



Our Vision: Working to achieve the best outcomes for Rochford District, its residents and businesses

Our Rochford Our Plan

2024 – 28



Foreword - Cllr J Newport

I am pleased to present Rochford District Council's New Corporate Plan 2024 - 28. It sets out the long-term vision and direction for the District of Rochford and encourages and challenges us to think and operate differently to deliver the very best for our residents now and in the future.



Rochford is a unique place with its historic towns, parishes and villages, wonderful countryside and coastline, as well as having London's fourth airport. There are few local authorities that can boast such an array of opportunities that should make growing up, living, working, or moving to the District a wonderful experience. Our new Plan will help us ensure this remains the case by focusing on those things that matter most to our residents. We will seek to preserve the natural beauty of our District, promote and protect tourism and wildlife sites, enhance leisure opportunities and ensure everyone can soak up our local history from the Windmill at Rayleigh, our Dutch Cottage and the wreck of The Beagle in the estuary, to name but a few places. At the same time, we will use our influence to ensure our local economy is robust and grows in a sustainable way that benefits everyone.

Our Corporate Plan recognises that our primary role is to provide effective and efficient local government services across the District, but increasingly local authorities play a much broader role in shaping the place and, in doing this, our plan is shaped around three themes:

Communities and Homes - 'Thriving and resilient communities that feel safe, supported and engaged'

We want Rochford District to continue to be a place people call home. We are residents ourselves and we believe you, as our neighbours and stakeholders, deserve to live in a place that feels safe, a place that supports communities, where residents feel able to support one another and where future generations can find a home to meet their needs.

Places and Spaces - 'A diverse and sustainable environment that enables everyone to live life to the full'

We want to maintain our natural parks and spaces such as Cherry Orchard, Sweyne Park, Hockley Woods and Wallasea Island that are an asset to our District. Open spaces offer both a unique day out for visitors and places to enjoy leisure and free time. We want to ensure our places and spaces are maintained to maximise the benefits our natural environment can offer, supporting our residents to continue to enjoy healthy and active living and all its benefits.

Economy and Prosperity - 'An inclusive economy that delivers inward investment to support the growth of businesses, jobs and tourism'

We want to lead the way to a more sustainable future for our District and future generations and this is reflected in our commitment to achieving net zero carbon by 2030 and our pledge to improve the Council's Climate Action Scorecard score. Much effort is needed by everyone, but we are willing and committed to rise to the challenge and will support others to rise to the challenge alongside us.

Our Plan will also provide a focus on creating conditions for our local economy to prosper and for residents to benefit from its success. Encouraging visitors and business to our area strengthens our local job market and encourages investment here, whilst heightening the popularity of Rochford as a destination to visit.

To be successful in delivering this Corporate Plan, the Council must have a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management and be an organisation that residents and businesses can trust. To ensure this we have recognised specifically in this Corporate Plan the need to ensure we focus on being a forward thinking and well managed authority, providing strong assurance and accountability to our residents.

These days standing still is not an option, funding continues to reduce and, as a result, we need to make tough choices and decisions. To help us on our journey, we will invite the Local Government Association to undertake a Peer Challenge this year to review all parts of our organisation, working alongside us to identify further opportunities to improve or do things differently.

Lastly, I would like to finish by adding that we want to strengthen our relationship with the communities we serve and better engage residents, ensuring the voice of all our residents are heard by us and others on matters that make the biggest difference to residents' lives. As such it is important that all organisations across the District effectively work together to improve the lives of the residents we all serve. I am particularly keen to work collaboratively with our town and parish Councils that are such a fundamental part of life in our District, as well as other partners, to continue to improve and enhance our services.

Councillor James Newport
Leader of Rochford District Council





This is reflected in our ambition to be a forward thinking and well managed authority.



A strong commitment to good governance and robust financial management.

How we ensure our Corporate Plan makes a difference



Our Plan is the principal corporate strategy of Rochford District Council. It sets out how we will play our part as a Council in shaping the District, alongside our residents, businesses and partners. It looks ahead, charting a course that is best able to deliver our three strategic themes. Each

theme is supported by a number of priorities which are of importance to our District, both as a place and for our communities who live, work and do business here.

