 people living in 36,00 homes.
5. The district has a strong entrepreneurial spirit with one of the best survival rates in the county for small business start ups. This small-business culture and rural/urban mix makes us a resilient and attractive place to do business
6. Our cultural sights and relative greenness make us an attractive place to live
7. Over 15% of the district's land area is covered by biodiversity designations, including around 12,000 hectares of in-land and marine habitats that are internationally important for birds

8. It has a rich and diverse history with settlements dating back to the pre-medieval period, and is home to over 300 listed buildings and ten conservation areas
9. Our proximity to London and the Lower Thames Crossing, and our key ports at London Southend Airport and Baltic Wharf makes us an economically competitive area attractive to inward investment
10. Over 70% of our land area is protected under the Metropolitan Green Belt
11. The district is one of the least deprived areas of the UK, with life expectancy and standards of health better than regional and national averages
12. What we do. 50,000 website visits per year. 2,540 litter bins emptied per week. 410 fly tips cleared per year. Process 766 taxi, premise and other licence applications per year. 3.8M kerbside waste and recycling collections made each year. 1,000,000 square metres of grass cut. 6,000 stage inspection visits conducted by Building Control each year. 97 housing hazards were removed from private sector dwellings. 1,936 parking charge notices issued in our car parks per year. 796 planning applications per year. 168 food businesses inspected annually. 69,335 telephone calls to Customer Services.
13. Transforming into a modern accessible & sustainable council.
  - a) Our Key Priorities. To deliver a balanced budget. To invest in the future of the district to stimulate growth and prosperity as well as attracting investors and visitors. To support local businesses and organisations to thrive.
  - b) Our Key Objectives. Providing best value for money for residents by delivering the services that matter most and prioritising our limited resources. Regenerating and investing in more efficient sites for the delivery of council, community, and leisure services. Making use of changing technology to become more efficient and ensure residents can contact us more easily and access more services on-line.
  - c) Key Objectives Achieved 2021/22. Delivery of a balanced budget for 2021/22 and a Medium Term Financial Strategy which sets out the financial outlook for future years. Progression of the Asset Delivery Programme, a long-term regeneration programme that will boost the local economy and deliver enhancements in community facilities. Following the We are Back website and the packs to local businesses the previous year using Reopening High Streets Safely (RHSS) funding. The Welcome Back funding has been used for numerous initiatives, including a deep clean of the three town centres, professional photography of these centres, on-going monitoring of footfall and the creation of a business directory. Delivery of the Council's digital transformation programme to enable more efficient processes, greater use of digital technology and new ways of working improving the customer experience. The Council's 2020/21 accounts were signed off by our external auditors with no matters to report

- d) Other achievements. We received 69,335 telephone calls into Customer Services and spoke to 10,490 people via live chat. Residents budget consultation undertaken with 506 responses. Over £3million in Business Restart Grants. Over the pandemic period we distributed more than £35m of Government COVID-19 grants to businesses in the district. Additionally, as 31<sup>st</sup> March we have awarded further £3.8m in COVID-19 related relief's to qualifying business rate payers. 68,000 visits to the Council's website. Increased sign up to the Tell Me More Business Bulletin from previous year to now over 2,600 subscribers. Now engaging with over two thirds of our business community on a weekly basis.

14. Facilitating safe, healthy and active communities.

- a) Our Key Priorities. We will focus on early intervention and protection for the most vulnerable. We will support and invest in community level work which enables everyone to lead healthy, safe and fulfilling lives. We will work with partner organisations to tackle inequalities and enable more improvements in well-being to be delivered by communities.
- b) Our Key Objectives. Continue to work with partners and communities to ensure our most vulnerable residents have felt supported to live well. Work together with communities and partners to prevent homelessness. Increase the standard and availability of affordable housing within the district. Increase the number of residents actively participating in healthier lifestyles.
- c) Key objectives achieved 2021/22. £10,000 of grants have been awarded to voluntary groups working across the district to enable them to deliver initiatives that support the priorities within the joint Rochford & Castle Point Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Housing Options service supported 4,365 households to meet their housing needs ranging from advice to emergency accommodation. Direct private housing interventions have supported households to live in safer and healthier homes. In total 136 housing hazards were removed, which resulted in an estimated £785,000 savings to the NHS and wider society. Between April 2021 and March 2022, 1,914 attendees took part in 92 Health Walks, organised in partnership with Walking for Health and The Ramblers. Launched the Castle Point and Rochford Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-25 | Rochford District Council
- d) Other achievements. At the end of March 2022, we paid £123,051 to applicants who meet the criteria for extra assistance with their rent. At the end of March 2022, we made 20 awards of exceptional Hardship totalling £8,171. Paid out £601,50 in Test and Trace Support payments. Supported 57 residence to be able to live more independently at home. Between April and March 2022, over 140 new affordable housing units were delivered on strategic sites across the District.

