



**Economic Development and Property Team
Achievements Review and Impact Assessment
for
Rossendale Borough Council**

January 2021



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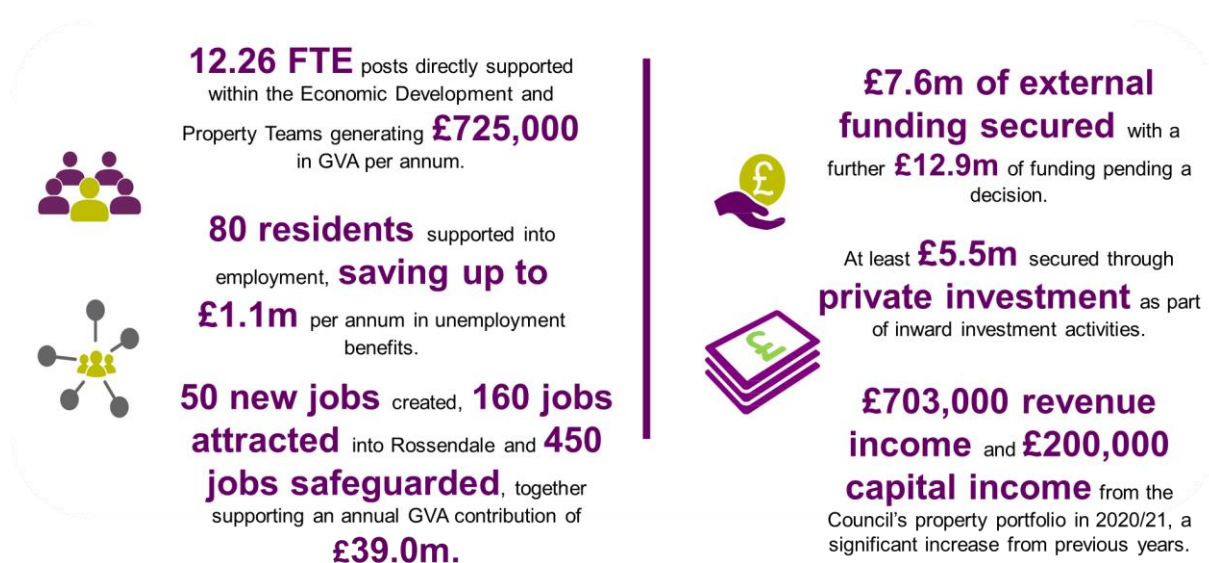
Key Messages

The Rossendale Borough Council Economic Development and Property teams have made considerable progress against the actions outlined in the Economic Development Strategy for Rossendale since 2018, despite challenging wider circumstances.

22 actions have already been delivered in full

Strong progress has made against a further **16 actions**

The teams' activities have generated considerable impacts for the Rossendale economy, supporting the businesses and residents that the Council serves, as well as strengthening income streams. Quantified benefits arising from the teams' activities include:



Relative to the cost to the Council of funding the teams, the return on investment of these benefits is considerable, equating to:



1 Introduction

Study Aim

1.1 ekosgen were commissioned by Rossendale Borough Council (RBC) in December 2020 to prepare an impact assessment of RBC's Economic Development and Property teams. The aim of the study was to understand:

- how the activities undertaken by RBC's Economic Development and Property teams between 2018 and 2020 have contributed to meeting the priorities of the Economic Development Strategy for Rossendale (2018-2033)¹ and specifically the actions identified for the 2018/19 to 2020/21 period; and
- achievements against the Economic Development Strategy for Rossendale's success measures and the wider impacts of activities on Rossendale's economy.

1.2 As far as possible, identified benefits have been set against the costs of supporting the teams to demonstrate the return on investment generated by their work.

Methodology

1.3 The impact assessment combines a review of activities delivered to explore the role that the Economic Development and Property teams play within the local authority area and the benefits and impacts that have been secured as a result. The core elements of the approach taken were:

- An initial fact-finding call with the economic development and property teams to understand the team structure, focus of activity over the assessment period and the records available to inform the assessment.
- Review of the records of activity delivered by the teams and supporting documentation held (e.g. press releases, funding bids, council reports and visitor numbers).
- An online survey of businesses (securing 61 responses) who have engaged with the economic development and property teams to understand support needs and their experience of working with the teams.
- Telephone consultations with a sample of businesses who have engaged with the teams, across the service offers provided, to explore their experience and examples of benefits secured.
- Assessment of the progress made by the teams against the priority actions and impacts identified in the Economic Development Strategy for Rossendale over the period January 2018 to the end of December 2020 – see Section 2 for further details.
- Determining the impacts arising from the activities undertaken by the teams.

1.4 Across the analysis, overarching findings are outlined along with relevant examples of how the team has worked with businesses to achieve the benefits identified.

Structure of the Report

1.5 The structure of the report is set out below:

- **Section 2:** presents the structure of the Economic Development and Property teams that have been reviewed, the activities they deliver, and their strategic focus.

¹ <https://investinrossendale.com/why-rossendale/working-in-rossendale/>

- **Section 3:** highlights the context in which the team has been operating, including the consideration of the challenges posed by Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic during the period considered, and the socio-economic conditions within Rossendale between 2018 and 2020.
- **Sections 4 to 8:** consider the achievements, impacts and outcomes under each priority of the Economic Development Strategy for Rossendale, as follows:
 - **Section 4:** Priority 1 – to establish thriving town centres.
 - **Section 5:** Priority 2 – to establish and invest in the Rossendale brand.
 - **Section 6:** Priority 3 – to create a strong and thriving business base.
 - **Section 7:** Priority 4 – to develop the visitor economy.
 - **Section 8:** Priority 5 – to ensure residents and communities reach their full economic potential.
- **Section 9:** sets out conclusions from the assessment, including consideration of the value for money delivered by the two services².

² Please note: the financial costs in this report exclude the contribution of the Director of Economic Development.

2 Team Structure and Remit

Team Structure

2.1 As outlined below, the structures of Rossendale Borough Council's Economic Development and Property teams have changed over the assessment period from 2018 to 2020, reflecting the availability of funding and associated focus of activities. An overview of the team structure, as it stood at the time of completing the assessment in January 2021, is set out at Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Economic Development and Property team structure



Economic Development

2.2 The Economic Development team currently consists of the following staff. The team has grown substantially over 2020; in 2019 the team consisted of only the Head of Regeneration, one Core Officer (who went on maternity leave in late 2019) and a Temporary Officer. The Bacup, Haslingden and Whitaker posts were created in early 2020, and the Business Advisor was recruited in August 2020, building the team's capacity.

Table 2.1: Economic Development team (as of January 2021)

Post	FTE	Type of employment	Funding route
Head of Regeneration	1 (splits time between both teams)	Permanent	Core (ED & P ³)
Core Officer	0.8	Permanent	Core (ED)
Core Officer – markets and derelict buildings	1	Maternity cover in 2019/20, now fixed term to June 2021	Core (ED)
Bacup HSHAZ Officer	1	Fixed term to March 2024	HSHAZ + RBC match
Haslingden NLHF Officer	1	Fixed term to March 2025 (subject to approval in June 2021)	NLHF + RBC match
Business Advisor	1	Fixed term to December 2021	UK Government Covid-19 Response Fund
Whitaker Project Manager	0.6 (reducing to 0.4 in 2022)	Fixed term to December 2022	NLHF + RBC match
Total FTE posts	6.4	1.8 permanent 4.6 fixed term	

³ ED = economic development and P = property throughout this section

2.3 The cost of the Economic Development service is £120,000 per annum for the core RBC-funded team, rising to £217,000 for the wider team of 6.4 FTEs⁴. However, in 2020/21, there is expected to be an under-spend due to not all posts being filled for the whole year, giving an expected cost of £93,000.

2.4 The team also includes the following Rossendale Works employability service staff. Again, the team has grown recently with the Rossendale Works Officer recruited on a temporary basis in 2019 and extended in 2020 and the Rossendale Youth Officer appointed in early 2020.

Table 2.2: Rossendale Works team (as of January 2021)

Post	FTE	Type of employment	Funding route
Rossendale Works Officer	1	Permanent	Employed by Active Lancashire, seconded to the ED team
Rossendale Youth Officer	1	Fixed term contract to April 2022	RBC/ESIF/DWP
Support Worker	1	Fixed term contract to April 2022	RBC/ESIF/DWP
Support Worker		Fixed term contract to April 2022	RBC/ESIF/DWP
Total FTEs	3.0	1 permanent 2 fixed term	

2.5 The Property team currently consists of the following staff. The team is relatively new – aside from the Head of Regeneration, the three members of staff in the Property team have all been recruited in the last 18 months. The cost of the Property team is £70,000 per annum for the following four posts.

Table 2.3: Property team (as of January 2021)

Post	FTE	Type of employment	Funding route
Head of Regeneration	0 ⁵	Permanent	Core (ED & P)
Senior Property Officer	0.86	Permanent	Core (P)
Property Officer	1	Permanent	Core (P)
Trainee Property Officer	1	Permanent	Core (P)
Total FTEs	2.86	2.86 permanent	

Team Remit

2.6 Across both the Economic Development and Property teams there is a wide-ranging remit delivered by the small teams with each team member having a clear remit within the overall structure. The Economic Development team has a core function to:

- deliver the priorities and activities outlined in the Strategy;
- manage regeneration projects;
- support business growth and local employability; and
- promote the borough as an attractive place for inward investors.