Underpinning our plan is a strong commitment to good governance and robust financial management. This is reflected in our ambition to be a **forward thinking and well managed authority**. This is something all Council staff embrace on a daily basis and reflect in their work to deliver good quality services to residents and businesses across the District. It means working together as a whole Council to develop our services, as well as doing those things that put Rochford District Council on a sound financial footing and support the organisation to operate efficiently and effectively for the people of Rochford.

Councillors have identified and agreed key activities that will commence in 2024/25. We will monitor progress on these activities to ensure their delivery. Each year we will update our Corporate Plan, so that new actions take the place of those that have been delivered. This will ensure that the outcomes we seek to achieve become a reality for the District. Every year we will update you on our progress by producing an Annual Report, allowing you to hold the Council to account for its performance and contributing to us being an effective and trusted organisation.

In parallel to this, we will align the annual refresh of the Corporate Plan with our budget setting process. This will ensure that the yearly allocation of financial resources within the Council's budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy and our ambitions as set out in the Corporate Plan accord and remain aligned.

The Corporate Plan will also inform other key policies and strategies of the Council and our partners, ensuring the collective pursuit of the goals we have set.

Jonathan Stephenson
Chief Executive
Rochford District Council

Our District

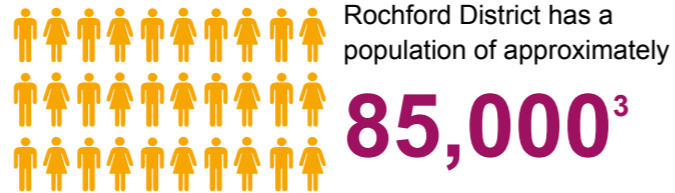
- A landscape rich in biodiversity, heritage and natural beauty
- Three main towns of Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley and surrounding smaller villages
- Home to London Southend Airport and Airport Business Park
- Good transport links to commute out to London, Southend and neighbouring large towns
- 79% of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live – 3rd highest level of satisfaction out of 12 Essex authorities¹
- 72% of residents are proud to live in Rochford District, above the Essex average of 62%²

District

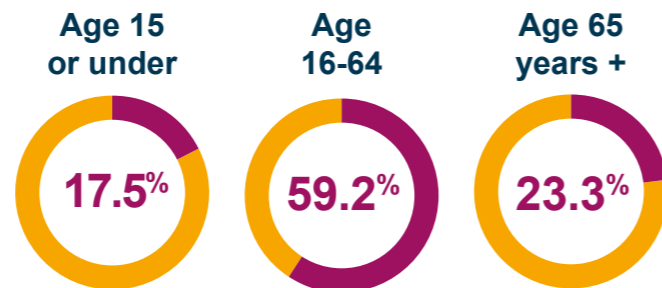
Our District covers an area of approximately 67 square miles (just under 17,000 hectares)



Population



Age



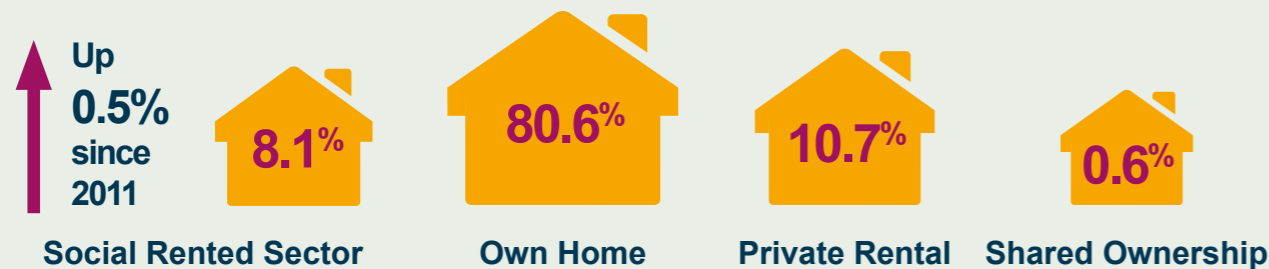
Between 2011 and 2021, the local population increased by 2.8%, which was lower than the overall increase for East of England (8.3%).

