Rural Community Council of Essex

Financial Statements

Incorporating the Directors' and Auditors' Reports

Year ended 31 March 2026

Registered Company No. 04609624
Registered Charity No. 1097009

THE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ESSEX
A Charitable Company Limited By Guarantee
Registered Charity No. 1097009

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

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THE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ESSEX
A Charitable Company Limited By Guarantee
Registered Charity No. 1097009

DIRECTORS' REPORT

The Directors are pleased to present their report on the affairs of the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) together with the audited Financial Statements of the charitable company for the year to 31 March 2026.

The Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in Note 1 of the Financial Statements and comply with the Companies Act 2006.

1. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The purpose of the Rural Community Council of Essex's work, as stated in its Memorandum of Association, is:

- "To promote any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community in the County of Essex and, in particular,
- The advancement of education, the protection of health, and the relief of poverty, distress and sickness,
- In the furtherance of the said purposes to promote and organise co-operation in the achievement of the same and to that end to bring together in the council representatives of the voluntary organisations and statutory authorities within the County."

During the period under review, RCCE's current Strategy provided the strategic framework for the company's development. This Strategy identifies RCCE's long-term mission and aims, and highlights four priority areas of work:

- Community Engagement and Housing
- Community Buildings, Assets and Enterprise
- Supporting People in Need
- Rural Voice, Partnerships and Programme Delivery.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

This section of the report summarises the achievements and performance of RCCE in the year to 31 March 2026 in relation to the four priority areas of work set out in its Strategy. The directors have paid due regard to guidance from the Charity Commission on public benefit in deciding what activities the charitable company should undertake, and the impact of the following achievements, based on RCCE's aims, provides evidence of that public benefit.

The income and expenditure attributable to each of the activities outlined in this section are presented as Notes 2 and 3 to the Financial Statements respectively.

Community Engagement and Housing

Community Engagement

RCCE's Community Engagement Team works with local communities to help them plan a sustainable future, supporting parish councils and community groups with the production of community-led plans. Neighbourhood Plans, which have statutory underpinning, have proved popular in recent years, particularly in Braintree and Uttlesford districts. In 2025/26, RCCE continued to support 18 Neighbourhood Plans, but increasingly it also promotes a range of other community planning options for particular purposes, with this year seeing increased community engagement in issues such as the environment, nature recovery and energy. Support for individual plans is augmented by a programme of training and networking events which this year attracted 178 participants.

DIRECTORS' REPORT – continued

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE - continued

RCCE uses its community engagement skills in delivering other projects and contracts with partners. It continued to provide support to Lottery-funded 'Big Local' partnerships in a range of locations, helping them to address long-term social and economic challenges through until the completion of the programme at the end of 2025/26.

Following a successful relaunch in 2024/25, the Essex Village of the Year Competition was again augmented by a series of Rural Community Awards, designed to celebrate outstanding individual projects, groups and amenities. The whole competition celebrates the key role volunteers play in sustaining rural community life in Essex. The major prizes this year were won by White Colne (Essex Village of the Year), Abberton & Langenhoe, Lion Corner Community Shop (Community Enterprise Award), Shotgate, Loopy Loo's Friendship Club (Community & Voluntary Group Award) and Felsted Village Hall (Village Hall & Community Building Award). Sponsorship was generously provided by Essex & Suffolk Water, Norris & Fisher Insurance Brokers Ltd. and Utility Aid.

Rural Housing Enabler and Community Led Housing

The immediate proximity of London exerts a big impact on rural Essex and inflates the demand for housing. In some areas, average house prices are 12 times higher than average earnings and significantly higher than both the equivalent figure for urban Essex and the national average.

RCCE's Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) service helps local communities to identify needs through confidential Housing Needs Surveys and then facilitates the development of small-scale, affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites tailored to meet identified local needs. The outcome of this work can be life changing for families and individuals who are able to secure an attractively designed, energy-efficient home in the rural community where they have roots and wish to remain. There are strategic benefits as well as such schemes are good for the rural economy and help to maintain local services and amenities.

Aided by funding from the Department for the Environment Food & Rural Affairs' (Defra) national Rural Housing Enabling Programme, the RHE service had another productive year facilitating the completion of 11 further Housing Needs Surveys and supporting 14 live projects. The highlight was the completion of the scheme at Thaxted in February 2026 providing four homes for rent to local people. Another RHE-facilitated scheme at Hatfield Heath is scheduled for completion this autumn.

The scheme at Thaxted was developed on land secured by the local Community Land Trust. This year saw RCCE set up the Essex Community Led Housing Network, to bring together individuals and organisations to create housing solutions that work for local communities.

Community Buildings, Assets and Enterprise

Village Halls & Community Buildings Advice Service

Village Halls are central to lives of many people in rural communities, providing a venue for a multitude of social, cultural and recreational activities as well as increasingly a space for key services that would otherwise be lost to the local community.

Most halls are registered charities managed by volunteer trustees for whom RCCE's Village Halls & Community Buildings Advice Service remains a lifeline. This year saw it providing advice and support to over 230 member halls. Requests for help frequently concerned legal, charitable and governance issues, with several halls seeking to obtain Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status to offset concerns about trustee liability. Other popular topics included energy efficiency and advice on funding for improvement and redevelopment projects.

DIRECTORS' REPORT – continued

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE - continued

In addition to helping halls on a one-to-one basis, RCCE provides support through a programme of training and networking events. This year these included a dedicated session on the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act, also known as Martyn's Law, which was organised in conjunction with the Safer Essex Partnership. For the first time, the annual Village Halls Conference, which was hosted by Alresford Village Hall, was staged as part of Action with Communities in Rural England's (ACRE) National Village Halls Week.

Although village halls continue to be very well used, they do face multiple, intersecting challenges and over the past three years, enquiries to RCCE have increased by 58%. In response to this, a new project proposal entitled 'Vibrant Village Halls' was developed this year with a bid for funding submitted to the National Lottery Community Fund in February. The project aims to help halls secure their future by addressing three key objectives; increasing sustainability, extending community engagement and strengthening governance.

Supporting People in Need

Community Agents Essex

RCCE's Community Agents Essex service focusses on helping vulnerable people and their informal carers; enabling them to continue living independently in their own home. It forms an essential part of the Essex Wellbeing Service, which drawing on lessons learnt from the pandemic, was created by Essex County Council in 2022, initially under a five-year contract. In February, it was announced that this contract would be extended to 2029. This was more good news for Community Agents, who earlier in the year, had received additional funding from Essex County Council worth £181,000 p.a. This will help the service respond to increasing needs, including the recruitment of additional agents in districts with particularly high demand.