2.7 The Property team manages around 1,500 estate assets including industrial estates, commercial leases, garages and land tenancies (plus unregistered land) which generate annual revenue and capital receipts to RBC. The team has a core function to:

- process property and land enquiries;

⁴ Please note: the financial costs exclude the Director of Economic Development and back office staff, who are out of scope of this report.

⁵ The post holder splits their time between the Economic Development and Property teams but as the costs have been captured under the Economic Development costs line the post has been counted there

- confirm title liability and ownership to instruct maintenance; and
- negotiate land and property acquisitions and lease renewals.

2.8 At present, the team is also tasked with establishing effective processes to manage the land and property portfolio and explore opportunities to raise income levels.

Strategic Focus

2.9 The work of the Economic Development and Property teams is guided by the Economic Development Strategy for Rossendale which was published in 2018 as part of the refreshed Corporate Strategy for the borough. The strategy outlines Rossendale's commitment to gain investment and ensure sustainable growth within the borough and sets a vision for Rossendale to show strong and sustainable growth by 2033 and act as a 'bridge' to Lancashire from Greater Manchester and Yorkshire.

2.10 Specifically, the Strategy seeks to:

- Attract private sector investment for employment sites and residential development worth c£550m.
- Secure over £200m of public sector investment required for rail and road infrastructure.
- Create over 1,600 new jobs, with more than 400 jobs in growth sectors.
- Achieve greater prosperity for all by raising income levels.
- Increase the business rate base on underdeveloped and under-utilised sites.

2.11 The Strategy is structured around five priority themes, highlighted in Table 2.4, reflecting the breadth of ambitions in Rossendale and the broad remit of the teams considered through this assessment.

Table 2.4: Economic Development Strategy priorities

Priority	Description
1	To establish thriving town centres of Rawtenstall, Bacup and Haslingden, each providing its own unique offer and a destination for shoppers and visitors.
2	Establish and invest in the Rossendale brand, promoting and increasing inward investment in Rossendale, attracting growth sector businesses and bringing quality employment.
3	Creating a strong and thriving business base , supporting new and existing businesses.
4	Developing the visitor economy , active leisure and Adrenaline Valley brand and cultural offer.
5	Ensuring residents and communities reach their full economic potential, enhanced employment, skills and educational opportunities.

2.12 Progress against these priorities and specifically the key actions identified for the period from 2018 to 2021 and the resulting outcomes and impacts are considered in Sections 4 to 8. A RAG (red-amber-green) rating system has been used to show the progress and direction of travel of each of the Strategy's key actions and success measures. The following ratings have been applied:

Table 2.5: RAG ratings system

Status	Progress against actions	Progress against success measures
Green	An action has been completed.	Performance against the measure has improved.
Amber	An action is underway and significant progress has been made.	There has been no notable change in performance.
Red	No or very limited progress has been made to deliver the action.	Performance against the measure has deteriorated.

3 The Delivery Context

Unprecedented Challenges

3.1 The period covered by this assessment, from the beginning of 2018 to the end of 2020, has been impacted by unprecedented circumstances that have been outside the control of RBC's Economic Development and Property teams and the businesses and communities that they serve. These circumstances will have impacted on the activities, outcomes and impacts achieved by the teams.

3.2 Over the course of the last year, the United Kingdom was placed into three national lockdowns of varying length to limit the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Rossendale has also been subject to local restrictions during the intervening periods that have further impacted residents and businesses.

3.3 The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have been felt at a national and local level. The UK Government has provided a number of funding streams and grants such as the job retention scheme – commonly referred to as the “furlough” scheme – to safeguard jobs and provide some assistance to businesses during the pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on Rossendale's economy has, however, continued to be severe. Between March and November 2020, the number of benefit claimants in Rossendale increased by 94%, higher than the increase at the Lancashire (89%) and North West (87%) levels. Take-up of the furlough scheme and financial support by Rossendale businesses are described in the next section.

3.4 Britain's vote to leave the European Union in 2016 and subsequent political uncertainty – including two national and three local elections – has also impacted upon business and consumer confidence for the past four years. Whilst the UK eventually left the EU with a Brexit deal at the end of December 2020, the terms and trading implications of the agreement were not known until very close to the date when new arrangements came into force. It will now also take time for arrangements to embed, with implications for businesses in Rossendale who export goods to Northern Ireland and the European Union. These circumstances may have impacted on the planning and performance of businesses in Rossendale, as has been the case across the UK.

Socio-Economic Conditions

3.5 Both the economic development priorities established and achievements recorded in Rossendale are best understood in the context of the baseline socio-economic conditions. Below, some key statistics are presented, using the most up to date statistics available at the time the assessment was prepared and the position as of 2018.

Population and Skills

3.6 Rossendale's population in 2019 was almost 71,500 having grown by 0.8% from the previous year. This represents growth in line with that of Lancashire as a whole and slightly ahead of the North West average (0.7%). Almost two thirds (62%, 44,100) of Rossendale's population were of working age (aged 16-64) in 2019, a share which is in line with Lancashire and the North West. The working age population grew by 0.3% from 2018, a slower rate of growth than for Lancashire (0.5%) and the North West (0.4%).

3.7 Around one in eight (12%) of Rossendale's population had no formal qualifications in 2019, this is higher than the rate in Lancashire and the North West (both 8%). Rossendale's rates of qualifications are below Lancashire's, the North West and England's rate in the working age population. The proportion of the working age population holding qualifications has decreased across all qualification levels from 2018 whilst the number of residents with no qualifications has increased.

Labour Market

3.8 Rossendale's employment rate was 85.7% for the 12-month period July 2019 to June 2020, a strong increase from 73.7% in July 2017 to June 2018, although much of this data pre-dates the Covid-19 pandemic impact on the labour market. This is a higher employment rate than for Lancashire (77.1%) and the North West (74.8%) as a whole.

3.9 Rossendale's key employment sectors in 2019 were Wholesale and retail (22%, 4,500 jobs), Manufacturing (20%, 4,000 jobs); Human health (11%, 2,250 jobs); and Education (10%, 2,125 jobs). The Wholesale and retail and Manufacturing sectors comprise a considerably greater share of Rossendale's employment base than at the Lancashire and North West levels.

3.10 During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in July 2020, 15% of Rossendale-based jobs were supported by the Job Retention Scheme, and this had fallen to 7% in October 2020. The rate of support was comparable to Lancashire (15%) and lower than the North West (16%) and England (17%), although the overall increase in benefits claimants throughout the Covid-19 lockdown was greater in Rossendale.

Table 3.1: Covid-19 job retention scheme

Area	July 2020		October 2020	
	Number	% take up	Number	% take up
Rossendale	4,900	15%	2,600	7%
Lancashire	81,500	15%	37,000	7%
North West	528,000	16%	244,900	7%
England	4,234,200	17%	1,897,400	7%

Source: UK Government coronavirus statistics

Business Base

3.11 In 2020, Rossendale was home to 2,480 businesses, a decline of 11% from 2,800 businesses in 2018. It is likely that the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were largely responsible for such a steep decline in business numbers, although a slight decline had already been experienced in 2019. In comparison, the number of businesses in Lancashire increased by 2%, whilst the North West has experienced a minor reduction of under 1%.

3.12 By August 2020, 1,283 Rossendale-based businesses had received the £10,000 Covid-19 Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF), at a total value of £12.8m, as shown at Table 3.2. Based upon business numbers in Rossendale, approximately half of the businesses received support through a grant. In addition to this, over 150 business have benefitted from the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grant Fund (RHLGF) and a further 39 from the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund (LADGF).

Table 3.2: Covid-19 grant funding to small and medium businesses (August 2020)

Fund	Number	£ (m)
SBGF	1,283	£12.8
RHLGF	151	£2.6
LADGF	39	£0.2

Source: UK Government coronavirus statistics

Deprivation

3.13 In the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Rossendale is the 91st most deprived local authority in England out of a total of 317, and so ranks in the top 30% most deprived local authority areas in England. This is a slight deterioration from the 2015 IMD where Rossendale was ranked as the 98th most deprived local authority in England.

3.14 Levels of deprivation across Rossendale are mixed, with pockets of severe deprivation evident. Within the borough, six Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) fall within the most deprived 10% in England, a number which has doubled from three LSOAs since 2015, with some areas experiencing significant decline over this period. Three of the six most deprived LSOAs are in Bacup, with the remainder located in Haslingden, Rawtenstall and Stacksteads.

4 Priority 1: Establishing Thriving Town Centres

Activities

Headline Achievements

4.1 Priority 1 is to establish thriving town centres in Rawtenstall, Bacup and Haslingden, each providing its own unique offer and destination for shoppers and visitors. Table 4.1 outlines progress against Priority 1 actions over the period from 2018 to 2020, with further details provided in the subsequent narrative.