This means the population is growing at a slower pace than many other areas in the East of England.

The population density of Rochford is 513 residents per square kilometer.

As of 2021, Rochford is the 22nd most densely populated of the East of England's 45 local authority areas.

Households



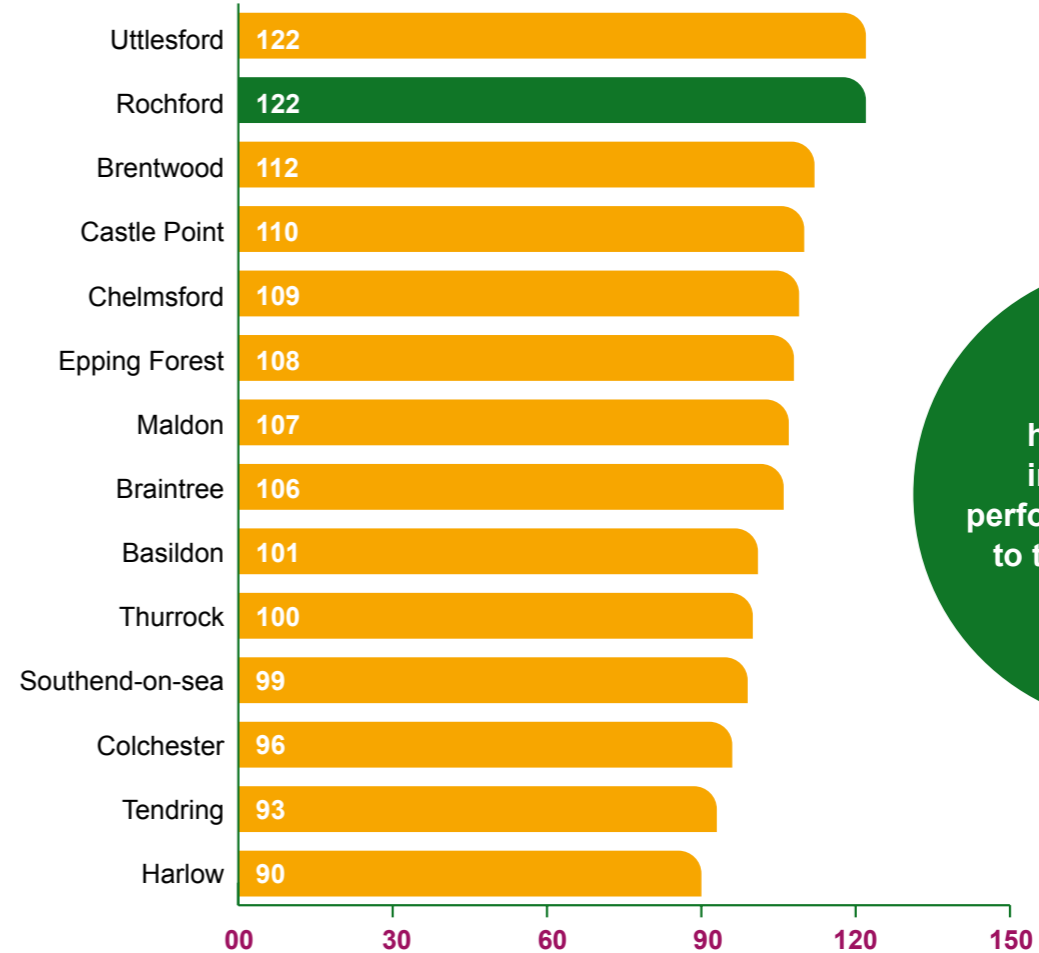
¹Essex Tracker Survey, 2023

²Essex Tracker Survey, 2023

³Census 2021

Health

The Health Index⁴ is a national measure of health in England. It provides a broad picture of health, including health outcomes, health-related behaviours and personal circumstances and wider drivers of health that relate to the places where people live.



