



Rochford District **Economic Growth Strategy**

2025 – 28

Foreword - Cllr Daniel Efde

We are pleased to introduce the updated Economic Growth Strategy for Rochford District. Back in 2022 we set out a clear ambition to grow our local economy by supporting businesses, attracting investment and promoting entrepreneurship through enhanced skills and opportunities for our residents.



Much has been achieved since then. This includes the ongoing development of the airport business park, the continuation of the Career Options Employer Showcase in our schools and the delivery of over £1 million in UKSPF funding. This funding has enabled a broad range of projects including direct grants to businesses, expanded training and mentoring opportunities and cultural events that have brought more people to our high streets.

As the national economic landscape continues to shift, we must remain responsive and forward-thinking. This new strategy builds on our progress and ensures that Rochford remains a place where businesses can succeed and residents can access meaningful, high-quality employment. It complements our newly adopted 2024-28 Corporate Plan and 2025-30 Cultural and Visitor Economy Strategy, forming a joined-up approach to delivering long-term prosperity for our District.



National Context

The government's 2024 Modern Industrial Strategy focuses on building a fairer, greener and more innovative economy for the UK. The key elements include:

1 Public Investment

Calls for a substantial increase in public investment in infrastructure, including transport, housing, and digital networks to drive economic growth and improve connectivity.

2 Regional Economic Growth

Aims to reduce economic disparities across the country by creating a focus on regional hubs and providing tailored support for local economies.

3 Skills and Education

Outlines a plan to upskill workers, improve education and reform vocational training and apprenticeships to help workers adapt to evolving job markets.

4 Innovation and Technology

Promotes the development of high-tech industries like AI, biotech and robotics. The government will invest in R&D to help make the UK a leader in advanced technologies.

5 Green Transition

Prioritises achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030, with major investment in green sectors like renewable energy, electric vehicles and carbon capture to create a low carbon economy.

6 Fairer Economy

Focuses on tackling inequality by supporting workers' rights, raising wages and promoting fair business practices, especially in emerging sectors.

Essex Context

The 2023 Essex Sector Development Strategy focuses on fostering economic growth and innovation in the region by prioritising key sectors such as green energy, advanced manufacturing, digital technology, life sciences and creative industries. It aims to enhance Essex's competitiveness by investing in skills development, particularly through vocational training and apprenticeships and supporting research and development initiatives.



The strategy also emphasises improving infrastructure, such as transport and digital connectivity, while promoting sustainability and environmental responsibility across industries.

By creating a supportive business environment and attracting investment, the strategy seeks to build a resilient, future-focused economy in Essex that benefits all local communities.

Rochford District Context

The 2024-28 Rochford District Council Corporate Plan outlines our strategic priorities to drive growth, improve public services and enhance the quality of life for residents. The plan focuses on several key areas, including:

1 Economic Growth

Encouraging business development, attracting investment and supporting local enterprises to create jobs and enhance the District's economic prosperity.

2 Sustainability and Environment

Prioritising environmental sustainability, with initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions, improving waste management and promoting green spaces.

3 Community and Wellbeing

Improving public health and community services, ensuring that residents have access to quality healthcare, education and housing to foster a sense of community and inclusivity.



4 Infrastructure and Connectivity

Investing in local infrastructure, including transportation networks and digital connectivity, to support the growing needs of the area.

5 Council Services and Efficiency

Focusing on improving council services and ensuring efficient use of resources, with an emphasis on transparency, accountability and delivering value for money to the public.

Overall, the 2024 – 28 Rochford Corporate Plan aims to create a vibrant, sustainable and inclusive community by addressing both present and future challenges while fostering long-term development.

1 Town Centre Regeneration

Revitalising the Hubs of our Communities

Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley will be transformed into bustling hubs where residents, businesses and visitors can come together.

This regeneration will blend heritage with growth and cultural events, creating vibrant, welcoming spaces that attract foot traffic, host high quality businesses and enhance the overall quality of life.