Table 4.1: Priority 1 activities to December 2020

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
Develop town centre visions for Rawtenstall, Bacup and Haslingden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bacup 2040 Vision developed Bacup Future High Street Fund (FHSF) expression of interest and National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) bid submitted Haslingden 2040 Vision draft developed Haslingden NHLF bid submitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bacup 2040 Vision approved Bacup NHLF bid approved Bacup FHSF full business case submitted Haslingden 2040 Vision and Masterplan approved, following extensive consultation Haslingden NHLF bid approved Spinning Point development acting as the key regeneration plan for Rawtenstall The Rawtenstall Town Centre Action Plan has been placed on hold 	
Deliver Spinning Point Phases 1 and 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 complete – 10,000 ft² of old town hall refurbished and occupied by Together Housing Group (30 jobs safeguarded) Phase 2 planning permission approved and preferred option agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 – three units let at Spinning Point and one remaining unit advertised Phase 2 – business case established and improvements to the Town Square underway. Funding being sought and architects developing plans for consultation 	
Bring forward Spinning Point Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for Phase 3 disbanded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for Phase 3 disbanded 	Dis-continued

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
Attract a quality investor to reinvigorate and manage Rawtenstall market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c.£160k of private sector investment secured through management partnership Market managed in partnership between RBC and The Clog Market from May 2019 Modestly refurbished market with 96 new pop-up one-day traders and 6 additional events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RBC took on temporary management of the market from September 2020 Market management partner approved to 2027 	
Develop a car parking strategy for Rawtenstall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No activity progressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking policy review launched, and car parking surveys completed to understand current use Rawtenstall Tesco park-and-ride facility project currently on hold Although beyond the scope of the action, car parking review also completed in Bacup, as part of the Future High Streets Fund development proposal 	n/a – this action is out of scope of the ED & P teams
Develop a forward strategy for Bacup Townscape Heritage Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bacup THI project complete – evaluation and forward strategy prepared 15 buildings restored, 4 buildings brought back to use, 7 new businesses, 1 expanded business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> THI project complete with plans developed to guide the next phase of activity in the town £1.08m High Streets HAZ funding secured Bacup 2040 Vision is the forward strategy 	
Investigate a 'shop local' scheme for Bacup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot work undertaken through consultation with local businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delayed due to Covid-19 Plans to re-start the project when able and when it will not duplicate similar schemes (e.g. Rossendale Connected) 	
Continue to seek external funding to support the investment in Haslingden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haslingden NHLF Stage 1 bid submitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage 1 bid £180k revenue secured A £3.4m (1.8m pure grant) Stage 2 capital and revenue bid has been submitted and is awaiting approval 	
Promote walking routes and signage in our town centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved pedestrian wayfinder signage in Rawtenstall and Bacup town centres, promoting footfall between East Lancashire Railway and the town centre 9 new directional signs across Rossendale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant public realm improvements through Haslingden 2040 Vision and Masterplan, including pedestrianised Upper Deardengate and one-way system for vehicles enabling town centre walking route for visitors Potential Bacup investor (Aldi) asked to contribute to town centre pedestrian/cycle way Progressing 'food and drink' heritage walks and signage in 2021 	

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
Ensure town centre management and maintenance systems are in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgraded CCTV in Rawtenstall, Bacup and Haslingden Bacup Now community group supported Regular town centre footfall counts commence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town centre footfall counts continue across the town centres. Footfall counters to be installed within the HAZ in Bacup town centre. The Haslingden area action plan includes details for future management and maintenance of the town centre 	n/a – this action is out of scope of the ED & P teams
Develop and deliver an action plan to promote the unique offers of our town centre, with our traders' groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bacup Business Association re-established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bacup Business Association meets monthly with 300+ members Area action plan approved for Haslingden Haslingden Business Association recently established 	

Achievements Narrative

4.2 The town centres have provided the focus for a considerable programme of activity in Rossendale over recent years, reflecting identified priorities for intervention, programmes of activity to build local engagement and funding opportunities. The achievements of the team therefore extend beyond the key actions identified in the strategy, as a wide range of opportunities have been taken to progress plans.

4.3 Details of the progress made in each of Rossendale's towns – covering the actions above as well as wider achievements – are provided below. This progress has been made despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. In recognition of the challenges faced, RBC received just over £60,000 funding from the UK Government's Reopening High Streets Safely Fund to introduce safety measures to help reopen high streets and commercial sectors.

Rawtenstall

4.4 One of the major Rawtenstall projects progressed over the assessment period is **Spinning Point**, which has progressed as follows:

- Phase 1 has been completed, which includes the development of four small/medium-sized retail units for local growth businesses, the new Rawtenstall Bus Station, and the redevelopment of the old town hall. The team secured £150,000 of Lancashire County Council capital funding towards the project which has delivered 10,000 ft² of commercial floorspace.
- Preparations for Spinning Point Phase 2 are currently underway, focusing on improvements to the town square, with planning permission approved and architects preparing plans for public consultation. Progress has been delayed with the town square being used for a temporary Covid-19 testing station.
- A decision has been made not to progress with Phase 3.

4.5 The vitality of the town centre has been further supported by hosting pop up events within the market and opportunities to establish a new multi-use space – potentially repurposing the town square – are also currently being explored.

4.6 Another key project has been the redevelopment of **Rawtenstall Market**, which aims to transform the market into a destination venue for food, drink and events, and as a result increase visitor and evening footfall in the town centre. The team commissioned a partner (The Clog Market) to manage the market alongside the council between May 2019 and August 2020, which, according to the impact report, helped to increase occupancy and footfall, introduce pop-up traders, encourage business start-ups and improve the overall profile of the market. From September 2020, the team took on the direct management role themselves, providing trader liaison, grant advice and rent support during the Covid-19 lockdown. The team has recently approved a commercial operator to manage the market up to 2027, providing a long-term solution to build on and maintain the market's success.

4.7 An example of a trader who has benefited from the market improvements and the impacts they have reported as a result is detailed below.

Bacup Pie Case Study

Bacup Pie was established in 2019 and sells its produce at stalls in three primary markets: Rawtenstall, Todmorden and Hebden Bridge. This core trade is usually complimented with stalls in Haslingden and Bacup, in addition to university pitches and farmers markets. The company has one full-time baker and two part time helpers on the market stalls.

Although Bacup Pie did not directly approach the Economic Development team for assistance, it has received support through the team's heavy involvement with Rawtenstall Market and business advice from the Food Standards Team.

"There have been some huge changes in the market, this is all credit to [RBC]"

The business feels that Rawtenstall Market did have a sub-standard reputation before substantial investment was made by RBC: the offering was poor and was focussed on cheap clothing and low-quality goods.

"The market was a dump, now it has a great vibe, and great traders"

Due to RBC's investment in Rawtenstall Market, Bacup Pie has taken on a larger stall at the market and has expanded their offer to include selling coffees and cakes in addition to the original baked goods offering. This has helped to increase the company's turnover and business resilience. They now report the market is busy every weekend and is a place that people enjoy coming to, stating:

"Rawtenstall Market is the best market in Lancashire"

Bacup Pie believes that the investment has been such a success that demand is sufficient to open the market on Sundays and/or extend trading hours during the summer or bank holiday weekends. They now see the market as a destination in itself, with a good quality offering for a family day out.

Bacup

4.8 The primary achievements in Bacup can be considered under four key headings:

4.9 The Bacup **Townscape Heritage Initiative** (THI) project ran from 2013 and completed in June 2019. The THI secured £1.5 million NHLF capital and revenue project and match funding which delivered a programme of improvements to the town's built heritage, historical properties and public realm. The momentum established through this programme has been built upon with a series of activities progressed since (see below).

4.10 Following the successful expression of interest and programme design stages in 2019, the Bacup **High Streets Heritage Action Zone** (HAZ) project secured £1.08 million funding from Historic England in 2020, including support for a staff post. The four-year project (2020-2024) is seeking to deliver grants to 22 buildings; redevelop the former Regal Cinema; complete community engagement and training; enhance public realm; and develop a Cultural Consortium. A project officer for this project was recruited in early 2020.

4.11 High levels of engagement have continued to be a feature of the progression of plans for Bacup. The Bacup 2040 Partnership Board was disbanded and realigned to become the HAZ Project Board, which first met in July 2020. The Board developed and submitted a Community Strategy to Historic England and is currently developing a Community Engagement Plan. Feasibility studies for elements of the HAZ project are currently progressing and are due to be completed in February 2021, and a preferred option for the former Regal Cinema is about to be taken forward.

4.12 The first Cultural Consortium meeting was held in August 2020. The Consortium secured £10,000 funding that month to deliver a Covid-19 response pilot project. The Consortium developed and submitted a further bid in December 2020 to secure £100,000 grant funding to deliver a programme of events and activities for the remainder of the HAZ project.

4.13 The **Bacup 2040 Vision** now sets the framework under which activity will be taken forward. After completing extensive public consultation, the Vision and Masterplan were approved by RBC in December 2019. A Bacup 2040 Partnership Board was been created, with bi-monthly meetings attracting over 40 stakeholders, and sub-groups established to lead on the Masterplan themes. The Board oversaw the Future High Streets Fund work.

4.14 In terms of the **Bacup Future High Streets Fund** (FHSF) submission, Stage 1 revenue funding of £150,000 was secured in 2020 to support plans to be developed, and an £8 million capital bid was submitted as part of an £11 million project running from 2021 to 2024. The proposals were centred

around the development of a new market square, that is both accessible and visible from Market Street and surrounded by two new development blocks, accommodating a new market and food hall, other food and drink units, visitor accommodation and apartments which together would animate the town centre and cater for the needs of residents and visitors (see the visitor economy section for further details).