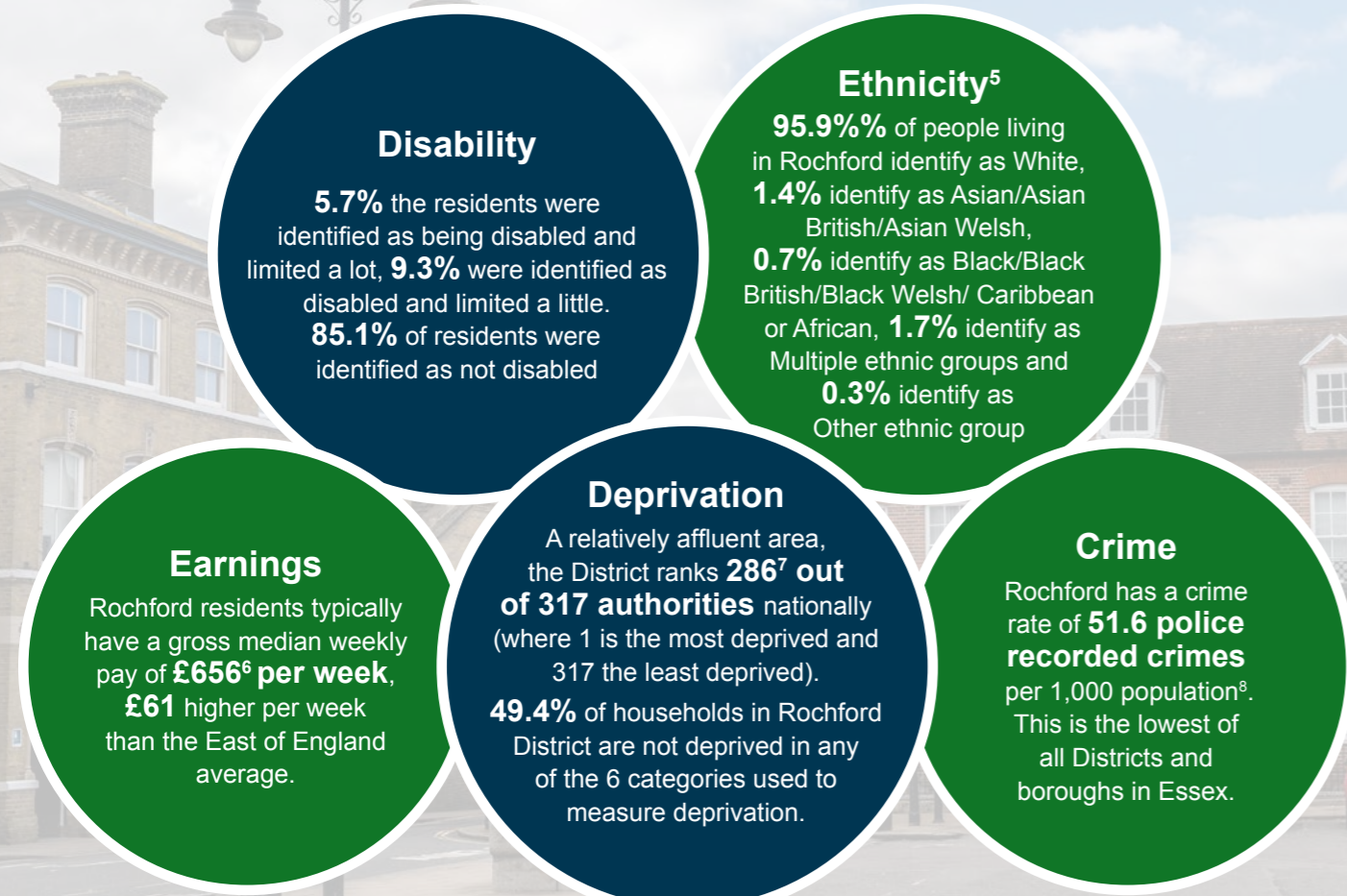
A score higher than 100 indicates better performance compared to the England 2015 position

County standings



⁴Health Index Dashboard | Essex Open Data ONS 2021

Our Residents



Your Council

As a local authority our primary role is the delivery of good quality local government services in the District and the majority of our resources are used to achieve this.