Community Agents work across all 12 districts/boroughs under the jurisdiction of Essex County Council. The team, who are home based, faced an increased target of 7,000 enquiries in 2025/26 and responded by handling more than 7,200. Key areas of activity throughout the year included financial concerns and the reduction of debt and poverty, home safety and security issues, and the handling of Blue Badge applications. Across all activities, more than 96% of clients considered that their needs had been either fully met or substantial progress had been made.

Social Isolation and Loneliness

The 'Kinder Essex' team of community resilience coaches are another vital component of the Essex Wellbeing Service provided by RCCE and will similarly benefit from the contract extension. Operating at district level, the 14 coaches aim to build resilience in communities across Essex and support them to tackle social isolation and loneliness, evidence of which can be found among people of all ages and backgrounds.

Over the past year, the 'Kinder Essex' team helped to facilitate a remarkable 27,000 acts of kindness, helped more than 6,500 volunteers to engage with the project and supported 450 new initiatives. The project successfully delivered two countywide projects this year, 'Kindness at Christmas' and 'Ripples of Kindness' and continued to facilitate local walking, exercise and activity groups.

Growing Communities

RCCE's Growing Communities project focusses on children and the importance of educating them on the benefits of growing and eating locally sourced food and caring for nature and the local environment. In 2025/26, it was again generously supported by the Augustine Courtauld Trust.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE - continued

Two competitions for schools again provided the focal point of the project. 'Bee Good' which encouraged team work to create a beneficial environment for pollinators, especially bees, and the 'Healthy Packed Lunch Plot', which asked entrants to design a small plot identifying the fruit and vegetables that would be grown there and then used to create a healthy packed lunch. Debden Primary Academy and Wethersfield Primary School were the respective first prize winners.

Rural Voice, Partnerships and Programme Delivery

Essex Rural Partnership

RCCE continued to facilitate the running of the Essex Rural Partnership (ERP) bringing together public, private and voluntary sector partners to co-ordinate approaches and assess the rural implications of national and local policy developments.

Alongside RCCE, key members of the partnership included Essex County Council, Essex Police, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Essex Association of Local Councils, National Farmers Union, Diocese of Chelmsford, Essex Wildlife Trust and Visit Essex.

Throughout the year, RCCE facilitated two meetings of the full partnership and three of its Strategic Board (steering group). The full partnership meetings included presentations on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation as well as focussing on coastal management, agricultural issues and the delivery of the Rural England Prosperity Fund in Essex.

A close working relationship was sustained with Essex Police and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner reinforced by active promotion of the work of the Essex Police Rural Engagement Team in ERP's monthly e-bulletin and RCCE's Oyster magazine.

ERP is one of 17 local or regional Rural & Farming Networks (RFNs) officially recognised by Defra and supported a proposal submitted by the RFNs this year to re-establish regular high-level engagement with civil servants and ministers in the Department. A response is awaited.

Policy Influencing and Representation

Aside from its role with the Essex Rural Partnership, RCCE has extensive experience of its own in providing a voice for rural communities to all levels of government and other public bodies and as an active participant in strategic partnerships.

The primary focus of attention this year was on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, resulting from the inclusion of Greater Essex in the Government's Devolution Priority Programme. RCCE responded to public consultations on the creation of a Mayoral Combined County Authority and on the reorganisation of local government in the county, with the existing two-tier structure set to be replaced by a number of unitary authorities. In both submissions, RCCE focussed its attentions on the needs of rural communities and on the role of the voluntary and community sector (VCS). Regarding the latter, it liaised closely with other VCS infrastructure organisations notably through 'roundtable' meetings convened by Essex Community Foundation. The Chair of Trustees and Executive Director also held a meeting with the newly-appointed Interim Chief Executive of the Mayoral Combined County Authority

The Government announced in December that the Mayoral election, originally scheduled for May 2026, would be postponed until 2028. In March, it published its response to the public consultation on local government reorganisation, announcing that from April 2028, the two-tier structure will be replaced by five unitary authorities.

DIRECTORS' REPORT – continued

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE - continued

Other examples of influencing and representative work this year included:

- Participating in the first 'Rural Connections' summit, organised by Essex County Council's Growth Agency in November. RCCE facilitated a series of inter-active sessions on the theme of 'Building Rural Communities'.
- Submitting a response to the Government's latest consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework. The RCCE response drew on its experience of working with rural communities and highlighted issues concerning the provision of rural affordable housing and the role of Neighbourhood Plans.
- Writing to the Minister for Housing and Planning to raise concerns about the withdrawal of Government funding for Neighbourhood Plans and the impact this could have particularly for smaller parishes.
- Engagement with the Essex Local Nature Partnership, which this year published the county's first Local Nature Recovery Strategy. RCCE is represented on both its Board and Local Communities Working Group and this year helped to establish the Essex Green Network, providing a forum for local community nature groups.
- Participation in the grants panel for the Dedham Vale and Coast & Heaths National Landscapes 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' programme.

Some of RCCE's influencing work is ongoing in nature. This includes providing regular trends and issues reports and other intelligence to ACRE under the terms of the current Defra/ACRE grant agreement and similar reports and intelligence to Essex County Council in accordance with its current grant agreement

3. FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial Performance – Year to 31 March 2026

From a financial perspective, the charity's activities are sub-divided between restricted activities and unrestricted activities. The restricted activities are funded by grants and other donations which are required to be used for specific purposes laid down by the donor. Unrestricted activities are funded by grants, donations, contract income and other income receivable, or generated, for the objects of the charity, without further specified purpose. Unrestricted activities are further analysed between charitable activities, donations and investments. The Statement of Financial Activities on page 16 of the Financial Statements provides an overall summary of the Restricted and Unrestricted activities.

Restricted Activities

The movements in restricted funds for the year are summarised in Note 10 to the Financial Statements. The donors, and specific activities that have they have funded, are described either in Section 2 of this Directors' Report or in Note 10. In overall terms, during the course of the year, the charity received £1,377,405 in restricted grants and donations and defrayed £1,480,130 in expenditure, reducing the carry forward by £102,724. When deducted from the accumulated surplus brought forward of £500,547, the accumulated surplus on restricted activities carried forward of £397,823 will be available to support restricted activities in 2026/27 and beyond.

Unrestricted Charitable Activities

During the course of the year, the charity received £334,035 in unrestricted charitable income and incurred £338,195 of expenditure, generating a deficit for the year of £4,160. The activities funded by these unrestricted funds are described in Section 2 of this Directors' Report.

Donations

During the course of the year, the charity received £6,125 in donations (i.e. gifts made on a voluntary basis without any significant benefit to the donor).