4.15 The team delivered an online campaign to raise and maintain public awareness of the bid and the 2040 Vision, and themed workshops were held in May 2020 to support the business case, which the team submitted in July 2020. The team also produced a Sustainable Transport Plan and Parking Strategy for the 2040 Vision and Masterplan. Although it has recently been announced that the bid was unsuccessful, the team is developing a revised scheme and exploring alternative funding opportunities to allow the plans to proceed.

4.16 Aside from these key projects, wider activity has been completed in Bacup town centre to support future ambitions, including:

- The Bacup Business Association was re-established in 2019 and now has over 300 business members and delivers monthly online meetings.
- The Economic Development team has completed feasibility studies on three key derelict buildings in Bacup, moving to RIBA Stage 2.
- The team began the negotiated purchase of 12 Market Street in early 2020, in support of redevelopment plans.

Haslingden

4.17 Over the past year, significant progress has been made on the **Haslingden 2040 Vision and Masterplan**, which began in early 2020. The team secured £180,000 of Stage 1 revenue funding in 2020 from the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) for the project (including support for a staff post), covering the period from 2020 to 2025, and more recently a £1.8 million Stage 2 capital and revenue bid has been developed and submitted, as part of a £3.4 million project.

4.18 The team completed an extensive consultation process for the 2040 Vision and Masterplan. Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, two consultation events were held in the town centre in August 2020 and an online survey received over 550 responses. Participation in the consultation was encouraged through radio, banners, shop window advertisements, flyers and a brochure sent to all Haslingden households. The team set up a Haslingden 2040 Twitter account in March 2020 which currently has 100 followers.

4.19 A number of projects have been identified to deliver the Masterplan, namely: Upper Deardengate; repurposing of Haslingden market with a modern market management partner; redevelopment of Cockerill Square to include residential, food and drink, retail and market space; and junction improvements to the crossroads at the welcome corridor. The consultation found that the vast majority of respondents were in favour of the proposed plans, stating that Haslingden will become a more attractive place to visit with the proposed changes. The 2040 Vision received 31 letters of support from local businesses within the town centre project boundary and both the Haslingden 2040 Vision and Masterplan were approved by RBC in December 2020.

4.20 Key progress against the Masterplan includes:

- The approval of plans for the **Upper Deardengate** project: a £3.4 million Deardengate Big Lamp – Shining Light on Haslingden project.
- Preparation of a £1.8 million **NHLF bid** which will focus on improving the public realm of Upper Deardengate, a five-year events plan, a micro-grant funding stream, and a Shop Front Improvement scheme.

- Formation of a **Haslingden Business Association** which met for the first time in December 2020.

4.21 If the NHLF bid is successful, the delivery of the project will run from Summer 2021 to Summer 2026, supporting a programme of physical, economic and social change in the town.






Derelict buildings

4.22 In addition to the town centre work, the Economic Development team has undertaken a derelict commercial buildings project since December 2019. The team has identified all derelict commercial buildings in the borough and increased liaison with the building owners to support their maintenance and development. The Derelict Buildings Action Group was formed and meets monthly to monitor progress and co-ordinate information. To date, the project has seen positive outcomes for several previously derelict buildings, including shops and offices in Bacup town centre and heritage buildings, closely aligned with the HAZ project. A similar approach is being taken in Haslingden through the NHLF bid.

Outcomes and Impacts

4.23 Table 4.2 sets out the headline outcomes and impacts against the Priority 1 success measures, identified in the Economic Development Strategy for the period to 2018/19 to 2020/21.

Table 4.2: Priority 1 impacts

Strategy success measures	RAG	Indicator
Increase in town centre footfall		Small increases in daytime (11am-12pm) town centre footfall between June and October 2019 in Bacup, Rawtenstall and Haslingden. The counts between June and October 2020 show a decline, as expected due to Covid-19 restrictions.
Increase in the evening economy footfall		Small decreases in evening (6pm-7pm) town centre footfall between June and October 2019 in Bacup, Rawtenstall and Haslingden. The counts between June and October 2020 show a decline as expected due to Covid-19 restrictions. The primary town centre developments needed to deliver against this indicator also remain to be realised.
Reduction in vacant town centre floor space		In November 2017, 12% of the shops in the borough were vacant, mainly in Bacup, Waterfoot and Rawtenstall. In Bacup, there has been a 7% reduction in ground floor retail vacancy rates since February 2019 as a result of the Bacup THI project.
% occupancy of Rawtenstall market		Current occupancy of the market is 100% and has been since the RBC Economic Development team took on management of the market in September 2020. Permanent occupancy increased by one third to 100% while managed by The Clog Market. The refurbishment of the market has also supported 96 new pop-up one-day traders and 6 additional events.
Number of press releases		27 press releases in 2018 across RBC and Invest in Rossendale websites and social media platforms, rising to 32 in 2020, including a Lancashire Life feature on Rawtenstall.

4.24 Through the town centre redevelopment, 2040 Vision and masterplanning work, a range of impacts are expected to be achieved over the next 20 years. Some impacts have already materialised beyond the identified success measures and include:

- Just over £7 million of public funding secured to progress plans with further opportunities continuing to be explored.
- Three units at Spinning Point in Rawtenstall have been let. One of the tenants, the Together Housing Group, has moved into the newly refurbished town hall, safeguarding 30 jobs as a result.
- During the management of Rawtenstall Market by The Clog Market (May 2019 to August 2020), 13 businesses established themselves at Rawtenstall, 10 new start-up businesses were supported and seven part-time jobs created.
- 15 buildings in Bacup have been restored and four returned to use, supporting seven new businesses and one business expansion.
- Support for four economic development staff posts on a temporary basis to progress the town centre plans.
- Through visioning work and the preparation of funding bids, local residents and businesses have been engaged which in turn builds ownership of proposals and the towns themselves. For example, development of the Haslingden 2040 Vision involved 550 people while development of the Bacup 2040 Vision secured over 500 survey responses. Ongoing engagement has also been secured by taking shared ownership of plans through new board structures, such as the Bacup 2040 Partnership Board.
- The business survey completed as part of this commission found that 64% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that the town centres of Rossendale have improved in the last two years.

5 Priority 2: Establishing and Investing in the Rossendale Brand

Activities

Headline Achievements

5.1 Priority 2 is to establish the Invest in Rossendale brand, promoting and increasing inward investment in Rossendale, attracting growth sector businesses and bringing quality employment into the borough. Table 5.1 sets out the activities completed under this priority over the period from 2018 to 2020.

Table 5.1: Priority 2 activities to December 2020

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
To secure 27 hectares of employment land within the emerging Local Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27 hectares of employment land has been allocated within the Emerging Local Plan, pending examination in public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Local Plan went out to consultation in November 2020. Feedback is currently being analysed 	n/a – this action is out of scope of the ED & P teams
To bring forward Futures Park Leisure and Employment Village, supporting leisure and healthy lifestyle businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A masterplan is in place for Futures Park Employment and Leisure Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £1.525m Growth Deal funding secured for junction improvements and flood prevention to support new industrial units Two Futures Park plots progressed – Orthoplastics building completed and nursery started on site in January 2021 Plans being progressed for a further two plots, including conceptual proposals under development for Plot 3 Two new tenants attracted to Futures Park business centre 	
To bring forward future employment sites suitable for advanced manufacturing and spin out companies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27 hectares of employment land allocated in the Emerging Local Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Futures Park plots being developed, including the completion of the Orthoplastics building – an important manufacturing business in the borough Approval of the emerging Local Plan will provide future land supply for these markets 	

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
To lobby for improvements to the M66, A56 and Gyratory to facilitate access and attract investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-configured the M66/A56 Steering Group to facilitate access and attract investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted bid for funding for St Mary's Way and gyratory capital improvements – decision awaited The M66/A56 Steering Group has continued to meet quarterly with representation from TfGM, LCC, Highways England and Transdev. Preparation of business cases is yet to occur 	
Promoting Rossendale as a place to invest; develop and deliver an Action Plan for 'Invest in Rossendale'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched Invest in Rossendale business brand with associated website, events and social media channels Secured an award-winning company relocation into the borough from Bury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing social media profile of Invest in Rossendale 	
Work with LEP/ Marketing Lancashire to promote 'Invest in Rossendale' in the wider Lancashire context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched Invest in Rossendale business brand with associated website, events, social media channels, red carpet treatment, soft landing scheme and promotional materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to manage social media channels and promotional materials Rossendale features in three Lancashire publications 	
To deliver short term actions to lobby, promote, shape strategy and develop a business case for the Rossendale Rail Link.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced an Early Strategic Case for investment for the Valley City Link Established the Valley City Link Steering Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultants commissioned to refresh Early Strategic Case Application submitted in March 2020 to Restoring Your Railway fund (unsuccessful) RBC invited by the UK Government to submit a new bid in November 2020 for the next funding round Listed as a pipeline project in Transport for the North 2027+ draft strategy 	
Develop a succession strategy for major inward investment; identifying sites for the longer term.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The succession strategy identified to be a medium-long term ambition for RBC, allowing activity to focus on the progression of other actions during this period 27 hectares of employment land allocated in the Emerging Local Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inward investment action plan drafted and likely to form the basis for a succession strategy Running a business relationship programme with Rossendale's largest businesses Once approved, promotion of the Local Plan sites will support longer term inward investment Planning to adopt current plan 	

Achievements Narrative

5.2 Recent economic conditions – fuelled by the Covid-19 pandemic and uncertainty caused by Brexit – along with a limited supply of large, readily available sites in Rossendale has presented a challenge to the attraction of inward investment over the assessment period. The teams have, however, worked to ensure that as many opportunities as possible could be converted with details of the actions taken and successes secured outlined below.

