



**East of England**  
Local Government Association

# Brentwood and Rochford Councils pay benchmarking report

Improving the East

## **1. Introduction**

Brentwood and Rochford councils have separate staff groups and serve both councils as independent sovereign councils.

Both councils are ambitious for their “places” and are delivering an ambitious and forward focussed agenda.

A new shared arrangement around a shared Chief Executive has recently been put in place. This arrangement is likely to become permanent with a move to a shared senior team then moving to a shared staff group longer term.

The councils want to attract recruit and retain the very best staff, and this is critical to their success especially in delivering on their aspirations.

The council will want and need the best possible staff to deliver the agenda, not just in terms of recruitment but retention too.

## **2. The shared senior team**

It is proposed to move to a three Director model reporting directly to the Chief Executive and working across both councils.

There are currently four roles at the two councils although one post is currently vacant.

The proposed configuration of the roles is;

Strategic Director- Resources, Assets and Place

Strategic Director- Customer and data insight, Partnership and Projects and

Strategic Director – Housing, Environment and Communities and Health

The current recruitment market is incredibly competitive, given the changes in working practices during Covid, hybrid and agile working means that staff can now choose to work almost anywhere and in any industry, and this presents both opportunities and threats.

There is the ability to recruit from across wider industry and geographical areas, but also the ability for existing staff to consider roles in other places too, without having to relocate.

The two councils have a good record of recruiting staff when the salaries offered have been competitive and have been less successful when the salaries offered fall short of the market expectations. There is no doubt that salary will play a role when competing for top talent, especially within the public sector.

It will be important to understand the current market including pay and reward arrangements across local government, in order to ensure that Brentwood and Rochford are able to recruit and retain the key staff required to deliver the two councils’ aspirations and objectives and to be the best that they can be for their communities.

A balance must be struck between pay that attracts and retains high calibre staff and good value for the public purse.

Recruiting and retaining the very best staff has a direct impact on outcomes, failure to do so will undermine the organisations’ ability to deliver for residents. It is especially unhelpful if key roles cannot be filled or become vacant as the loss of key staff will impact on the ability to deliver key outcomes.

### **3. Benchmarking**

There are 39 Districts/Boroughs in the East of England, the councils vary in size (geographically and population) and have differing characteristics, e.g., rural/urban mix, proximity to London, Coastal or Port authority responsibilities and differing levels of economic or social challenge. All of these things can influence recruitment and retention and therefore salaries offered.

There are some issues to consider when benchmarking salaries. Whilst every council must have a Head of Paid Service (usually included in a Chief Executive or Managing Director role) and two statutory officers (Monitoring officer and Section 151 officer) the exact configuration of post below the Head of Paid Service differs across councils.

The number of officers at tier two; usually called Director and at tier three, variously called Assistant Directors/Heads of Service can be quite different.

The configuration and content of roles at tiers two and three can also be significantly different.

It is unlikely that roles at tiers two and three will have direct comparators at other councils, except for the level at which they operate.

In order to understand the current market EELGA has undertaken benchmarking into pay at Chief Executive, tiers two and three for similar councils and for the types of roles that exist in Brentwood and Rochford.

EELGA has recently surveyed councils on salary levels at tiers 1 to 4. This historical data is contained in a report submitted to the region's Chief Executives however evidence suggests that senior salaries are being reviewed across the region.

The data that has been used for benchmarking is current published data for councils according to their pay policies and information about role content provided by councils directly to EELGA as part of a research project into senior pay across the region.

Particular attention has been paid to shared arrangements and to District/Borough councils in Essex.

#### ***4.1 Shared arrangements***

The proposed shared arrangement at the two councils creates an additional dimension to roles at a senior level. Supporting two sovereign councils with two (currently) separate teams is more complex both practically and politically and will need to be reflected in the senior roles.

The additional dimension of the geographical distance between the two councils also introduces further complexity.

Whilst there are shared services across councils for a wholly shared workforce, specific service areas or for individual shared posts, there are no other district/borough in the East of England that have the complexity of a newly shared Chief Executive across geographically distances areas and introducing a shared team.

Four "pairs of councils" have previously set up shared arrangements, all of which have wholly shared workforces and adjacent geographical boundaries.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk have a wholly shared workforce as have South Norfolk and Broadland. In these cases, as with Brentwood and Rochford they serve two sovereign councils.