Key Objectives:



- **Support the redevelopment of underutilised spaces** to create mixed-use developments that meet the needs of residents and businesses.
- **Improve pedestrian wayfinding, public spaces and transport links** to make our town centres more accessible and appealing.
- **Support the creation of cultural and community hubs** that will host events, markets and festivals, driving local engagement and tourism.
- **Engage with businesses** to explore how they can work together to support their town centres.



Outcome:

Revitalised town centres that become the focal point of Rochford District, attracting both residents and visitors while supporting local businesses and community life.

2 Growing Businesses

Nurturing a Thriving Local Economy

Rochford District will be a magnet for new and growing businesses, offering an environment conducive to entrepreneurship, innovation and business expansion.

By providing the right support and infrastructure, we will ensure that both start-ups and established businesses can thrive and contribute to the local economy.



Outcome:

A diverse and resilient local economy with a wide range of businesses that create high quality jobs and make Rochford District an attractive place for investment.

Key Objectives:



- **Promote the advantages of Rochford District** to attract start-ups, entrepreneurs and growing businesses.
- **Enhance business support** with mentoring programmes, access to training and signposting to national and regional opportunities.
- **Foster a culture of innovation** by encouraging collaboration between local businesses.
- **Provide focused support and promotion of visitor economy businesses** to grow the tourism sector in the District.
- **Working with partners** to ensure our Rochford District businesses are ready to win large public and private sector contracts.
- **Support rural businesses** to diversify, develop and grow.

3 Skills

Building a Workforce for the Future

Rochford District's workforce will be equipped with the skills needed to meet the challenges of the future economy.

By focusing on education, training and lifelong learning, we will ensure that residents have the tools and knowledge to succeed in emerging industries and contribute to the area's long-term prosperity.



Outcome:

A skilled, adaptable workforce that is ready to meet the demands of future industries, attracting both employers and talent to Rochford District.

Key Objectives:



- **Continue to work with local schools** to ensure that educational programmes align with the needs of employers, particularly in high-growth sectors like technology, green industries and digital services.
- **Promote apprenticeships** and vocational training opportunities that offer practical experience and open pathways to skilled employment.
- **Work with Essex County Council and other providers** to offer upskilling programmes for adults to support lifelong learning and career progression, focusing on digital, technical and sustainable skills.

4 Sustainability

Building a Green and Resilient Economy

Rochford District will lead the way in environmental sustainability, integrating green technologies and sustainable practices into all aspects of its economic growth.

By prioritising sustainability, we will ensure that the District's growth is environmentally responsible and provides long-term benefits for the community.



Outcome:

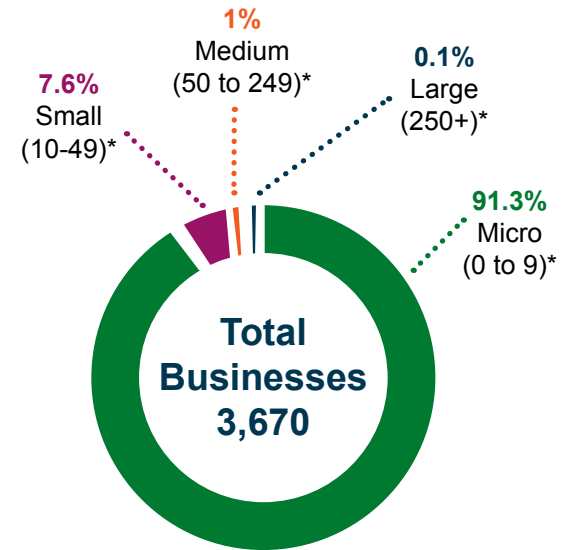
A sustainable and resilient economy that attracts eco-conscious businesses, reduces environmental impacts and improves the quality of life for residents.