Property, land and infrastructure

5.3 Progress has been made to establish a land and property offer that can cater for the needs of inward investors as well as the existing business base over both the short and longer term. This has included:

- ensuring an appropriate scale of land allocations is identified through the emerging Local Plan that can accommodate requirements over the longer term;
- making more effective use of the Council's land and property portfolio (also considered under Priority 3);
- considering future development priorities where the Council has a role to play; and
- ensuring that available sites and premises are publicised to meet business requirements.

5.4 Early impacts are starting to be realised and will grow over time.

5.5 One area of focus over the assessment period has been **Futures Park** in Bacup, after the Economic Development team developed a revised masterplan for the site in 2018. The team successfully secured £1.525 million of Growth Deal capital as part of a £7 million development of two of the five plots over the period 2019 to 2021. A 50,000 ft² building was completed in one plot in late 2020 and will serve as the headquarters of Orthoplastics, creating an estimated 100 new jobs for the company as well as safeguarding 174 existing posts within the UK. A new nursery is being built on a second plot, which is expected to open in September 2021 and create 30 new jobs, and a third plot is earmarked for the Lee Quarry trail centre. The Economic Development and Property teams are currently working on bringing a fourth plot at Futures Park into use, beyond which the teams will bring forward the final, fifth plot to complete the development.

5.6 Providing the infrastructure needed to support the borough to function effectively has also featured within the team's workload. RBC has been taking forward an improvement scheme for **St Mary's Way and the gyratory** in Rawtenstall since 2019, in order to improve the traffic and air quality in the town. In early 2020, the Economic Development team developed a proposal for Lancashire County Council's bid to the Department for Transport's Local Pinch Point Fund for £7 million worth of funding for capital improvements. This aligns with further transport infrastructure planned improvements including RBC's lobbying for the Rossendale Rail Link to connect the borough to Manchester, with the team preparing to re-submit a bid to the UK Government's Restoring Your Railway fund.

Promotional activity

5.7 The Economic Development team has promoted the Invest in Rossendale brand through its dedicated website, press releases and publications and, more recently, through the delivery of workshops to support the local business base with specific issues. The team also established the Invest in Rossendale Twitter in mid-2017, with the details of the account shown at Table 5.2 overleaf. The figures show that the account has been active and the team report that the number of followers has increased over the assessment period.

Table 5.2: Invest in Rossendale Twitter statistics

Followers	671
Posts	1,149
Likes	653

Source: RBC (as of January 2021)

Inward investment secured

5.8 The team has supported inward investors to locate in Rossendale over the assessment period, bringing new employment opportunities and capital investment to the borough. The team has a small grant offering to support inward investor and, over the assessment period, received four applications, with one award, two grant offer letters and one not progressed. An example of a business that has been attracted into the borough is provided below, including details of how the Economic Development team helped to facilitate the move.

Melba Swintex Case Study

Melba Swintex are the world's leading manufacturer of temporary traffic management products, such as signs, barriers and cones. In late 2018, the company operated a factory employing 160 people in Ramsbottom, Bury, and had been looking for a larger site to move to for almost four years.

After exhausting their search in Bury, the company contacted RBC's Economic Development team who swiftly arranged a meeting in Bacup with Voith Fabrics, who were looking to sell their site at Stubbins. As a result of the quick introduction made by RBC, Melba Swintex were able to secure the site before it went on the market. They were impressed by the site's size (17 acres), electrical supply and interiors, stating:

"It was the nature of the site that attracted us"

Melba Swintex bought the site in May 2019 and, after moving all the staff and machinery, it became fully operational in March 2020. During this time, they invested c.£5.5 million into refurbishing and renovating the site. They also secured NNDR from RBC for Year 1 and 2 as a 'welcome hello'. This generated a saving of c.£40,000 per annum which they were able to re-invest into the new site.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the company has diversified into making reflective signs for the NHS, testing centres and supermarkets. As a result, Melba Swintex is expecting a 25% increase in turnover for 2020/21, from £18.6m to £23.0m.

The success of the company is having a positive impact on Rossendale's economy. To date, as well as moving the 160 jobs from Bury, the company has created around 40 new jobs at the Stubbins site. Given the site's proximity to Greater Manchester, many of these jobs have been taken up by people resident outside of Rossendale, although the company has successfully recruited from Lancashire's Recycling Lives programme for ex-offenders and has engaged with Rossendale Works.

In addition to this, the company currently has four machines on order which will see the creation of up to 20 new jobs by April 2021.

"The economic development team have been very good. We've had lots of meetings with Carol⁶. They are very understanding and support what we're trying to do at Stubbins."









The next steps for the company are to secure planning permission from RBC for outdoor storage space at Stubbins which will support their growth ambitions or secure a second site for this purpose.

Outcomes and Impacts

5.9 Table 5.3 sets out the headline outcomes and impacts against Priority 2 success measures, identified in the Economic Development Strategy for the period 2018/19 to 2020/21.

⁶ Although the consultee referred to 'Carol', and a direct quote from the consultation has been included here, it is believed the reference should have been to 'Cath'

Table 5.3: Priority 2 impacts

Strategy success measures	RAG	Indicator
Increase in the number of businesses relocating/investing in Rossendale		RBC has attracted a range of businesses to relocate/invest in the borough. This includes some high employing businesses such as Melba Swintex.
Increase the number of jobs created as a result of businesses relocating/investing in Rossendale		Melba Swintex has created 40 new jobs to date, and expects to create up to 20 additional jobs by Spring 2021, making them one of the largest private employers in the borough.
Increase the number of jobs safeguarded as a result of businesses relocating/investing in Rossendale		Melba Swintex relocated 160 jobs in their move from Bury to Stubbins.
Increase the job density ratio within the borough		The job density (jobs per working age population) in Rossendale fell slightly from 0.51 in 2018 to 0.47 in 2019. This was largely driven by a fall in employment rather than any real change in the working age population.
Increase in employment rate		Rossendale's employment rate increased from 73.7% in July 2017-June 2018 to 85.7% in July 2019-June 2020. This is faster growth than across Lancashire.
Increase in median workplace earnings (residency based)		Median resident earnings in Rossendale has increased by 11% from 2018 (£25,000) to 2020 (£27,740), faster growth than across Lancashire (7%) and the North West (8%).
Reduction in out-commuting	n/a	No data to support this. Anecdotally around 60% of workers commute outside of Rossendale for work, largely to Greater Manchester.
Increase in private sector investment as a result of businesses relocating/investing in Rossendale		Small number of larger inward investors contributing significant investment e.g. Melba Swintex invested c.£5.5m when moving to the borough.
Expand the business rate base		The Rossendale business base fell by 11% from 2018 (2,800) to 2020 (2,480). The Covid-19 pandemic will have contributed to this position although this was a steeper decline than reported across Lancashire and the North West. Inward investment activity will, however, have helped to reduce the impact felt in the borough by providing new additions to the business base.

5.10 Further outcomes and impacts from activities are expected to continue to build as:

- The portfolio of land identified in the emerging Local Plan is brought forward for development, supporting the needs of both existing and incoming businesses and creating new investment opportunities and employment in the process.
- Further inward investors are attracted into the area as a result of promotional activities and understanding of what Rossendale has to offer, supporting increases in employment, wages and business rates income.
- Funding is hopefully secured to fund identified transport infrastructure improvements, helping Rossendale to offer the infrastructure needed for growth and effective functioning.
- Investments made by inward investors benefit local businesses as funds circulate through supply chains.
- In the assessment's business survey, 57% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that Rossendale is a more attractive place to invest than it was two years ago.

6 Priority 3: Creating a Strong Business Base

Activities

Headline Achievements

6.1 Priority 3 is to create a strong and thriving business base, supporting new and existing businesses in Rossendale. Table 6.1 sets out the activities completed under this priority over the period from 2018 to 2020. Further details of the activities that have been progressed are provided in the narrative that follows.