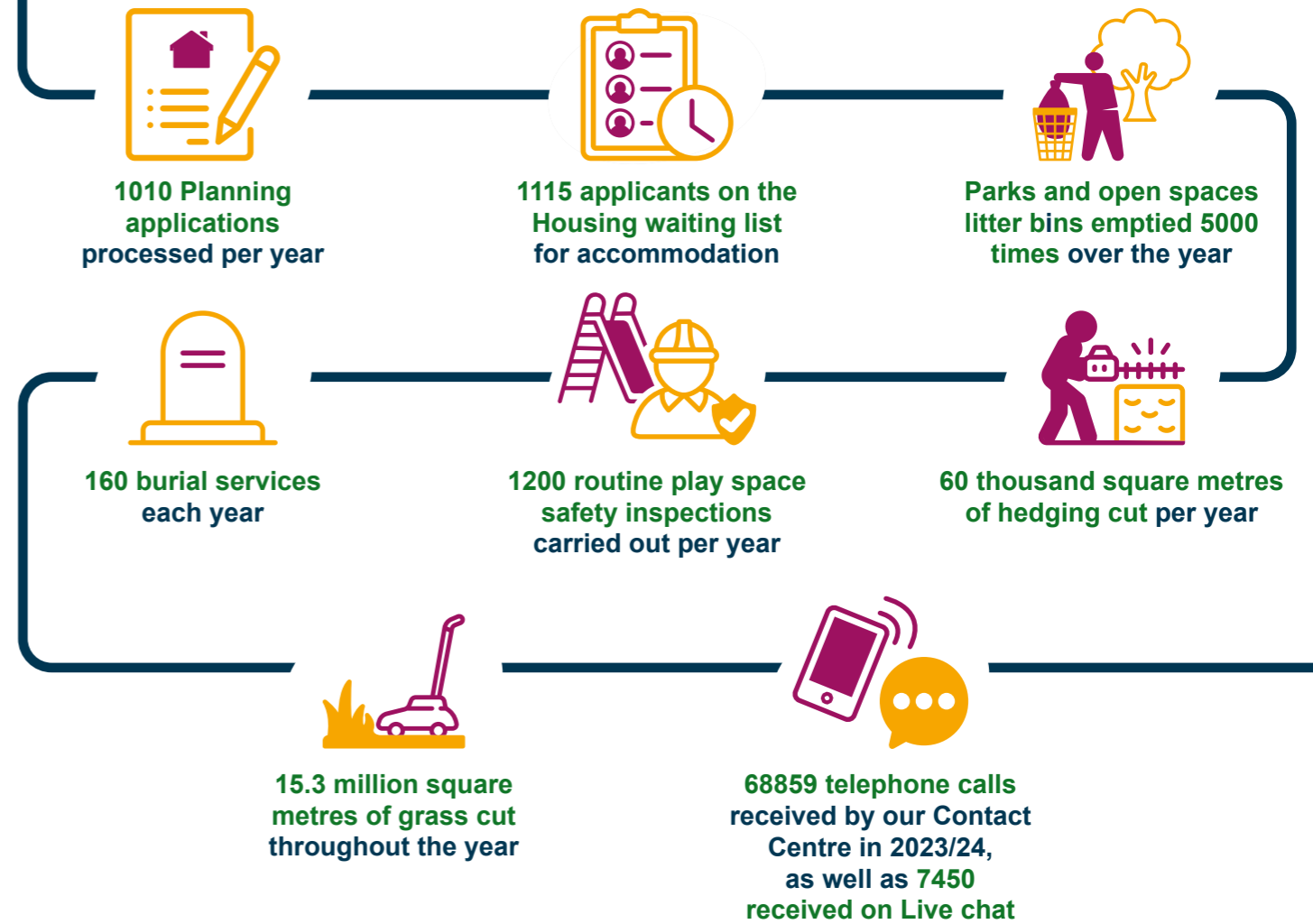
- One of 12 District Councils in Essex providing services in a two-tier structure, alongside Essex County Council
- There are 39 Members of the Council, who represent 13 Wards
- There are 14 town and parish Councils serving local communities