Key Objectives:



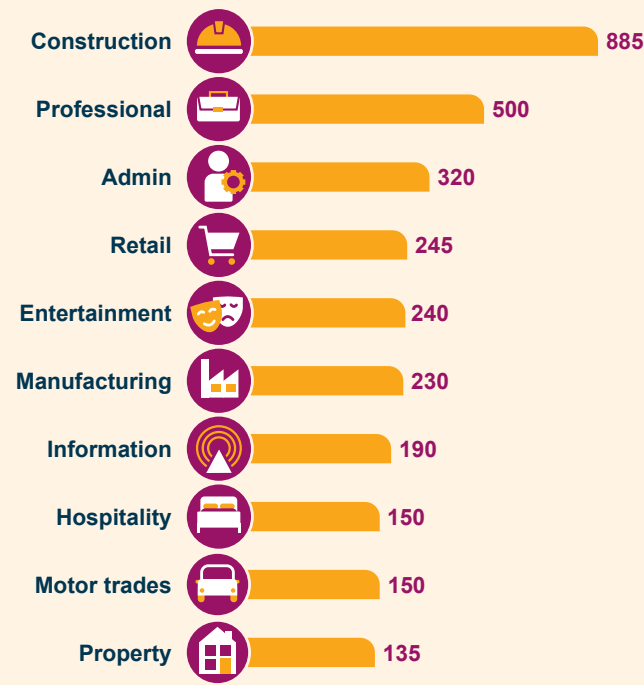
- **Promote the use of renewable energy sources** and energy-efficient technologies in both residential and commercial developments.
- **Support businesses in adopting sustainable practices**, such as reducing waste, minimising carbon footprints and embracing the circular economy.
- **Work with Essex Climate Action Commission** and other partners to achieve our aim of being a carbon neutral District by 2040.
- **Accelerate high speed digital connectivity** by working with partners to expand rollout of gigabit capability fibre.

Our District Economy



*Number of employees
Source: [UK Business Counts \(2024\)](#).
Inter Departmental Business Register (ONS).

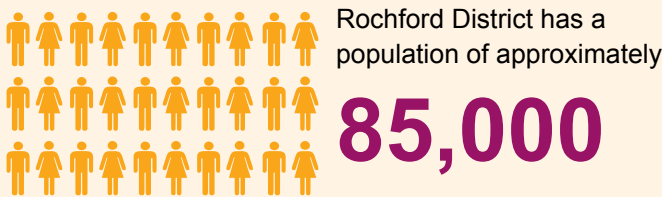
Top 10 sectors in Rochford District



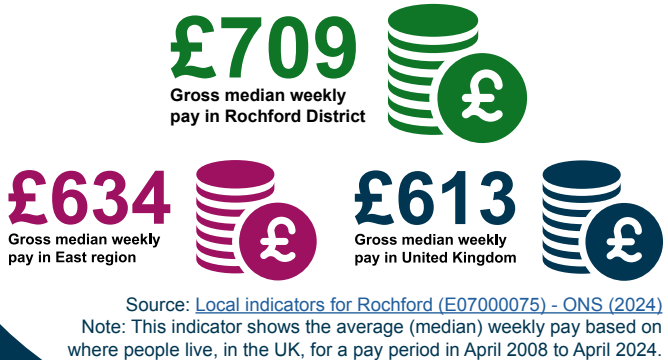
[UK Business Counts - enterprises by industry and employment size band \(2024\)](#).
Inter Departmental Business Register (ONS).
Note: Number of businesses by industry



Population



Source: [Census 2021](#)