Table 6.1: Priority 3 activities to December 2020

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
Developing Rossendale Council's presence in the commercial lettings market with an e-enabled and up to date offer of Council owned commercial premises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New property team established to manage the Council's portfolio Streamlined the purchase/ lease/ rental process with a new fit-for-purpose Property Services Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property team continues to deal with property enquiries using new processes The process has now transitioned from paper to be digitalised 	
To identify suitable occupants for the current Futures Park to co-locate with Rossendale Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kick started Futures Park Employment and Leisure Village securing an advanced manufacturing business for Plot 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orthoplastics and Bright Futures nursery confirmed as tenants for new development plots Two new tenants attracted to the Futures Park business centre 	
To recommend the acquisition and further development of employment based assets to expand the Council's portfolio, generate revenue streams and expand the business rate base.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due diligence undertaken on the acquisition and further development of the Knowsley Road revenue generation project Supported business expansion into the former Rosso Depot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Asset Review began in December 2020 with the aim of maximising RBC income A series of further development (including joint venture) opportunities are currently being explored to support revenue generation and an expanded business base 	
Investigate the provision of an enterprise hub managed workspace scheme for start-up and microbusinesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The enterprise hub scheme identified to be a medium-long term ambition for RBC, allowing activity to focus on the progression of other actions during this period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valley Heritage supported to secure funding to transform a former bank in Bacup town centre into a co-working space Similar scheme sought for Bacup market developments with work ongoing 	

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
Deliver an NNDR relief scheme for businesses which are expanding the business rate base and creating jobs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted the NNDR relief scheme to existing businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 businesses given NNDR relief 	
To investigate a bond-holder type initiative for the evolution of the Rossendale Business Leaders Forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigated bond-holder model for Rossendale Business Leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The activities of the Business Leaders Forum and the Invest in Rossendale workshops and functions supported to deliver similar aims to the initially envisioned bond holder initiative 	
Working with the LEP and partners, develop a social enterprise and business support infrastructure, including network events, referrals to the BOOST Gateway and linkages to Further and Higher Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held a series of promotional work for Small Business Saturday 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered a range of business support workshops Opportunities for physical collaboration limited during 2020/21 due to the impacts of Covid-19 	
Working with Valley at Work and the Whitaker to provide specialist support to our creative industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered a collaborative event with Valley at Work and sponsored a local food and drink guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborated with Valley at Work to deliver further business workshops 	
Influence the LEP and other partners to maximise broadband coverage and band widths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trends in broadband coverage start to be explored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A survey of properties found very few areas without a broadband connection, resulting in a decision that this action did not need to be progressed 	No longer applicable
Working with East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, support the expansion of the renewable energy sector, identifying income generation opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified the next flagship renewable energy project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current Strategic Asset Review is covering RBC owned buildings and land and suitable sites will be put forward for assessment and possible delivery 	

Achievements Narrative

6.2 Activity to support the business base has become increasingly important as the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic became apparent over the past year. Securing additional staff resource to deliver this priority has been important to boost the team's capacity and allow more tailored activities to be delivered. Another strong focus of activity under this stream has been building a greater understanding of the Council's land and property assets and ensuring their effective management to maximise the associated income streams. The primary achievements in both respects are outlined below.

Engaging and supporting the local business base

6.3 The Business Adviser has been in post since August 2020, offering a support role to the 2,710 businesses based in Rossendale. This addition to the team has allowed more proactive business engagement and support activities to be delivered. During the three-month period from August to October 2020, the adviser contacted 63 businesses throughout Rossendale and made 52 one-to-one business visits. During this time, the team provided six Rossendale businesses with national non-domestic rates return (NNDR) relief.

6.4 One particularly positive engagement with a key local employer has been with We Buy Books, based in Waterfoot, who were looking to move their operations to a larger site outside of Rossendale. The Business Adviser found an alternative site in Rawtenstall and supported the company with consultancy support to broker the deal and gain planning approval. This is expected to be finalised soon and will safeguard up to 170 jobs in Rossendale.

6.5 In addition to one-to-one business support, the team has delivered a range of business events⁷ between 2018 and 2020, detailed in Table 6.2 below, that have attracted strong interest. A range of online business workshops were completed in late 2020, including topics such as setting up a new business, accessing finance and business Covid-19 guidelines.

Table 6.2: RBC-organised business events

Event	Date	Location	Description	Individuals	Businesses
Promoting Rossendale Stakeholder Forum	April 2018	Whitaker	Forum	28	21
Rossendale Works - Jobs Fair	July 2018	Grip and Go	Event	1,500	70
Google Digital Garage	March 2019	Chamber	Workshop	52	52
Food Allergen Training	May 2019	Chamber	Workshop	40	40
Rossendale Works - Jobs Fair	July 2019	Grip and Go	Event	1,300	56
Invest in Rossendale Event	Sept 2019	Riverside	Event	137	124
Covid-19 Business Consultation	June 2020	Online	Consultation	29	24
Visitor Economy Consultation	July 2020	Online	Consultation	62	57
Bank Street Temporary Changes Consultation	Aug 2020	Online	Consultation	13	6
New Business Workshop	Aug 2020	Online	Workshop	6	6
Invest in Rossendale Event	Sept 2020	Online	Event	54	41
BBA Seminar	Nov 2020	Online	Seminar	18	18
Business Guidance Seminar	Nov 2020	Online	Seminar	31	31
Access 2 Finance Seminar	Nov 2020	Online	Seminar	10	10
Business Guidance Seminar	Dec 2020	Online	Seminar	18	18
HBA Seminar	Dec 2020	Online	Seminar	10	10
Rossendale Business Awards	Dec 2020	Online	Event	200	200
Totals				3,508	784

⁷ As the majority of events have related to support for the existing business base, they have been referenced under Priority 3. There is, however, also some recognised overlap with the aims of Priority 2.

6.6 The business advisory service and events have been well received by businesses: 10 businesses completed RBC-administered feedback forms on the quality, ease of contact and satisfaction with the service, with all 10 rating each element very highly.

6.7 Feedback on the service from the assessment's business survey was also positive. On a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good), on average businesses rated:

- The process of engaging with RBC as 4.2;
- The quality of support received as 4.1;
- The overall experience of support as 4.0;
- RBC's understanding of their business and its challenges/opportunities as 3.9; and
- Communication from RBC as 3.9.

Supporting businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic

6.8 In addition to support detailed above, the team received and dealt with a total of 212 Covid-19 business enquiries between March and August 2020, prior to the Business Adviser being in post, and a further 126 between October and December 2020. The team also managed the allocation of the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund, which supported small and micro businesses that are not eligible for other Covid-19 grant schemes. As of August 2020, 39 Rossendale-based businesses had received grants totalling around £200,000.

6.9 The Economic Development team produced a Covid Impact Report in November 2020 to demonstrate the impact of the pandemic on the business community and understand the public attitudes to restrictions in Rossendale. The report was based on a survey of 115 businesses and 935 residents and is currently informing the development of a Covid-19 Recovery Plan, due to be published in January 2021.

6.10 As expected, the report's research found that the pandemic has had a significant impact on the local economy and the well-being of local communities. Covid-19 has had a significant effect on 82% of Rossendale businesses surveyed, and two thirds of businesses have seen a significant reduction in their annual turnover this year (of at least 25%). Micro businesses have been most affected.

6.11 Despite the roll-out of UK Government financial support schemes to businesses, over two thirds (68%) of Rossendale businesses are at risk of collapse if sufficient financial support is not sustained until Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. Just over half (53%) of businesses have moderate confidence in the recovery but feel that financial support is required to stabilise their business. The Economic Development team (including through the Rossendale Works team considered under Priority 5) have supported a number of businesses to restructure as a result of the pandemic as well as previous activity working closely with Job Centre Plus to minimise the redundancy impacts of the restructuring of the Tesco supermarket store in Rawtenstall. In all cases, the activity has sought to minimise employment losses within the borough while also supporting business resilience.

6.12 As a result of the research, RBC are looking for greater discretion from the UK Government in allocating financial support to businesses in most need of it (including those who do not qualify for Government schemes). Since October 2020, the Economic Development team opened the application process to the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSB) and, by December 2020, had already paid over 30 grants directly to businesses. They have also identified and contacted almost 90 further businesses around obtaining the grant.

Providing premises and maximising council income streams

6.13 The Property team is relatively new, having been recruited within the last 18 months, and has made an impact over a short period with benefits to continue to build over time. There was no property

or inward investment enquiry process prior to the formation of the team, and so this process had to be developed and implemented as team members came into post. Over the assessment period, the team has resolved 120 enquiries and has 22 active enquiries currently.

6.14 The Property team has already increased annual revenue and capital receipts to RBC and income is expected to continue to grow over time as a result of their work, representing an important opportunity for the Council. This will be supported by:

Ensuring high occupancy levels are maintained to provide a regular source of income: As examples:

- The Property team manages RBC-owned industrial units, including Daniel Street Industrial Estate in Whitworth, a 16,500 ft², 22 unit site which generates £76,000 annual rental revenue for the Council per annum, and Heys Street Industrial Estate in Rawtenstall, a 6,800 ft², seven unit site which generates £30,000 annual rental revenue. The current occupancy across both sites is 96%, and this is expected to reach 100% by March 2021.
- The team also managed RBC-owned garages, which generate revenue for the Council. As of December 2020, this involved managing 263 plots, of which 81% were occupied, generated annual income of £36,000 for the Council.

Securing a robust appreciation of the Council's assets: A Strategic Asset Review began in December 2020 and has a focus on increasing the annual revenue returns to RBC, increasing the utilisation of existing assets and unused land to drive forward returns. The Review will be undertaken over the next two years, alongside a number of other activities such as asset inspection and categorisation of the Council's 1,500+ asset portfolio, industrial rent reviews, garage site reviews, land registry, the digitisation of records and the development and implementation of a marketing strategy.








Exploring new opportunities for income generation: The Economic Development and Property teams are exploring opportunities for the council to play a more active role in the local development landscape. A series of potential sites and development opportunities (including Joint Ventures) are being considered to both support growth within the local area and generate new income streams that can help to support wider services.

6.15 The Property team were actively supporting the Economic Development team on a range of different projects as of December 2020, including the following: Spinning Point; Together Housing Land and Garage Swap; Loveclough Cycle Link; Outdoor Rossendale; East Lancashire Railway; Cockerill Square; Ski Rossendale; Wallbank Lodge Community Group; and Futures Park (both new development phases and securing tenants for the business centre with two offices let in April 2020).