15. Thriving economy, skills and employment opportunities.

- a) Our Key Priorities. We will maintain, protect and enhance our many green parks, playgrounds and open spaces; creating greater opportunities for leisure and cultural enjoyment. We will be more environmentally conscious and strive to eliminate our carbon footprint. We will work with other councils across South Essex and Central Government to promote the district and create inward investment which will shape our landscape for the future.
  - b) Our Key Objectives. Work with neighbouring councils and Government to protect the district's built and natural environment, supporting both the local and regional economy. Increase opportunities for residents to enjoy culture and leisure and create a strengthened visitor and business economy across the district. Protect the district for future generations by recycling and green policies aimed at achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. Invest in our green spaces and community facilities to support our growing population's health and well-being.
  - c) Key Objectives Achieved 2021/22. The Council's Local Plan has progressed over the year with a key stage of public consultation (the Spatial Options) held in the Summer of 2021. Technical work has advanced including housing, environment and the economy. 50 hectares of wild-flower meadow were managed, cut for hay and more than 300 s/m of woodland rides were cut and managed for the nationally rare butterfly, the Heath Fritillary. We also incepted our new Parks for Nature initiative which will plant trees and other vegetation to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and maintain meadows and plantations for habitats and wildlife. 410 Fly Tips were removed. We issued 15 warning letters, 6 Fixed Penalty Notices for Fly Tips, and 9 Fixed Penalty Notices for Littering. 1 prosecution for Fly Tipping. Fusion Lifestyle reopened both Clements Hall Leisure Centre and Rayleigh Leisure Centre in a COVID-19 secure phased approach with participation totalling 331,920 between April 2021 and March 2022.
  - d) Other achievements. Path to Prosperity Funding – used to commission 'Go Jauntly' a walking app for the Rochford Town circular route inc. the coastal path around Stambridge and a 'Beagle Trail' on Wallasea Island. As part of the River Crouch CCT work, Path to Prosperity funding was used to produce digital assets to promote water safety in the River Crouch during the summer of 2021. Using Path to Prosperity Funding and working in partnership with Maldon and Chelmsford, a River Crouch promotional video s due to be launched in 2022 and a River Roach video has also been produced. Achieved 50% match funding to invest £162,000 for investment in new play facilities and recreation grounds. Held 83 weddings between April 2021 and March 2022 at the Old House, Rochford. Rayleigh Windmill retained its Visit England Quality Assured Visitor Attraction accreditation. Launch of virtual tour of the Rayleigh Windmill [www.rochford.gov.uk/windmill](http://www.rochford.gov.uk/windmill). Over 2 million bins collected.
16. Protecting, enhancing and promoting our district
- a) Our Key Priorities. We will support residents, local businesses and organisations to create a district full of great life opportunities and choices,

business growth and economic security. We will work with partners to build community resilience and public safety. We will engage with communities to meet our priorities and shape the future of the district. We will inspire our communities to make a difference.

- b) Our Key Objectives. Working with the voluntary, community and faith sectors to build capacity for meeting the needs of residents. Working together to make a difference to live better, safer, healthier lives. Working closely with residents, communities, and the police to maintain low crime levels and to improve residents' perception of safety. Working with businesses and communities to develop plans to achieve and invest in strong, sustainable town centres and high streets. Reducing social isolation through strengthening connections within communities.
- c) Key Objectives Achieved 2021/22. Supported both Citizens Advice South Essex and Rayleigh, Rochford, and District Association for Voluntary Service (RRAVS) with annual funding of £70,000 and £15,000, respectively. Launched the [Castle Point & Rochford Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-25 | Rochford District Council](#) as part of the joint Rochford and Castle Point Health and Wellbeing Board. We partnered with Click It Local to develop a virtual high street where local retailers and home businesses can sell their products directly to customers across Essex and beyond. There were 591 Orders by residents to local Rochford stores which was £25,741 in Total Revenue for local businesses. 10.7% conversion rate on [www.clickitlocal.co.uk/rochford](http://www.clickitlocal.co.uk/rochford). We received funding from the Getting Building Fund (GBF) to finance a 'No Use Empty' scheme, which is a partnership approach returning empty properties back into use for residential and commercial use. The scheme launched May 2022 and is currently being promoted across the district.
- d) Other achievements. From April to March 2022 we processed a total 796 household or minor planning applications. Distribution of over £3.1m in funding to businesses from the Additional Restrictions Grant. 539 licensed businesses have been supported to get 'safely' back to work. 8 licensing hearings were heard by the Council's Licensing Committee. 168 high risk food businesses have been made safer, by inspections, advice and enforcement.