DIRECTORS' REPORT – continued

3. FINANCIAL REVIEW - Continued

Investments

The charity generated £25,910 in interest on its bank deposits and investments over the course of the year. Because the charity presently has insufficient staff/activities to fill the entire Threshelfords Business Park office, sections of the building are rented out on short-term operating leases. The rental income generated in 25/26 was £9,806, it is the intention to develop this income in the future. The share of overheads attributable to this space amounted to £6,582. The minimum future rental income receivable as at 31/03/2026 from the tenants is disclosed in Note 8 to the Financial Statements.

Total Unrestricted Activities

The overall surplus on unrestricted activities (£26,249) has been carried forward, taking total unrestricted funds as at 31 March 2026 to £1,104,993. A proportion of these funds (£725,900), being an approximation of the equity held in the Threshelfords Business Park property, has been separately set aside as a Designated Capital Fund in the event that it is needed to contribute to a pension `cessation' liability, should the charity cease to be a member of the Essex Local Government Pension Scheme.

Essex Local Government Pension Scheme

In arriving at the above surplus on unrestricted activities, the Directors have continued to apply a true and fair override of Section 28 of FRS102; the Directors' reasons for making this judgement are fully explained in Note 12 to these Financial Statements. Had the charity applied Section 28 of FRS102, this would have led to an additional pension service credit for the year of £48,000. The actuarial gain would have been £53,000 and there would have been a balance sheet pension asset of £2,564,000. Note 12 to the Financial Statements provides further details. In these circumstances, the company would have recorded a surplus on unrestricted activities of £127,249.

Risk Management

At each of their meetings, the three Board sub-committees review those aspects of the company's Strategic Risk Register which fall within their remit. The major risks are then taken to the subsequent Board meeting. Internal financial risks are minimised through the implementation of robust financial control procedures. These procedures are regularly reviewed by the Financial Control Committee to ensure that they still meet the needs of the company.

Reserves Policy

The company's Reserves Policy requires RCCE's minimum unrestricted funds neither committed nor invested in tangible assets (i.e. the company's minimum 'Free Core Charitable Funds' or 'Free Reserves') to be sufficient to enable the company to meet its next five months' direct expenditure on its unrestricted activities. As at 31 March 2026 this equated to a minimum requirement of £143,657 (2025: £135,948) in Free Reserves. The actual Free Reserves as at that date amounted to £379,093 (2025: £348,745).

DIRECTORS' REPORT – continued

3. FINANCIAL REVIEW - Continued

Investment Policy

The company's overall investment objectives are to create income to assist the company to carry out its purposes consistently year by year, with due and proper consideration for future needs and the maintenance of and, if possible, the enhancement of the capital value of the invested funds while they are retained. During the last financial year the directors applied the following approach:

1. Retaining the company's investment in the Threshelfords Business Park premises and developing the rental income on the building. Not only should this provide a reliable stream of income and, over the long term, steady capital growth, but the building is used in RCCE'S day to day operations and the trustees believe that its disposal would adversely impact on the organisation's ability to deliver its objectives.
2. Investing up to no more than £50,000 in a conservatively managed global equity fund such as CCLAs Global Equity Fund.
3. Investing surplus cash (over and above the company's short term liquidity needs) in National saving income bonds, CCLA's Charity Deposit Fund and / or one or more other fixed interest or fixed term securities.
4. Keeping the company's remaining cash with main Bank (wherever possible in an interest-bearing deposit account, as opposed to a current account).

4. PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

In March 2026, the Board of Trustees commenced a refresh of RCCE's current Strategy, a process that will continue in 2026/27. In doing this, the organisation recognises a series of challenges common to rural communities throughout Essex that will help to shape its work in the coming year and beyond. These include an ageing population, poor access to jobs, housing and services, increasing development and environmental pressures, a reduction in volunteers and disproportionate cost-of-living increases.

A new hybrid working policy, developed after the experience of the pandemic, permits a mix of home and office working, including substantial home working, although the number of events and activities held in person increased in 2025/26. This trend is likely to continue in 2026/27.

RCCE's long-term funders, Defra and Essex County Council continued to provide invaluable support in 2025/26, although for differing reasons, both could only offer one-year grant agreements. The position for 2026/27 looks more encouraging. Defra have agreed a new three-year agreement with ACRE, the national body for England's Rural Community Councils, albeit subject to annual ministerial review. Essex County Council have provided a two-year agreement that will operate until March 2028, when the authority is set for abolition as part of the local government reorganisation process.

Given Essex County Council's position as RCCE's largest individual funder as well a key working partner, and with the organisation also working closely with many District Councils, the transformation of local government in the county will add significantly to the uncertainties facing the organisation in the years ahead. These uncertainties are likely to extend beyond 2028, when the elected Mayor and unitary authorities are scheduled to take office.

There has, however, been no detrimental impact on the charity's budgeted income for 2025/26, nor on its levels of working capital. At the time of approving these Financial Statements, the directors have a reasonable expectation that the company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future, and they continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting as a result.

DIRECTORS' REPORT – continued

4. PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS - Continued

What can be said with conviction is that with its extensive reach into communities, augmented by strong strategic relationships and a deep knowledge and experience of rural disadvantage, RCCE remains uniquely qualified to help rural communities throughout Essex navigate a way through these challenging times.

5. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Rural Community Council of Essex is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales, registered company number 04609624. The registered office is Threshelfords Business Park, Inworth Road, Feering, Essex CO5 9SE. The company is also a registered charity, charity registration number 1097009. The company is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

RCCE's subscribing membership comprises individual members and corporate members, the vast majority of the latter being village halls and parish and town councils.

Directors / Trustees

The directors who have held office during the year are as follows:

Dr J Bettley JP DL FSA – Chair
Ms B N Alvey JP
Mr R Brice DL – Resigned 9 July 2025
Mr S R Brice DL – Resigned 9 July 2025
Mr S Calvy – Elected 9 July 2025
Dr C Dollery
Cllr M Durham – co-opted 3 December 2025
Mrs S Dutton
Mr R Gazely – Elected 9 July 2025
Mr S Lyster DL – Resigned 9 July 2025
Ms T C Meadows
Revd. Canon J Nicholls DL
Ms S Pinkerton – Resigned 9 July 2025
Mr P Roberts DL
Mr H M Stuchfield MBE JP DL FSA – Elected 9 July 2025
Mrs B Weir JP – Elected 9th July 2025

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law. The Articles of Association stipulate that the Board of Trustees can comprise up to 12 elected members - all elected trustees are required to be subscribing members of the charity. In addition to the elected members, the Board is also entitled to co-opt up to 5 additional members to meet the requirement for specialist skills. At each Annual General Meeting, one-third of the trustees (both elected and co-opted) are required to retire and are then eligible for re-election (those longest in office since their election/co-option are required to retire first). All subscribing RCCE members are circulated with invitations to nominate trustees prior to the Annual General Meeting.