Outcomes and Impacts

6.16 Table 6.3 (overleaf) sets out the headline outcomes and impacts against Priority 3 success measures, identified in the Economic Development Strategy for the period to 2018/19 to 2020/21.

Table 6.3: Priority 3 impacts

Strategy success measures	RAG	Indicator
Improve business formation rates		In 2017, prior to the assessment period, 930 new businesses were formed. After an initial fall to 265 new businesses in 2018, this rose again to 310 in 2019. Data for 2020 is not yet available. ⁸⁹
Improve business survival rates		There has been little change in the business survival rates. Of the 930 businesses formed in 2017, 96.2% survived for one year and 88.2% for two years. Of the 265 businesses formed in 2018, 94.3% survived for one year. Data is not available for 2019-2020.
Number of businesses supported		Over a four-month period in late 2020, the RBC Business Adviser has supported 52 businesses. The ED team has also dealt with over 330 business Covid-19 enquiries. Almost 800 businesses have attended ED-ran events over the three years.
Jobs created/safeguarded		Based on intelligence gathered through the assessment, employment impacts include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected 65 jobs safeguarded and 15 created at Rosso Depot Expected 172 jobs safeguarded and 90 created at Futures Park plot 5 Expected 170 jobs safeguarded at We Buy Books in Waterfoot Of the businesses surveyed for the assessment, 56% had safeguarded employment (107 jobs quantified) and 22% had created employment (10 jobs quantified) as a result of RBC support.
Business turnover increased/safeguarded		Of the businesses surveyed for the assessment, 53% had increased turnover and 42% increased profit as a result of RBC support.
Increase in revenue streams from Council owned commercial stock		Revenue income from the property portfolio has risen to a forecast £703,000 in 2020/21 (a net profit of £433,000) and is expected to continue to rise over the next few years as a result of the Strategic Asset Review.
Expansion of business rate base		The Rossendale business base fell from 2,800 in 2018 to 2,710 in 2019, and further to 2,480 businesses in 2020 ¹⁰ . The Covid-19 pandemic will have impacted on the position over the last year.

6.17 Wider impacts are:

- Working relationships established with local businesses, providing the Council with greater understanding of the local business base and opportunities for the future.
- Improved business confidence and resilience supported by the provision of advice and small grants totalling £200,000, a particularly important achievement during a turbulent period. In the assessment's survey, 77% of businesses reported a positive impact on their business resilience as a result of engaging with RBC (and 29% a 'high impact') and 68% reported a positive impact on their future growth prospects.

⁸

⁸⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/businessdemographyreferencetable>

⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/methodologies/multiplebusinessregistrationsatasinglepostcode2018>

¹⁰ UK Business Counts

- Establishing greater pride and confidence in Rossendale with two thirds (67%) of surveyed businesses strongly agreeing or agreeing that Rossendale is a more attractive place to do business now than it was two years ago.
- Employment created and safeguarded for local residents, providing a wider range of opportunities and greater job security.
- Increased business investment in the borough. In the survey, 45% of businesses had increased their investment as a direct result of support from the Council.
- Scope for further income generation over time as – alongside the Strategic Asset Review – the Council explores new opportunities to deliver development (including through Joint Venture arrangements) that also ensure control of local development patterns and ensure schemes are responsive to local needs and commercial opportunities.
- Ensuring a clear plan is in place to guide Rossendale's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, supporting both businesses and residents to respond to changing conditions and take advantage of opportunities that do arise.

7 Priority 4: Developing the Visitor Economy

Activities

Headline Achievements

7.1 Priority 4 seeks to develop Rossendale's visitor economy, active leisure and Adrenaline Valley brand and cultural offer. Table 7.1 sets out the activities completed under this priority over the period from 2018 to 2020.

Table 7.1: Priority 4 activities to December 2020

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
To develop a tourism and cultural strategy for Rossendale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gathered survey data to support a culture, leisure and tourism strategy for Rossendale Annual Leisure and Tourism Stakeholder Forum in place, with 30+ attendees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor Economy Strategy for the whole of Rossendale (2020-2030) published following public consultation 	
To bring forward a Trail Head Centre (Phase 1) for the Lee Quarry Mountain Bike facility at Futures Park Leisure and Employment Village.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a three-year action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for the trail centre and an associated camp site are in development with architects appointed to prepare RIBA 1 and 2 stages ITT completed for trail centre and camp site providers, EOIs submitted from potential parties and Heads of Terms agreed Full RBC report and options appraisal will be submitted in March 2021 to seek authorisation 	
Support the growth plans for Bacup Football Club.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported Bacup FC's forward strategy to remain in situ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following an options review, Bacup FC decided to remain on site so the action is no longer applicable 	No longer applicable
To support the capital expansion of the Whitaker Museum and Art Gallery, securing Phase 2 Heritage Lottery Funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured £1.8m in NHLF Phase 2 funding to support expansion at the Whitaker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted bid for an uplift of £250,000 capital and revenue funding 	

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
To support the continued development of Ski Rossendale and capital works.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured £460k Sports England funding for project Completed the £600k Ski Rossendale refurbishment Worked with Ski Rossendale to rebrand, market and launch new facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project is completed – no further actions required 	
To work with the LEP/ Marketing Lancashire to promote the visitor economy in the wider Lancashire context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with the LEP/ Marketing Lancashire to promote the visitor economy in various guides and online platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to manage social media platforms and promote the visitor economy through publications 	

Achievements Narrative

7.2 The Economic Development team manages a £40,000 annual budget to market Rossendale's visitor economy and delivers a range of activities to support and promote Rossendale as a destination for daytime and overnight visitors. Key areas of achievement over the assessment period are considered below, capturing progress in setting a direction of travel for the visitor economy and securing investment in key assets.

Developing a strategy for Rossendale's visitor economy

7.3 Following public consultation, the Visitor Economy Strategy for Rossendale was published by RBC in late 2020 and covers the period to 2030. The Strategy is centred around five themes – marketing, outdoor, lifestyle, accommodation and creativity – that recognise existing assets and opportunities for further development and aims to make Rossendale a more attractive place for day visitors and those on staycation. Having the strategy will ensure that future activities are coordinated and that the Council can clearly articulate its priorities to potential funders and partners.

7.4 One of the key priorities is to develop a brand encompassing the range of opportunities in the borough to attract more people to visit and stay in Rossendale. The Strategy has set a target of restoring the value of the visitor economy to pre-Covid-19 levels by 2023 and to increase its overall value and employment levels year-on-year to 2030.

Enhancing key attractions

7.5 RBC has been looking to build upon Rossendale's reputation as '**Adrenaline Valley**', where residents and visitors can benefit from the concentration of adrenaline sports attractions by trying a number of high-octane outdoor and indoor activities. Some of the key attractions include The Adrenaline Centre, Ski Rossendale, Whitworth Water Sky Academy, Lee Quarry Mountain Biking Trial Centre and Cowm Leisure Off Road Centre. As well as prioritising a selection of these facilities for investment, the team has recognised the opportunities to improve connections between the outdoor leisure market and Rossendale's town centres. For example, this ambition sat at the core of the recent Bacup Future High Streets Fund bid to increase dwell time and expenditure in the borough as well as enhance the visitor experience.

7.6 During 2018, the Economic Development team developed a NLHF grant to support the expansion of **The Whitaker Museum** in Rawtenstall. The project will see the refurbishment of redundant adjacent buildings to expand the museum's space and improve the visitor offer and experience. The team secured £100,000 revenue in 2017 for the Stage 1 and £1.8 million capital and revenue funding for Stage 2 over the period 2019 to 2021. In addition, an uplift of £250,000 capital and revenue funding is currently pending approval for 2021 to 2022. The project is currently ongoing and the museum is closed for vital construction works.

7.7 The team also partnered with The Hill at **Ski Rossendale** to improve facilities at the ski centre. In 2018, the team secured £480,000 of Sport England capital funding to upgrade the facility to a purpose-built ski centre building with an improved bistro and viewing area and enhancing skiing facilities. The project had a positive economic impact on the attraction, prior to the Covid-19 lockdown. Ski Rossendale stated:

"We would have had the best year yet [in 2020] following the new facilities, based on winter ticket sales being up 20% on the previous year. New café and changing facilities proving very popular following our joint project"

7.8 In order to link into the Lee Quarry mountain bike trails and the 'Adrenaline Valley' branding, RBC is in the early stages of developing plans for a **mountain biking trail head centre** at Futures Park. The centre will comprise a café, shop, changing facilities and a training room, and it is thought to have

the potential to bring an additional 100,000 visitors per year. The team is likely to prepare funding bids to support the project in 2021, providing scope for further funding to be attracted.

7.9 In addition to the key tourism projects described above:

- RBC are the lead of the East Lancashire Railway Group, which is seeking to continually improve and promote the attraction, which is currently Greater Manchester's third most visited paid attraction.
- The Economic Development team have overseen funding of £13,000 being issued to support community events throughout Rossendale that have attracted visitors, and the installation of new fingerpost tourism signage in Bacup and Rawtenstall town centres.
- An expanding programme of events has been delivered from Rossendale's town centres (also in support of the ambitions under Priority 1), helping to attract new visitors and increase dwell time.
- The team supported Bacup Football Club's growth ambitions with an options review of potential sites, although the club ultimately decided to remain on their current site.

