

Rochford District **Economic Growth Strategy**

Action Plan 2025 – 26



Summary

This action plan outlines the key projects and initiatives for 2025-26 that will bring Rochford District's Economic Growth Strategy 2025-28 to life.

The plan will be updated yearly including monitoring of the performance in the previous year.

Funding for these projects may come from multiple sources, including Council budget, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and grants. Some projects will be co-delivered with partners such as Essex County Council, Greater Essex Careers Hub, South Essex Advanced Technical Skills and Backing Essex Business.



1 Town Centre Regeneration

Revitalising the Hubs of our Communities

Project 1.1: Bring Together Town Centre Businesses to Consider How They Wish to Work Collaboratively

Expected Outcome: Vibrant town centres that become the focal point for cultural activities and community engagement.

Objective: For businesses to decide how they wish to work together to support the town centres and how the Council can support them.

Actions:

- Engage with town centre businesses to gather input on their vision for the town centres.
- Complete an action plan for working together.
- Consider funding opportunities for the completion of the action plan, including UK Shared Prosperity Fund, grant funding or funding from businesses.
- Seek feedback from businesses about wider improvements to town centres, including public realm.

Timeline: By March 2026

Project 1.2: Rochford Town Centre Revitalisation

Expected Outcome: A more accessible, attractive town centre that encourages residents and visitors to spend time and money in the area.

Objective: Understand the barriers preventing Rochford town centre from becoming more attractive and successful.

Actions:

- Building on previous health check reports, commission any additional work necessary to explore the actions identified.
- Develop a prioritised action plan resulting from the updated findings of the report.
- Work with partners to seek funding opportunities for the action plan.

Timeline: Up to one year for report and action plan

Project 1.3: Establish Cultural Hubs and Event Spaces

Expected Outcome: Vibrant town centres that becomes a focal point for cultural activities and community engagement.

Objective: Create spaces for cultural activities, markets and events that will attract visitors and support local businesses.

Actions:

- Identify key locations within the town centres for the development of cultural industry hubs.
- Work with partners to deliver regular community events and markets to drive foot traffic and promote local businesses.
- Work with local cultural groups and event organisers to schedule programming that aligns with Rochford District's identity.

Timeline: Up to one year, with ongoing programme

2 Growing Businesses

Nurturing a Thriving Local Economy

Project 2.1: Availability of Business Space

Expected Outcome: Increased business occupancy, with new companies attracted to Rochford District for its supportive business environment.

Objective: Ensure attractive, modern commercial space is available in the District.

Actions:

- Work with the planning policy team to ensure appropriate new commercial space is allocated in the new Local Plan.
- Take opportunities to highlight Rochford District's benefits as a location for business relocation and growth.

Timeline: Up to one year, with ongoing programme

Project 2.2: Continue Business Support Programmes

Expected Outcome: A workforce with skills that align with current and future business needs, especially in high-demand sectors like technology and sustainability.

Objective: Strengthen the local business network through mentorship, training and access to finance.

Actions:

- Partner with business networks to offer mentorship programmes and free advice to businesses across all sectors and all stages of business growth on topics such as finance, marketing, legal support and expansion.

- Develop an appropriate business information and networking programme in the District.
- Subject to funding, deliver a grants programme to help businesses access funding for innovation, growth and sustainability projects.

Timeline: Up to one year

3 Skills

Building a Workforce for the Future

Project 3.1: Work with Local Educational Institutions to Promote Career Opportunities

Expected Outcome: A skilled, future-ready workforce that meets the needs of local employers and supports economic growth in key sectors.

Objective: Align local schools with the needs of local industries, focusing on key growth sectors.

Actions:

- Continue with District schools partnership to highlight the skills gap locally and connect students to career pathways and business leaders in those key sectors.

- Partner with Greater Essex Careers Hub to encourage participation from all secondary schools.

Timeline: By March 2026

Project 3.2: Adult Reskilling and Upskilling Programme

Expected Outcome: A more adaptable workforce with the skills to thrive in emerging sectors and future-proof industries.

Objective: Ensure the local workforce has access to reskilling opportunities, particularly in digital, technical and green sectors.

Actions:

- Partner with Essex County Council and training providers to offer affordable re-skilling programmes to adults retraining and updating their skills, particularly for retrofitting and other green sector roles.
- Promote government, regional and Skills England funding and subsidies, to ensure accessibility, for all residents and businesses to participate in these programmes.
- Continue organising and promoting local job fairs in partnership with Department for Work and Pensions.

- Promote opportunities for apprenticeships, including signposting to South Essex Advanced Technical Skills (SEATS).

Timeline: Up to one year, with ongoing programme

4 Sustainability

Building a Green and Resilient Economy

Project 4.1: Green Business Incentive Programme

Expected Outcome: Increased adoption of sustainable practices by local businesses, positioning Rochford District as a leader

Objective: Encourage local businesses to adopt sustainable practices and green technologies.

Actions:

- Signpost to any financial incentives, such as tax breaks, grants or subsidies, for businesses that implement energy-efficient technologies, reduce waste or adopt renewable energy solutions.
- Promote the Essex County Council sustainability certification programme that highlights local businesses committed to eco-friendly practices.

- Organise workshops and knowledge sharing events on sustainability best practices for businesses in various industries.
- Work with Digital Essex and commercial partners to drive digital connectivity across the District to encourage green growth.

Timeline: Up to one year

Project 4.2: Renewable Energy Infrastructure Development

Expected Outcome: A greener, more energy efficient District with reduced carbon emissions and a sustainable local energy system.

Objective: Promote the use of renewable energy within businesses and residential areas.

Actions:

- Work with energy providers and Essex County Council as appropriate to offer incentives for local businesses and residents to switch to renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power.
- Work with Planning Team to secure BREEAM very good or outstanding on all new commercial buildings.

- Work with the Council's Climate Change team and the County Council's Essex Climate Action Commission to deliver a campaign to raise awareness of renewable energy options and their benefits to businesses.
- Promote opportunities for businesses to be part of large infrastructure projects.

Timeline: Up to one year

5 Monitoring and Evaluation

The projects outlined in the action plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis through the internal Economic Board (or its successor) and every year through the relevant Council Committee, where an updated action plan will be set for the year ahead.

Phone: 01702 546366

Email: business@rochford.gov.uk

Website: www.rochford.gov.uk/business