The Board of Trustees administers the charitable company and meets on a quarterly basis. There are three Board sub-committees. Of these, the Financial Control Committee meets on a similar quarterly cycle, and the other committees meet at least three times a year.

DIRECTORS' REPORT – continued

5. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT - continued

The trustees review the operation of the Board and its sub-committees on a regular basis. In addition to its regular schedule of meetings, the Board holds annual 'awaydays' to review the charity's future direction.

New trustees undergo a briefing session to inform them of their legal obligations under charity and company law, and to introduce them to the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the strategy, business plan, and governance and management structures of the organisation. As part of this induction they are introduced to key employees and other trustees.

The Company Secretary throughout the year was Mr N Shuttleworth. The Honorary Officers who have held office during the year are as follows:

Patron	Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Essex
President	Mr N S Charrington DL
Vice-Presidents	Mr D Boyle JP, DL
	The Revd. Canon J Brown DL
	Mr G Courtauld OBE, DL
	Cllr J Jowers
	Lord Petre KCVO
	Professor J Pretty OBE
	Mr R Woolley

Company Secretary and Honorary Officers

The Company Secretary and Honorary Officers are elected/re-elected annually at the first Board meeting following the Annual General Meeting.

The Executive

The Executive Director, Mr N Shuttleworth, has delegated authority from the Board of Trustees to manage the day-to-day operations of the charity. Sitting beneath the Executive Director, the charity's staffing structure is aligned with the four priority areas of work defined in RCCE's Strategy, update (see sections 1 and 2 of this report).

In addition to the Executive Director, the charity presently has 35 field-based Community Agents working in the districts of Uttlesford, Braintree, Tendring, Colchester, Maldon, Rochford, Castle Point, Brentwood, Epping, Harlow, Basildon and Chelmsford, 16 field-based Kinder Essex (formerly United in Kind) Coaches working in the districts of Braintree, Tendring, Colchester, Maldon, Harlow, Epping, Rochford, Castle Point, Basildon, Chelmsford, Uttlesford and Brentwood and 10 members of staff predominantly working from home or based at RCCE's Threshelfords Business Park office.

DIRECTORS' REPORT – continued

6. OTHER REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Bankers

The charity's bankers for the year were:

Unity Trust Bank plc
Four Bridley Place
Birmingham
B1 2JB

And also

Barclays Bank plc
40-41 High Street
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1BE

For investments we have an account with

CCLA
One Angel Lane
London
EC4R 3AR

Auditors

The charity's auditors throughout the year were:

Streets Audit LLP
Orderly House
Dragoon Road
Colchester
CO2 7FU

Approved by Dr J Bettley JP DL FSA (Chair)
3rd June 2026

DIRECTORS' REPORT – continued

STATEMENT OF DIRECTORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Charity law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the excess of net income or of net expenditure of the company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless this is inappropriate.

The directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ESSEX

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Rural Community Council of Essex Limited (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2026 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activity, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cashflows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2026, and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Emphasis of matter – defined benefit pension scheme

In forming our opinion, we have considered the adequacy of the disclosures made in Note 1viii) and Note 12 of the financial statements concerning the company's defined benefit pension scheme and the application of a true and fair override of Section 28 of Financial Reporting Standard 102. In view of the significance of this information we consider that it should be drawn to your attention, but our opinion is not modified in this respect.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the trustees' annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements, or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ESSEX – continued

Other information - continued
work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.
We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006
In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Directors' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception
In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Directors' Report.
We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit**;** or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies' regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the Trustees' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees
As explained more fully in the Statement of directors' responsibilities, the trustees who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.
In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements
We have been appointed as auditors under Section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Act and relevant regulations made of having effect thereunder.
Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.
Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ESSEX – continued

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements - continued

The audit tests, including planning procedures, adopted for the audit of these financial statements are designed to assess and detect the risk of irregularities, including fraud. Our risk assessment of the likelihood of irregularities included the high degree of involvement of the experienced directors, which reduces the risk of irregularities. The engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

We identified the laws and regulations applicable to the charity through discussions with trustees and other management, and from our commercial knowledge and experience of the sector.
We focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the charity, including the Companies Act 2006, Charities Act 2011, Employment Law and Data Protection.

We assessed the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations identified above through making enquiries of management. These were communicated within the audit team regularly and the team remained alert to instances of non-compliance throughout the audit.
We identified the greatest potential for fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations in the following areas, and the specific procedures performed to address them are described below:

- We obtained an understanding of the income process and the flow of financial information to the general ledger and how this is classified as restricted and unrestricted.
- Cut-off testing was performed at the year-end date by reviewing revenue which had been accrued for and revenue that had been recognised after date to identify any transaction which had been erroneously recognised in the incorrect period. The same testing was carried out for expenditure.
- In line with all audits under ISAs (UK), we are also required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override. In addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, we reviewed accounting records for any unusual adjustments.

In addition to the above, our procedures to respond to the risk identified included the following:
- Reviewing financial statement disclosures by testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with provisions of relevant laws and regulations described as having a direct effect on the financial statements.
- Performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risk of material misstatement due to fraud.
- Enquiring of management concerning actual and potential litigation and claims, and instances of non-compliance for the year.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.
A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/Our-Work/Audit/Audit-and-assurance/Standards-and-guidance/Standards-and-guidance-for-auditors/Auditors-responsibilities-for-audit/Description-of-auditors-responsibilities-for-audit.aspx. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ESSEX – continued

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements – continued

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Michael Greene BSc FCCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)

For and on behalf of Streets Audit
Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor

Date:

Streets Audit LLP
Orderly House
Dragoon Road
Colchester
CO2 7FU

THE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ESSEX
A Charitable Company Limited By Guarantee
Registered Charity No. 1097009

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (including Income & Expenditure Account) YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2026 £	Total 2025 £
Income from:			Note 11		Note 15
Charitable activities	2	334,035	1,372,555	1,706,590	*1,771,209*
Donations		1,275	4,850	6,125	*6,014*
Investments					
Rents receivable	1v	9,806	-	9,806	*2,688*
Interest receivable		25,910	-	25,910	*32,074*
Total income		371,026	1,377,405	1,748,431	*1,811,985*
Expenditure on:					
Charitable activities	3	338,195	1,480,129	1,818,324	*1,686,121*
Investment management					
Rental overheads	1v	6,582	-	6,582	*7,751*
			-		
Total expenditure		344,777	1,480,129	1,824,906	*1,693,872*
Net income before other recognised gains / (Losses)		26,249	(102,724)	(76,475)	*118,133*
Gain on revaluation of fixed assets		-	-	-	*41,720*
Net income after other recognised gains / (Losses)		26,249	(102,724)	(76,475)	*159,833*
Total funds brought forward		1,078,745	500,547	1,579,292	*1,419,459*
Total funds carried forward		£1,104,994	£397,823	£1,502,817	*£1,579,292*

The notes on pages 19 to 33 form part of these financial statements.