Health Index

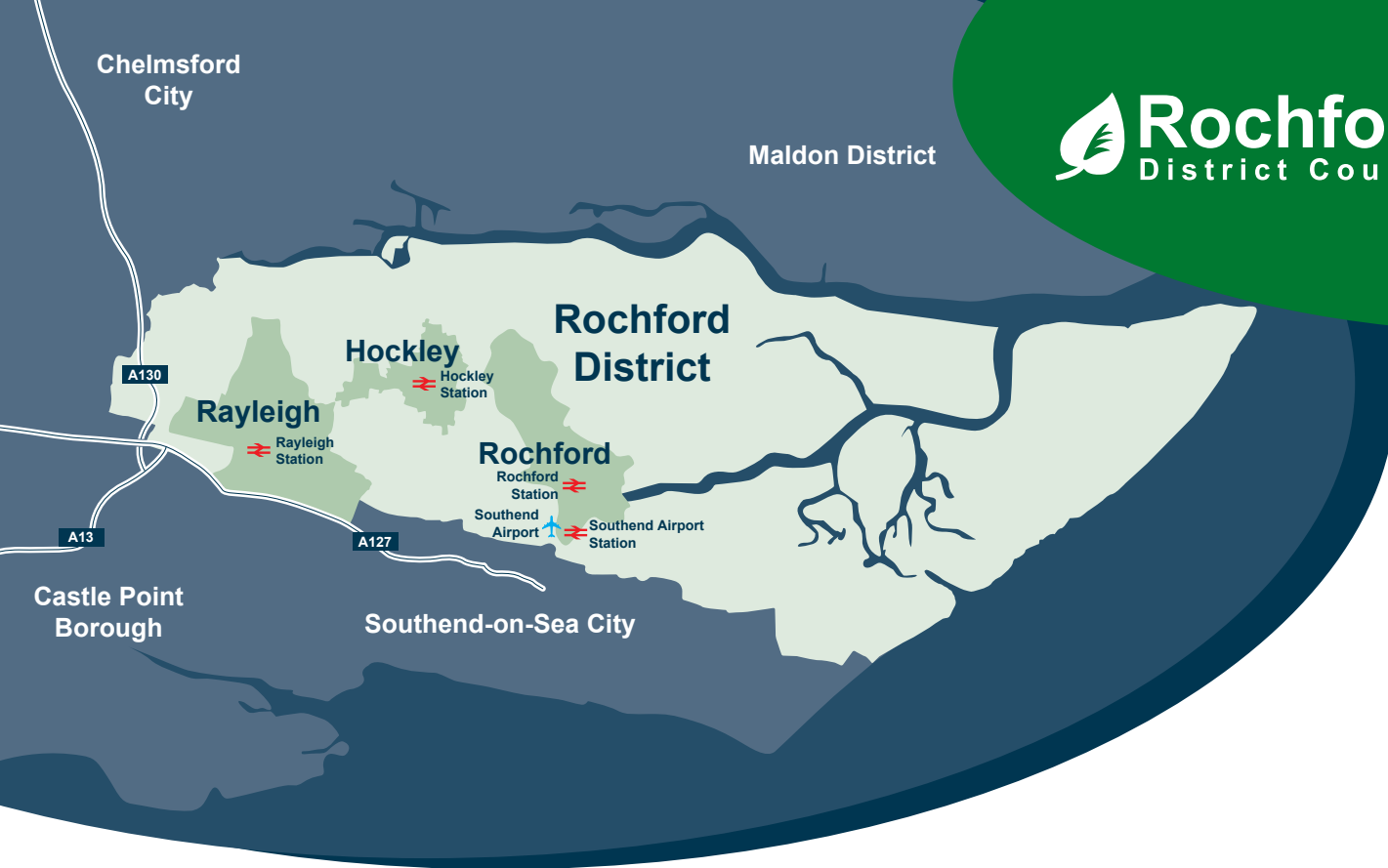
The Health Index is a national measure of health in England. It provides a broad picture of health, including health outcomes, health-related behaviours and personal circumstances and wider drivers of health that relate to the places where people live, including employment.

Rochford District has a median health index score of approximately 116, the second highest in Essex.

Source: [Health Index Dashboard | Essex Open Data ONS 2021](#)
Note: Rankings show the District's position in Essex.

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