The services we provide include:

- Community Services
- Community Safety
- Housing Services
- Planning Services
- Building Control
- Economic Development
- Leisure and Tourism
- Waste and Recycling Collection
- Electoral Services
- Council Tax and Business Rates collection
- Benefits
- Off Street Parking

⁵Ethnic group - Census Maps, ONS
⁶Local indicators for Rochford (E07000075) - ONS (2023)
⁷IMD 2019
⁸December 2023. Compare your area | Police.uk (www.police.uk)

What this looks like:



On average, each household will pay £2,175.37 in Council Tax in 2024/2025.

Only a fraction of that - £260 for an average band D property – is paid to Rochford District Council to help fund the services it provides to local people and businesses.

Essex County Council delivers a number of other services for the whole county, including Rochford District. These include:

- Children services and education
- Adult social care
- Libraries
- Highways

In 2024/25, Essex County Council will receive £1296.09 from Council Tax to fund the services it provides to the County as well as £226.44 from the Social Care levy.

Our Partnerships

We work in partnership alongside our partners when we share a common goal and where it is mutually beneficial to do so. Rochford has the following partnership arrangements in place with other Councils:

- **South Essex Councils (SEC)**
Oversees sub-regional growth and infrastructure development affecting Rochford and partners across south Essex.
- **One Team**
Our strategic partnership with Brentwood Borough Council that supports both Councils to share resources and achieve more together than would be possible by acting alone.
- **South Essex Parking Partnership**
Managing on-street parking restrictions throughout south Essex.
- **South Essex Housing Group**
A group comprising housing professionals across Essex used to share best practice and collaborate on schemes such as rough sleeping.
- **Essex Countywide Traveller Unit**
Allowing partner authorities to address the issue of unauthorised encampments in a consistent manner across Essex.



Alongside, these formal partnerships we work closely with a range of other partners in the District including other public service providers, town and parish Councils and the voluntary and community sector.



Governance and Financial Management

To deliver this Corporate Plan, the Council must have a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management. Our commitment to this is specifically expressed in the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance and the key principles set out therein and as defined by CIPFA and SOLACE.

We will review the effectiveness of our governance arrangements and report on our performance and areas for improvement in the Annual Governance Statement, which is published each year as part of the annual Statement of Accounts.

We will monitor and report on progress against the Corporate Plan throughout the year and our management of associated risks. We will publish an Annual Report which will provide an opportunity for our residents to hold us to account for our performance. It sets out the progress we have made in the delivery of our Corporate Plan and our performance in the delivery of our services.

Each year the Council reviews its financial strategy to ensure resources follow our agreed priorities. As part of this process, the Council considers:

- How it can work differently to achieve efficiencies necessary to maintain services
- Opportunities to generate income streams to support the Council's ambitions for the District
- Service design and delivery options to best meet the needs of the community
- How to utilise the Council's asset portfolio both efficiently and effectively

Our approach is set out in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy, which is approved each year as part of the budget setting process.

Strategic Theme

Communities and Homes

Thriving and resilient communities that feel safe, supported and engaged.

We are committed to:

Developing innovative solutions in relation to our housing need

- Review the Housing Allocations Policy to ensure it remains fair, transparent and meeting the needs of our residents
- Undertake a review of temporary accommodation, affordable and social housing provision in the District outlining options to increase provision

Enabling local communities to shape their future

- Develop the Council's approach to consultation and engagement
- Enhance effective and meaningful relationships with the town and parish Councils in the District to ensure we are working collaboratively to improve services to residents
- Continue to develop our relationship with the Youth Council to ensure the voices of our young people are heard

Working in partnership to create safe and healthy lives

- Deliver a programme of initiatives that support the District to be a safe and thriving location for both residents and visitors to enjoy, whether visiting during the day or at night
- Working with Partners, develop a new approach to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP)
- Undertake promotional campaigns throughout the year, to raise awareness and engage with residents on key issues relevant to the health and wellbeing of the community
- Deliver a review of Community Grants (CAB/ RRAVS) to understand impact and outcomes for local people
- Secure a Leisure provider to manage and enhance the District's Council owned Leisure facilities

Strategic Theme

Places and Spaces

A diverse and sustainable environment that enables everyone to live life to the full.