THE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ESSEX
A Charitable Company Limited By Guarantee
Registered Charity No. 1097009

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 MARCH 2026

	Notes	2026 £	2025 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	4	725,900	*730,000*
Investments		-	-
		725,900	*730,000*
Current assets			
Debtors	5	112,703	*208,275*
Cash at bank and in hand		741,163	*703,949*
		853,866	*912,224*
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	6	(76,949)	*(62,932)*
Net current assets		776,917	*849,292*
Total assets less current liabilities		1,502,817	*1,579,292*
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	6	-	-
Net assets		£1,502,817	*£1,579,292*
Restricted funds	10	397,823	*500,547*
Unrestricted funds	11		
Designated capital fund		725,900	*730,000*
Free core charitable funds		379,094	*348,745*
Total funds		£1,502,817	*£1,579,292*

Approved by the Board on 3rd June 2026 and signed on its behalf by:

……. Dr J Bettley JP DL FSA
(Chair)

The notes on pages 19 to 33 form part of these financial statements.

THE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ESSEX
A Charitable Company Limited By Guarantee
Registered Charity No. 1097009

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total 2026 £	Total 2025 £
					Note 16
Net income as per the Statement of Financial Activities		26,249	(102,724)	(76,475)	*159,833*
Adjustments for:					
Rents receivable		(9,806)	-	(9,806)	*(2,688)*
Interest receivable		(25,910)	-	(25,910)	*(32,074)*
Rental overheads payable		6,582	-	6,582	*7,752*
Depreciation charges		4,100	-	4,100	*(41,516)*
Decrease/(increase) in debtors		28,218	66,681	94,899	*(140,521)*
Increase/(decrease) in creditors		18,366	(4,355)	14,011	*255*
Net cash provided by operating activities		47,799	(40,398)	7,401	*(48,959)*
Cash flows from investing activities:					
Rents received		10,478	-	10,478	*2,016*
Interest received		25,910	-	25,910	*32,074*
Rental overheads paid		(6,575)	-	(6,575)	*(7,981)*
Net cash provided by investing Activities		29,813	-	29,813	*26,109*
Net change in cash		77,612	(40,398)	37,214	*(22,850)*
Cash balances brought forward		347,489	356,460	703,949	*726,799*
Cash balances carried forward		£425,101	£316,062	£741,163	*£703,949*

The notes on pages 19 to 33 form part of these financial statements.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

i) Basis of accounting

These Financial Statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to include freehold property at fair value and in accordance with the Companies Act 2006. They form the accounts of the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE), a public benefit entity as defined by FRS102 (the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland). At the time of approving these Financial Statements, the directors have a reasonable expectation that the company has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. They continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting as a result.

ii) Presentation currency and rounding

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

iii) Recognition and allocation of income and expenditure

All income is accounted for on a receivable basis, net of any applicable VAT. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis. All income and expenditure is allocated to a particular activity where it relates directly to that activity. Support functions (including finance, human resources, facilities management and governance) are apportioned across the activities that the functions support. Overhead costs (including office running costs and consumables, information technology, insurances and affiliation fees) are similarly apportioned. Taken together, all these costs are referred to as 'support costs' in Note 3 to the Financial Statements. To the extent that activity-related funding agreements allow, support costs are apportioned to activities based on the full-time equivalent number of staff employed within that activity.

iv) Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds comprise grants and donations, contract income and other income receivable or generated for the objects of the charity without further specified purpose. In RCCE's case this includes the charity's core commissioning grants from Essex County Council and Defra (the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs), both of which are applied across all the charity's objects and are fully utilised over the course of the year. Unrestricted funds which are not utilised during the year are carried forward as general funds. Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the directors for particular purposes. Restricted funds are grants or other donations which are required to be used for specific purposes laid down by the donor.

v) Long-leasehold property

RCCE occupies a `purpose built' office at Threshelfords Business Park in Feering, held under a 999 year lease acquired in October 2006. The building is held for operational use as a tangible fixed asset but, from time to time, if the company has insufficient staff/activities to fill the entire building, sections of the building are rented out on short-term operating leases. The prime reason for owning the building is to meet RCCE operational needs, and because the fair value of the rented element of the building is variable and cannot be measured reliably without undue cost, it is the company's policy to account for the entire building as long-leasehold property within tangible fixed assets (see Note 4). In accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice (FRS102), the rental income from the property is separately disclosed in the Statement of Financial Activities, alongside a fair share of the overhead costs associated with running the building. The future minimum rental receipts are disclosed in Note 9 to the Financial Statements.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued

vi) Depreciation

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each 'high-value' asset (costing in excess of £1,000) over its estimated useful life:

Long leasehold buildings	-	1% on revalued amount
Long leasehold land	-	Zero
Office equipment	-	15% on cost
ICT hardware & software	-	25% on cost
Fixtures & fittings	-	10% on cost

Any office equipment, ICT hardware & software and fixtures & fittings that are specifically financed by restricted project funds are fully written off in the year that the expenditure occurs.

vii) Financial instruments

All the company's financial assets and financial liabilities are 'Basic Financial Instruments', as defined in Section 11 of FRS102. Accordingly:

1. All the company's fixed asset investments are initially measured at transaction price excluding transaction costs and will be subsequently measured at market value at each reporting date. Changes in market value are recognised in net income/(expenditure) for the year. Transaction costs are expensed as incurred.
2. All the company's other financial assets, comprising trade debtors and bank balances, are measured at the cash consideration expected to be received and are not discounted.
3. All the company's financial liabilities, comprising trade/other creditors and the company's mortgage liability, are measured at the cash consideration expected to be paid. The amounts falling due on the mortgage are not discounted back to their present value as the time value of money is considered by the Board to be immaterial.

viii) Defined benefit pension scheme

The preparation of the financial statements requires the Directors to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported. These estimates and judgements are continually reviewed and are based on experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

RCCE participates in a multi-employer defined benefit pension scheme - the Essex Local Government Pension Scheme - administered by Essex County Council. The scheme has been closed to new members since 31 May 2016. Up until 31 March 2017, the pension liabilities and assets were recorded in line with Section 28 of FRS102. The Directors reconsidered this assumption in March 2018 and judged that, were the company's defined benefit pension liabilities and assets to be recorded in line with Section 28 of FRS102, this would not provide a true and fair view of the company's financial position at the Balance Sheet date, nor of its net income/expenditure for the year then ended. Instead, the Directors judged that it would be true and fair to include neither a net pension liability nor a net pension asset in the financial statements and that, from 1 April 2017, employer contributions should be charged in the accounts as they become payable in accordance with the rules of the scheme. The Directors' reasons for making this judgement are fully explained in Note 12 to these Financial Statements.