Both East Suffolk (Suffolk Coastal and Waveney) and West Suffolk (Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury) which had a previously shared workforce have now formed a single councils from the previous shared

arrangements, and as the salaries were set when the sharing was in place, they still reflect the additional complexities of shared arrangements.

As all of these comparator authorities are in Suffolk and Norfolk, the salary levels will be lower than might be found in Essex where competition for talent within Essex, into Hertfordshire and in London typically means that salaries are higher than those in Suffolk and Norfolk.

Salary levels for shared arrangements are shown in the table below.

**Table one**

<b>Council</b>	<b>Chief Exec/MD</b>	<b>Directors</b>	<b>ADs (or equivalent)</b>	<b>Total number in senior team</b>
Babergh/Mid Suffolk  <b>These salaries are currently under review</b>	£118,767- £138,202	£82,170- £96,804 (1 Director post)	£59,658 to £74,292(9 posts, including 1 post 50% funded by Health)  Additional payments for MO, S151 and AD Assets and Investments.	11
Broadland/South Norfolk	£140,000- £160,000	£80,000- £100,000 (3 Director posts)	£61,200, - £80,999  (8 Assistant Director posts)	12
East Suffolk	£153,615.	£96,215 - £105,022.  (2 Director posts)	£63,956 - £75,080  £77,861 - £88,503  (13 posts - total including two partnership-shared roles)	14 + two shared roles
West Suffolk	£130,000 to £142,500.	£97,500- £106,875 (2 Director posts)	£78,000 -£85,500  (6 posts)	9

#### **4.2 Chief Executive pay**

The pay of the Chief Executive essentially provides a “ceiling” and caps the pay of staff at the levels below.

It is often used to determine pay at lower levels within the organisation by expressing senior pay as a percentage of Chief Executive pay which broadly equates to the “weight” of the role.

The Chief Executive pay for districts and boroughs in the region varies significantly. This is related to a number of factors; the size of the council often linked to population size. The complexity of the council; key features such as commercial activity, specific features such as ports/airports or coastal responsibilities and the affordability for the council in relation to market forces at play when the post was last recruited to.

In terms of Chief Executive pay in shared (or previously shared) arrangements Babergh/Mid Suffolk is the lowest (£118,767- £138,202) and no longer reflects the market. The most recent shared appointment in the region is at South Norfolk/Broadland at £140,000-£160,000. This salary was market tested after benchmarking at the point of advertising the role.

In Essex (district and boroughs) salary levels vary due to a number of factors; population size was once used to inform Chief Executive and Director salaries as part of a national formula. This is no longer used however long standing pay arrangements may still retain vestiges of this practice. The timing of the most recent appointment to the role and the market conditions at the time may have impacted on the advertised salary on appointment. The financial position of the authority can also have a bearing. Finally, the authority is free to set and review pay rates and will also set its pay policy on an annual basis.

It is worth noting that some salaries quoted in the benchmarking are based on flexible retirement/part time roles and will therefore not be comparable to full time costs. Also of note is that some salaries are currently under review.

The table below contains salary levels for Chief Executives/Managing directors in Essex. The detail is based on published data and does not include any recent pay awards or any pending changes to pay rates as a result of restructures or pay reviews.

**Table two**

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Tier 1</b>
Basildon	189804
Braintree	140754
Brentwood	125000
Castle Point	143200
Chelmsford	182160
Colchester	133189
Epping forest	143000
Harlow	138971
Maldon	90088
Rochford	124992
Tendring	135076
Uttlesford	122006

### **4.3 Director pay**

Pay for the Directors can vary significantly both in shared arrangements and more widely regionally and nationally and again is sensitive to market conditions particularly on appointment. The title “Director” can relate to a functional, corporate or strategic role and again this may impact on salary.

Table one (above) shows the pay rates for Directors in shared arrangements as well as Chief Executives and tier three roles.

The table below (table three) shows pay for tier two in district/borough authorities in Essex. Again, caution is required as the roles described at tier two in authorities will differ in terms of responsibility, configuration of strategic/corporate/service responsibilities and the size, shape and range of the role and when pay was last reviewed or the organisation was last restructured. Authorities in Essex do not have shared arrangements of the type envisaged in Brentwood and Rochford of a shared senior team.

When setting pay for the new Brentwood and Rochford shared senior roles consideration will be needed of the additional complexity of a shared role. This usually requires an enhancement to salary beyond that paid to a Director, working for a single authority in recognition of the complexity of the role.