We are committed to:

Working alongside communities & businesses to help make the District net zero by 2030

- Ensure the Council improves its Council Climate Action Scorecard score and progresses further towards achieving the target of net zero carbon by 2030 by:
 - Exploring options for the introduction of PV on all Council assets
 - Continuing our insulation programme to reduce the loss of heat from Council buildings
 - Using Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund, complete Clements Hall Net Zero Improvements to boost energy efficiency
 - Develop a No-Peat policy
- Explore options to secure funding to adopt a revised food waste policy and waste collection policy to enhance sustainability, support the circular economy and drive improvement in waste reduction and recycling
- Develop a programme of activity to ensure the Council Fleet achieves net zero carbon by 2030
- Seek to influence the expansion of the EV charging network across the District and develop an EV Charging Strategy to support the move to more sustainable transport options

Enhancing and protecting our open spaces

- Undertake a programme of work to inform future development of an Open Spaces Strategy and Play Areas Strategy and invest to make improvements to these facilities
- Review the process of reporting, collecting and reducing fly tipping so that we can keep the District clean and tidy

Create the infrastructure needed to maximise the benefits of our natural environment

- Explore opportunities to enhance visitor amenities at Cherry Orchard Country Park
- Enhance youth provision in the District by delivering a skate park at Clements Hall
- Explore opportunities to improve accessibility at Hockley Woods for all visitors





Strategic Theme Economy and Prosperity

An inclusive economy that delivers inward investment to support the growth of businesses, jobs and tourism.

We are committed to:

Creating conditions to support local economic prosperity and enabling businesses in the District to thrive

- Developing and delivering a refreshed Economic Development strategy to enable sustainable and inclusive growth that optimises opportunities for local people and provides a framework for delivering a successful future for Rochford's economy
- Supporting our town centre businesses to work together and consider the introduction of a Business Improvement District (BID)
- Utilising the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) and monitor to ensure outcomes are delivered for local communities

Putting Rochford on the map as a sustainable destination to live, invest in and visit

- Developing a Cultural and Visitor Economy strategy to set the direction to maximise the benefits for local businesses, local communities and visitors alike

Planning for the future needs of our communities

- Delivering a new Local Plan for Rochford District to meet future development needs in a planned and managed way reflecting the housing, employment and infrastructure needs of the area whilst ensuring the historic and natural environment is conserved and enhanced

Using our assets to maximise the benefits to the community

- Developing a refreshed Asset Management strategy and Framework that will guide and underpin our decisions on how to make best use of our assets and ensure they work to the benefit of the District
- Undertaking a programme of work to ensure delivery of a future permanent headquarters for Rochford District Council thereby ensuring a continued civic presence in our District
- Undertaking a consultation on Mill Hall Arts & Events Centre to inform the development of a sustainable operating model for the centre, fit for now and the future
- Exploring and progressing options for the future of the former South Street Council Office

A forward thinking and well managed authority

Alongside delivery of local services and our strategic ambitions, it is important that we are a trusted, forward thinking and well managed authority.

We are committed to:

Good Governance

Operating in accordance with the 7 principles of good governance, set out in the CIPFA SOLACE 2016 Framework and in the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefit
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
- Developing the entity's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
- Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

Fit for the Future

Developing the organisation so that it is best placed to respond to challenges and opportunities that may arise in the future