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued

ix) Defined contribution pension scheme

The company participates in a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees who are not members of the defined benefit pension scheme. The assets of the defined contribution scheme are held separately from those of the company in an independently administered fund. Employer contributions are charged in the accounts as they become payable in accordance with the rules of the scheme.

x) Taxation

The company is a charity within the meaning of section 506(1) of the Taxes Act 1988. Accordingly, the company is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within the categories covered by Section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that such income or gains are applied to exclusively charitable purposes.

2 INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Activity	2026 £	2025 £
Community Engagement	77,213	*68,042*
Rural Housing Enabler Service	29,170	*48,700*
Village Halls Advice Service	44,798	*48,067*
Rural England Prosperity Fund Maldon	-	*40,000*
Community Agents	801,292	*615,093*
Kinder Essex	408,158	*414,494*
Strategic Influencing and Partnership Working	182,853	*152,990*
North West Ipswich Big Local 1	-	*41,895*
North West Ipswich Big Local Subordinated Loan	-	*22,030*
North West Ipswich Big Local 2	30,194	*156,110*
Grassroots Voluntary & Community Support	-	*30,000*
Hackney Wick Big Local	83,826	*75,664*
LB Hackney Wick Funds	3,000	-
Defra Rural Housing Programme	46,086	*58,124*
	£1,706,590	£1,771,209

The above figures include the following 'government grants':

Source	Activity		
Essex County Council	All unrestricted activities	150,000	*150,000*
Essex County Council	Grassroots Vol & Com Support	-	*30,000*
Essex County Council	Kinder Essex Grant	-	*300*
DEFRA (Via ACRE)	All unrestricted activities	46,875	*46,875*
DEFRA (via ACRE)	Rural Housing Programme	46,086	*58,124*
District/Borough Councils	Rural Housing Enabler	9,000	*6,000*
Total Government Grants		£251,961	*£291,299*

3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Year to 31 March 2026	Direct costs £	Support costs £	Total 2026 £
Community Engagement	64,190	13,985	78,175
Rural Housing Enabler Service	18,346	11,188	29,534
Village Halls Advice Service	35,567	9,789	45,356
Rural England Prosperity Fund Maldon	1,971	-	1,971
Growing Communities	2,320	-	2,320
Strategic Influencing and Partnerships	148,196	34,962	183,158
Community Agents	679,375	55,502	734,877
Kinder Essex	441,096	35,416	476,512
Grassroots Voluntary and Comm Support	-	-	-
NWI Big Local 1	97	-	97
NWI Big Local 2	45,602	1,438	47,040
NWI Big Local Subordinated Loan	5,030	-	5,030
HW Big Local	146,504	7,595	154,099
LB Hackney Wick Funds	3,000	-	3,000
Defra Rural Housing Programme	45,623	11,532	57,155
Restricted Grant Making Funds (Note 11)	-	-	-
	1,636,917	181,407	1,818,324

Year to 31 March 2025	Direct costs £	Support costs £	Total 2025 £
Community Engagement	44,553	16,020	*60,573*
Rural Housing Enabler Service	27,334	16,020	43,354
Village Halls Advice Service	33,446	9,345	42,791
Rural England Prosperity Fund Maldon	22,466	-	22,466
Growing Communities	3,426	-	3,426
Strategic Influencing and Partnerships	113,294	36,046	149,340
Community Agents	585,467	46,131	631,598
Kinder Essex	365,591	29,056	394,647
Find Your Active	25,169	1,312	26,481
Grassroots Voluntary and Comm Support	10,695	-	10,695
NWI Big Local 1	73,253	3,840	77,093
NWI Big Local 2	131,831	7,434	139,265
NWI Big Local Subordinated Loan	17,000	-	17,000
HW Big Local	5,392	-	5,392
Defra Rural Housing Programme	50,468	11,532	62,000
Restricted Grant Making Funds (Note 11)	-	-	-
	1,509,385	176,736	1,686,121

3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES - continued

Salary and on-costs

The average number of staff employed during the year was 63 (2025: 63). All the company's salary and on-costs are included in total expenditure on charitable activities, as follows:

	2026 £	2025 £
Wages and salaries	1,144,159	*1,075,294*
Employer's national insurance contributions	114,650	*65,974*
Employer's contributions – defined benefit pension scheme	99,937	*98,495*
Employer's contributions – defined contribution pension scheme	18,123	*15,614*
Total salary and on-costs	£1,376,869	*£1,255,377*

The above figures include accrued holiday pay of £26,236 (2025: £10,296).

One employee earned more than £60,000 per annum (2025: one), and no employee received any other benefits from the company (2025: Zero).

Included within the above figures include salary and employer's pension contributions for the Executive Director and members of key management personnel of £153,260 (2025: £146,307).

These individuals were re-imbursed for expenses amounting to £57 (£2025: £187).

Grants payable

Direct costs include grants paid to third parties of £2,865 (2025: £109,208) – Note 10 (Restricted Funds) provides an analysis by activity. Of this sum, £2,464.97 was paid under North West Ipswich Big Local Subordinated Loan (2025: £2,000), £400 was paid to Essex School food and Farming (2025 £400), £0 was paid to various organisations under North West Ipswich Grant 2 (2025: £74,914), £0 was paid to various organisations under North West Ipswich 1 Grant (2025: £14,630), £0 was paid to various CVS Groups under Grassroots and Voluntary Support Grant (2025: £10,695).

Support costs

The constituent elements of the company's support costs, and the method of their apportionment to the company's charitable activities, are explained in Note 1iii) to these Financial Statements. Support costs include £4,100 for depreciation (2025: £204) and the following amounts in respect of governance costs for the company:

	2026 £	2025 £
Salary and on-costs	*7,679*	*7,285*
Statutory audit fees	9,375	*8,250*
	£17,054	*£15,535*

4 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Long-leasehold property £	Office equipment £	ICT hardware & software £	Fixtures & fittings £	Total £
Cost / Valuation					
As at 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026	730,000	18,612	2,611	4,704	755,927
Depreciation					
As at 1 April 2025	-	18,612	2,611	4,704	25,927
Charge for period	4,100	-	-	-	4,100
As at 31 March 2026	4,100	18,612	2,611	4,704	30,027
Net book value					
As at 31 March 2025	*£730,000*	*£-*	*£ -*	*£-*	*£730,000*
As at 31 March 2026	£725,900	£-	£ -	£-	£725,900

The long-leasehold property comprises a `purpose built' office at Threshelfords Business Park in Feering, held under a 999-year lease acquired in October 2006. The property was revalued, in accordance with the current edition of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors' UK and global professional standards, by an independent valuer, Fenn Wright chartered surveyors, in March 2025. Had the long-leasehold property not been revalued its carrying (net book) value at 31 March 2026 would have been £834,235 (2025: £839,462).