**Table three**

Basildon	146954
Braintree	111006
Brentwood	88492
Castle Point	102842
Chelmsford	125000
Colchester	115797
Epping forest	115000
Harlow	107181
Maldon	86812*
Rochford	96126
Tendring	99465
Uttlesford	96094

\* Three Director/Head of Paid Service model.

#### **4.4 Assistant Director pay**

The Third tier (often called AD roles) are much more difficult to benchmark as tier three can be very different in each council. The numbers of tier three posts and the organisation of work make direct comparisons difficult.

In some councils tier three roles are wholly operational, especially where there are a larger number of posts at tier two, in others they are more corporate with a balance of cross cutting themes and operational responsibilities. Generally, the more corporate the role the higher the salary to reflect the higher level at which they operate.

In Brentwood/Rochford salaries will be dependent on responsibilities, for example where roles are more strategic with a corporate focus and responsibility across both councils these are likely to attract higher salaries than purely operational roles.

#### **5. Recommendations on pay and reward**

The benchmarking exercise has identified that Brentwood and Rochford will need to consider salaries carefully to ensure that they are set fairly and in line with the market. Whilst simultaneously providing good value for the public purse. Consideration will also need to be given to existing salaries for the current posts.

The Chief Executive at Brentwood is currently paid a spot salary of £125,000. This is the same level as a Director at Chelmsford.

The Managing Director at Rochford was paid £124,992

Strategic Directors at Brentwood are paid between £83,230 and £90,262.

The Director at Rochford is paid between £84,818 to £96,126.

For the new shared arrangements, the responsibilities of the roles change substantially to include both corporate and functional responsibilities across both councils. The recommendations below take this into account.

## **5.1 Chief Executive**

The salary at shared arrangements are as follows;

West Suffolk is, £130,000 to £142,500, East Suffolk it is a spot salary of £153,615, South Norfolk/Broadland-£140,000 to £160,000. Babergh and Mid Suffolk are not included as these are currently under review.

Salaries for a Chief Executive for a single authority in Essex vary from the smallest £ 90088 (which relates to a Director post which also holds the statutory responsibility of Head of Paid Service) to the highest of £189804 at Basildon. Basildon has traditionally had higher rates of pay than the rest of Essex.

Taking both Maldon and Basildon aside, and Chelmsford (a City Council) salaries range from £122,006 (Uttlesford) to £143,200 (Castle Point).

The current Chief Executive at Brentwood is paid £125,000 with the previous MD at Rochford paid £124,992.

The closest comparator is likely to be the most recently appointed Joint Chief Executive at South Norfolk Broadland and therefore the recommended salary for the Chief Executive at Brentwood and Rochford is £140,000 to £160,000. With annual progression through a grade of three points (£140,000, £150,000 and £160,000) based on performance.

## **5.2 Strategic Director**

Salaries for Strategic Director roles differ across the region, Broadland and South Norfolk have three Director roles but these are configured differently to those proposed at Brentwood and Rochford, both East Suffolk and West Suffolk have two Directors whilst Babergh and Mid Suffolk have only one Strategic Director.

The salary for Director roles at Broadland and South Norfolk is £80,000-£100,000, West Suffolk is, £97,500-£106,875, at East Suffolk it is £96,215 - £105,022 and at Babergh and Mid Suffolk it is £82,170-£96,804 , although this is under review.

Across districts and boroughs in Essex, salaries for tier two range from £86812 in Maldon to £146954 in Basildon. Taking these two extremes aside, salary levels range from between £96094 (Uttlesford and £115797 (Braintree)

The current Director salaries in Brentwood are £88,492 and in Rochford is £96,126.

it is recommended that the salary for the Strategic Director should be set at £100,000 to £120,000 with a scale of 3 points (£100,000, £110,000, and £120,000). This recommendation acknowledges the strategic nature of the roles , the operation across two councils, with two sets of members and more accurately reflects the responsibilities of the role.

## **5.3 Assistant Directors**

The salary for roles at tier three should not be set until these have been developed as part of the shared arrangement. The size, shape and content of the roles will drive the salary level and can be compared with benchmark information available before the roles are offered as part of the restructure.

It is worth noting that EELGA is currently supporting a number of restructures across the region. In all cases tier three is proving the most difficult to recruit to; salaries are being adjusted to aid recruitment in response to the market.