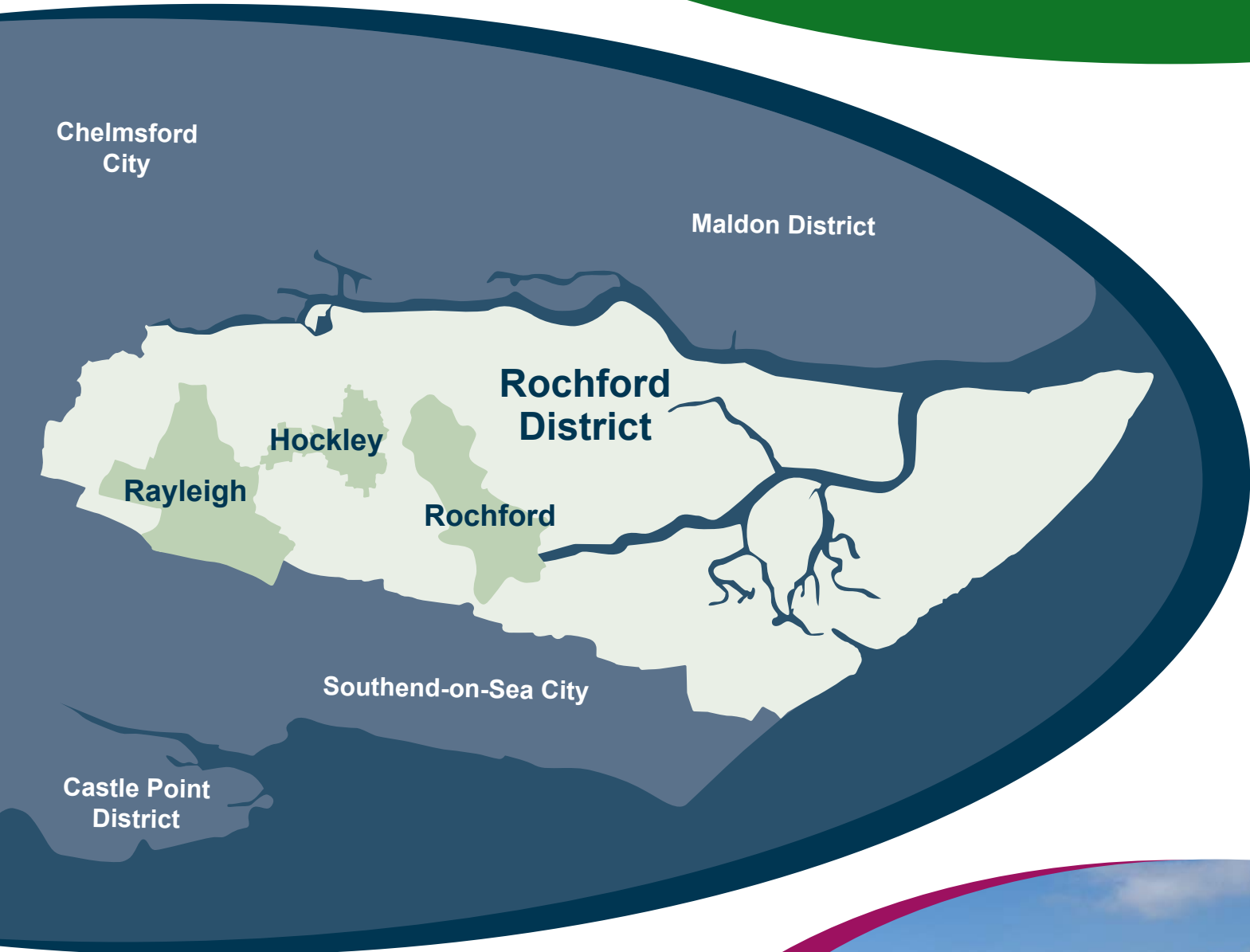
This means:

- Continuing to develop the capability and capacity of our workforce so that they are appropriately skilled and supported to deliver the Council's priorities, now and in the future
- Transforming our services so that they continue to meet the needs of our residents, service users and businesses
- Creating a work environment and culture that reflects our core values and can withstand uncertainty and change

Key Deliverables:

- Develop a refreshed Corporate Plan to be subject to an annual review
- Effective implementation of the new Committee System form of governance
- Undertake a Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review in 2024/25
- Deliver a balanced budget
- Implement the key actions in the Annual Governance Statement to ensure the Council has effective governance arrangements
- Deliver a fees and charges review and produce a strategy





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