5 DEBTORS

	2026 £	2025 £
Trade debtors	92,405	*188,542*
Other debtors	-	-
Prepayments	20,298	*19,733*
	£112,703	*£208,275*

6 CREDITORS

	2026 £	2025 £
Amounts falling due within one year		
Trade/other creditors	-	*2,537*
Income received in advance	12,069	*5,562*
Accruals	44,038	*34,275*
Value added tax	(1,104)	*3,124*
Pay-as-you-earn tax (PAYE)	21,946	*17,434*
	£76,949	*£62,932*

7 FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

	2026 £	2025 £
Financial Assets		
Trade debtors (Note 5)	92,405	*188,542*
Cash at bank and in hand	741,163	*703,949*
Carrying value of financial assets	£833,568	*£892,491*
Financial Liabilities		
Trade/other creditors (Note 6)	76,949	*62,932*
Carrying value of financial liabilities	£76,949	*£62,932*

8 AMOUNTS RECEIVABLE UNDER OPERATING LEASES

The company's minimum future rental income - receivable from tenants of the Threshelfords Business Park building - is as follows:

	2026 £	2025 £
Receivable within 1 year	9,430	*4,686*
Receivable between 1 and 5 years	14,145	*2,344*
	£23,575	*£7,030*

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

9 AMOUNTS PAYABLE UNDER OPERATING LEASES

The company's minimum future rental liabilities are as follows:

	2026 £	2025 £
Payable within 1 year	622	*950*
Payable between 1 and 5 years	1,244	*1,865*
	£1,866	*£2,815*

10 RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Balance 1 April 2025	Total income	Expenditure			Balance 31 March 2026
			Activities under-taken directly	Grant funding of activities	Total expenditure	
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Restricted Activities described in the Directors' Report						
Community Agents	164,007	801,292	734,878	-	734,878	230,421
Kinder Essex	216,063	410,508	476,512	-	476,512	150,059
ECC Grassroots	19,305	-	-	-	-	19,305
Growing Communities	1,509	2,500	2,320	-	2,320	1,689
Defra RHE Programme	717	46,086	57,155	-	57,155	(10,352)
NWI Big Local 1	97	-	97	-	97	-
NWI Big Local 2	16,846	30,194	47,040	-	47,040	-
NWI Sub Loan	5,030	-	2,565	2,465	5,030	-
Hackney Wick Big Local	70,273	86,825	157,098	-	157,098	-
Restricted Grant-Making Funds						
'Natural Environment' Project	6,700	-	-	-	-	6,700
	£500,547	£1,377,405	£1,477,665	£2,465	£1,480,130	£397,823

Defra RHE Grant is paid in arrears which is the reason it is showing as a deficit as at 31/3/2026.

Restricted Grant-Making Funds

'Natural Environment' Project

This grant has been provided by Essex County Council to fund a project that will assist with the delivery of Priority 10 of the Essex Rural Strategy – 'Protecting and promoting our natural environment'. Essex Wildlife Trust, as the lead for Priority 10, will be identifying a project in due course. RCCE, as the managing body for the Essex Rural Partnership, is holding the funds until then.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

11 UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

	Designated Capital Fund £	Free Core Charitable Funds £	Total Unrestricted Funds £
As at 1 April 2025	730,000	348,745	1,078,745
Net movement in unrestricted funds	-	26,249	26,248
Transfers to / from Designated Capital Fund:			
Reduction in value of long leasehold property	(4,100)	4,100	-
As at 31 March 2026	£725,900	£379,094	£1,104,994

12 DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEME

RCCE participates in the Essex Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), a multi-employer defined benefit statutory pension scheme administered by Essex County Council. The scheme has been closed to new members since 31 May 2016.

Since 31 March 2018 the Directors have made the following judgements in respect of the company's Balance Sheet reporting:

1. Ongoing valuation - reporting a pension asset account would have been wrong for many reasons including the trustees responsibilities for prudence, the lack of likelihood of conversion of a balance sheet asset to cash and the lack of any underlying detail in the actuary's 'ongoing' report.

2. FRS 102 valuation - reporting a pension liability would also not have been "true and fair" as it was felt clear from ongoing valuations that RCCE has no actual pension deficit as normally measured. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, in their guidance on FRS102, emphasises that "true and fair" has to take precedence over financial reporting standards.

3. The only "true and fair" approach was to recognise neither an asset nor a liability in the Balance Sheet, but to account for employer contributions in the Statement of Financial Activities as they become payable in accordance with the rules of the scheme.

Nothing has changed to persuade the Directors that they should not continue to apply this true and fair override of Section 28 of FRS102 to the company's Financial Statements.

12 DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEME - Continued

A new ongoing valuation was completed as of 31 March 2023. Current funding position as follows:

	Ongoing Valuation 2023	**FRS102 2026**	**FRS102 2025**
Financial assumptions			
Salary increases	3.50%	2.90%	2.90%
Pension increases (CPI)	2.50%	2.90%	2.90%
Discount rate	4.20%	6.10%	5.85%

	Ongoing Valuation 2023	FRS102 2026	FRS102 2025
Present value of defined benefit liabilities	(£2,193,000)	(£2,125,000)	(£1,951,000)
Fair value of fund assets	£2,937,000	£4,689,000	£4,277,000
Impact of asset ceiling	-	-	-
Net defined benefit pension asset/(liability)	£744,000	£2,564,000	£2,326,000

FRS102 pension valuation as at 31 March 2026

The information below is taken from the actuary's FRS102 pension valuation as at 31 March 2026, and is provided to enable the reader to understand how the company's Balance Sheets as at 31 March 2026 and 31 March 2025, and Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA) for the years then ended, would have looked if the Directors had decided to value the company's pension liabilities and assets using actuarial assumptions that comply with Section 28 of FRS102.

To arrive at the RCCE's FRS102 pension valuation as at 31 March 2026, the scheme actuary, Barnett Waddingham, applied the following actuarial assumptions that comply with Section 28 of FRS 102:

	2026	**2025**
Financial assumptions		
RPI increases	3.30%	*3.20%*
Salary increases	2.90%	*2.90%*
Pension increases	2.90%	*2.90%*
Discount rate	6.10%	*5.85%*
Assumed life expectancy from age 65 years		
Retiring today - males	22.0	*20.8*
Retiring today - females	24.2	*23.3*
Retiring in 20 years - males	23.5	*22.1*
Retiring in 20 years - females	25.9	*24.8*

12 DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEME – continued

The actuary's estimated asset allocation for the company as at the year-end was as follows:

	2026	2025
Equities	54%	*55%*
Gilts / other bonds	1%	*2%*
Property	9%	*8%*
Cash / alternative assets / other managed funds	36%	*35%*

These assumptions gave rise to the valuations below.

It should be noted that, under FRS102, the `current service cost' in the SOFA is assessed by the actuary to be the value of benefits accrued by members over the accounting period in question. In the year to 31 March 2026, this was estimated by the actuary to be £48,000 in excess of the employer contributions payable in accordance with the rules of the scheme (2025: £42k in excess).

Analysis of the amounts that would have been recognised in the SOFA under FRS102	**2026** £'000	**2025** £'000
Current service cost	(50)	*(59)*
Net interest on the defined benefit pension liability	137	-
Total amount that would have been recognised in net income	87	*(59)*
Return on fund assets in excess of interest	150	*8*
Other actuarial gains	-	-
Changes in financial & demographic assumptions	23	*348*
Experience (gain) on defined benefit obligations	(120)	-
Changes in effect of asset ceiling	-	*1,928*
Total amount that would have been recognised as an actuarial (loss)/gain	53	*2,284*
Net amount that would have been recognised in the SOFA	53	*2,225*

Analysis of the amount that would have been recognised in the Balance Sheet under FRS102	**2026** £'000	**2025** £'000
Present value of defined benefit scheme liabilities	2,125	*1,951*
Fair value of fund assets (bid value)	4,689	*4,277*
Impact of asset ceiling	-	-
Net defined benefit pension liability/(asset)	(2,564)	*(2,326)*

12 DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEME – continued

Reconciliation of the opening and closing balances of the present value of the defined benefit scheme liabilities (under FRS102)	**2026** £'000	**2025** £'000
Opening present value of defined benefit scheme liabilities	1,951	*2,143*
Current service cost	50	*59*
Interest cost	112	*105*
Changes in financial & demographic assumptions	(23)	*(348)*
Experience (gain) on defined benefit obligations	120	-
Estimated benefits paid net of transfers in	(102)	*(25)*
Contributions by scheme participants	17	*17*
Closing present value of defined benefit scheme liabilities	2,125	*1,951*

Reconciliation of the opening and closing balances of the fair value of the fund assets (under FRS 102)	**2026** £'000	**2025** £'000
Opening fair value of fund assets	4,277	*3,981*
Interest on assets	251	*197*
Return on assets less interest	150	*8*
Other actuarial gains	(2)	*(2)*
Estimated benefits paid net of transfers in	(102)	*(25)*
Contributions by employer	98	*101*
Contributions by scheme participants	17	*17*
Closing fair value of fund assets	4,689	*4,277*

13 ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

31 March 2026	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £
Tangible fixed assets	725,900	-	725,900
Current assets – debtors	11,801	100,902	112,703
Current assets – cash at bank and in hand	425,101	316,062	741,163
Current liabilities	(57,808)	(19,141)	(76,949)
Net assets at 31 March 2026	£1,104,994	£397,823	£1,502,817

31 March 2025	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds £
Tangible fixed assets	*730,000*	-	*730,000*
Current assets – debtors	*40,690*	*167,585*	*208,275*
Current assets – cash at bank and in hand	*347,489*	*356,460*	*703,949*
Current liabilities	*(39,434)*	*(23,498)*	*(62,932)*
Net assets at 31 March 2025	*£1,078,745*	*£500,547*	*£1,579,292*

14 RELATED PARTIES

Directors

RCCE is controlled by its Board of Directors. No member of the Board of Directors receives remuneration from the company. and no expenses were reimbursed to members of the Board during the year (2025: Zero). An up-to-date register of directors' interests is maintained, and all directors are required to declare any potential conflicts of interest at meetings of the Board and its sub-committees.

During the year amounts of £400 were paid to Essex Agricultural Society, a company with a common directorship (2025: £400). This was for activities deemed to be for charitable purposes. No amounts were outstanding at year end.

During the year amounts of £520 were paid to T Sapsford, a close family member of key management personnel (2025: £700). This was for activities deemed to be for charitable purposes. No amounts were outstanding at year end.

15 COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (including Income & Expenditure Account)

Year ended 31 March 2025	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total £
Income from:			
Charitable activities	*357,798*	*1,413,411*	*1,771,209*
Donations	*3,217*	*2,797*	*6,014*
Investments			
Rents receivable	*2,688*	-	*2,688*
Interest receivable	*32,074*	-	*32,074*
Realised Gain on Investment	-	-	-
Total income	*395,777*	*1,416,208*	*1,811,985*
Expenditure on:			
Charitable activities	*318,524*	*1,367,597*	*1,686,121*
Investment management			
Rental overheads	*7,751*	-	*7,751*
Total expenditure	*326,275*	*1,367,597*	*1,693,872*
Net income before other recognised Gains / (Losses)	*69,502*	*48,611*	*118,113*
Gain on revaluation of fixed assets	*41,720*	-	*41,720*
Net income after other recognised gains / (Losses)	*111,222*	*48,611*	*159,833*
Total funds brought forward	*967,523*	*451,936*	*1,419,459*
Total funds carried forward	*£1,078,745*	*£500,547*	*£1,579,292*

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

16 COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

Year ended 31 March 2025	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total £
Net income as per the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities	*111,222*	*48,611*	*159,833*
Adjustments for:			
Rents receivable	*(2,688)*	-	*(2,688)*
Interest receivable	*(32,074)*	-	*(32,074)*
Rental overheads payable	*7,752*	-	*7,752*
Depreciation charges	*(41,516)*	-	*(41,516)*
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	*(5,221)*	*(135,300)*	*(140,521)*
(Decrease) in creditors	*(3,448)*	*3,703*	*255*
Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities	*34,027*	*(82,986)*	*(48,959)*
Cash flows from investing activities:			
Rents received	*2,016*	-	*2,016*
Interest received	*32,074*	-	*32,074*
Realised Gain on investment	-	-	-
Rental overheads paid	*(7,981)*	-	*(7,981)*
Net cash provided by investing activities	*26,109*	-	*26,109*
Cashflows from Financing Activities			
Net Cash used from investments	-	-	-
Net cash (used in) financing activities	-	-	-
Net change in cash	*60,136*	*(82,986)*	*(22,850)*
Cash balances brought forward	*287,353*	*439,446*	*726,799*
Cash balances carried forward	*£347,489*	*£356,460*	*£703,949*