Visitor promotion

7.10 The Economic Development team has promoted Rossendale's visitor economy across a range of press releases, guides and online platforms, including working with Marketing Lancashire and the LEP to release county-wide publications. The team also manages a range of social media accounts which promote Rossendale as an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest, as well as keeping Rossendale residents up-to-date on news. These accounts have grown in following over the last two years, and the details of each as of January 2021 are shown at Table 7.2.

7.11 The Visitor Economy Strategy sets out a target to double the number of followers of Visit Rossendale social media platforms to over 10,000 by 2030. The team have committed to creating a social media and press plan and allocating a budget to monitoring key online trends to support the achievement of its targets.

Table 7.2: Visit Rossendale social media platforms

	Visit Rossendale Facebook	Visit Rossendale Twitter	Visit Rossendale Instagram
Followers	1,900	2,600	1,021
Posts	81	94	29
Likes	n/a	236	n/a
Engagements	1,800	377	n/a

Source: RBC (as of January 2021)

7.12 An example of a tourism business benefiting from RBC support is detailed below.

Rossendale Holiday Villages and Glamping Case Study

Established in 2014, Rossendale Holiday Villages and Glamping started with three cottages, and have since expanded their site to 10 cottages and six glamping huts. They approached RBC for support in growing the business, including help with a planning application to extend the site and advice on staffing issues and tourism opportunities within Rossendale.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, RBC's business advisor visited the site and supported the business with applications for UK Government grants and other available funding options and provided marketing support to help get the site back up and running post the initial lockdown. The business was impressed with the advisor's enthusiasm and understanding of their needs and challenges.

"The business advisor was very helpful, easy to engage with, reactive and the communication was superb".

Rossendale Holiday Villages and Glamping also completed joint marketing with RBC to promote the holiday site and the wider tourism offer in Rossendale. The team supported the business to apply for brown tourist signage from Highways England to improve wayfinding to the site, although Lancashire County Council did not approve the request.

The business has also attended the Rossendale Works Skills and Employability Fairs and have hired four members of staff directly through these events.

The support provided by the Economic Development team has helped the business to overcome some of their challenges and has increased their turnover and business resilience.

“The team are very active in their marketing of tourism in Rossendale and it is good to know that support is there when it is needed”.


More widely, the business has noticed a recent improvement to the quality of the tourism offer in Rossendale, including an increase in marketing materials, support to local businesses and tourism providers, and improvements to footpaths and bridleways for visitors.

Outcomes and Impacts

7.13 In 2018, Rossendale had over 1.4 million tourism visits, according to STEAM data for that year. The vast majority (1.3 million) of these were day visitors, with Rossendale accommodating an estimated 140,000 overnight visitors. Together, the visitor market generated an estimated £63.6 million for the local economy through visitor and tourism business expenditure. STEAM data is unavailable for 2019 or 2020 to make comparisons.

7.14 Table 7.3 sets out the headline outcomes and impacts against Priority 4 success measures, identified in the Economic Development Strategy for the period 2018/19 to 2020/21.

Table 7.3: Priority 4 impacts

Strategy success measures	RAG	Indicator
Increase in value of the Rossendale visitor economy.	n/a	Worth £63.6m in 2018 (STEAM). No 2019 or 2020 data available.
Increase in the number of visitors.	n/a	1.44 million visitors in 2018 (STEAM). No 2019 or 2020 data available.
Increase in overnight stays.	n/a	140,000 overnight visitors generating 346,000 bed nights in 2018 (STEAM). No 2019 or 2020 data available.
Increase in average visitor spend.	n/a	£44 average spend across day/overnight visitors in 2018 (STEAM). No 2019 or 2020 data available.
Increase in the profitability of the Whitaker Museum and Art Gallery.	n/a	The project planned to deliver change against this indicator is ongoing and is expected to have a significant positive impact on the museum's profitability on completion. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic over the most recent year means that it would not be appropriate to assess change at this time.
Increase in the profitability of Ski Rossendale.		The redevelopment of Ski Rossendale resulted in the venue reporting a 20% increase in ticket sales, supporting improved profitability, prior to the pandemic.

7.15 Wider identified outcomes and impacts of the supported activities include:

- The attraction of £2.6 million of external funding into the borough in support of visitor economy ambitions with recent applications potentially raising this figure to £4.6 million.

- Development of the Visitor Economy Strategy has brought stakeholders together with the consultation capturing the views of more than 60 businesses, organisations and community members through a series of online meetings in lockdown.
- The profile of Rossendale as a visitor attraction has continued to build through social media activity and the inclusion of articles in Lancashire wider publications.
- In the assessment's business survey, 56% of respondents strongly agree/agree that Rossendale offers an improved visitor offer now than two years ago.

7.16 Wider impacts will also continue to be reported as, for example, the Visitor Economy Strategy goes on to be implemented and the Whitaker Museum and Art Gallery works are completed. Schemes being progressed under other priority areas (e.g. the regeneration of Rossendale's town centres under Priority 1) will also play a role in attracting additional visitors and associated expenditure into the borough, in support of Priority 4 objectives.

8 Priority 5: Ensuring Residents and Communities Reach Their Full Potential

Activities

Headline Achievements

8.1 Priority 5 is to ensure that Rossendale residents and communities reach their full economic potential, enhance employment, skills and educational opportunities. Table 8.1 sets out the activities completed under this priority over the period from 2018 to 2020.

Table 8.1: Priority 5 activities to December 2020

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
Deliver the pilot 'Rossendale Works' employability programme with disadvantaged residents, supporting businesses to employ local people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered the Rosendale Works Employability and Volunteering Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured funding to continue the delivery of Rossendale Works and Rossendale Youth, supporting residents into positive destinations 	
Based on a gap analysis of employment and skills provision, develop a 'Rossendale Futures' project, a single gateway multi-agency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured partnership funding from Active Lancashire and DWP to expand Rossendale Works project and pilot the Rossendale Futures project focussed on those furthest from employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to deliver Rossendale Futures to those most in need of employability support New staff posts supported to deliver the expanded service 	
Promote apprenticeship opportunities and jobs for local people within the construction sector by conditioning planning applications via the preparation of an Employment and Skills Supplementary Planning Document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links to apprenticeship opportunities through Rossendale Works scheme and free CSCS training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RBC met with Taylor Wimpey to discuss apprenticeship opportunities on upcoming developments New social value clause built into RBC construction contracts to provide a link to Rossendale Works placements 	
Work with the LEP/ Skills & Employment Hub to improve the take up of employment and skills services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worked with the LEP/ Skills & Employment Hub to improve the take up of employment and skills services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed activities through the Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network (LEAN) on behalf of the LEP Rossendale Employment and Skills Hub established 	

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
Raising aspirations and informing career choices with better links between Rossendale's high schools and businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised aspirations and informed career choices with better links between Rossendale's high schools and businesses • Held well-attended Rossendale Works Jobs Fairs in 2018 and 2019 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ED team carried out school site visits and talks, working closely with school careers advisers • Team members work as enterprise advisors in local schools 	
Work with Accrington and Rossendale college to re-establish a satellite presence in Rossendale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No progress recorded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College has a stronger presence in the borough through links with Lancashire Adult Learning and Rossendale Works/Youth • Ongoing discussions to find a local site for a satellite presence 	n/a – this action is out of scope of the ED & P teams
Develop strong links with Lancashire County Council Children and Young People's service, Rathbone and Child Action North West to support those Not in Education, Employment or Training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual employability and skills fair targeting young people, NEET and job seeking adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trialled Rossendale Youth employability programme to support 18-25 year olds into positive destinations 	
Explore the opportunity for the Credit Union to diversify into the business loan market to support people into self-employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RBC press release encouraging the use of Credit Unions • RBC signed up to fairquid, to put employees in touch with local Credit Unions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting held with the Credit Union who are preparing to support individuals with loans for business improvements with further activity to continue over the medium to long term 	
In partnership with Social Enterprise Lancashire Network, developing opportunities in the third sector, including volunteering and social enterprise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No progress identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No progress identified 	
To lobby for improvements to public transport links within the Central Pennine Strategic Development Corridor to support access to work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No progress identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RBC contributing to a refresh of the 2018 Valley City Link strategic case for investment, which will be used to access external funding 	
Investigate establishing a local authority-led housing company to deliver affordable housing and address local housing needs across tenures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No progress identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No progress identified 	n/a – this action is out of scope of the ED & P teams

Strategy key actions	Progress against actions		RAG
	Jan 2018 to Sept 2019	Oct 2019 to Dec 2020	
To develop a Vacant Property Plan and investigate commencing the CPO of Waterside Mill, Bacup and other targeted development opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Derelict commercial buildings project launched during 2019 (also see Priority 1 narrative) RBC officer tasked with leading on Empty Homes Week delivery RBC hosted open day to discuss issues related to identified properties and give advice to property owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property team overseeing Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) on properties in Sunnyside Works, Lees Street and Blackburn Road The Bacup Future High Streets Fund bid identified further derelict / under-used buildings for repurposing Commitment through Haslingden 2040 to development opportunities for derelict buildings to support the creation of a new Cockerill Square Cockerill Square Project Officer Group established to produce cohesive approach for the site 	

Achievements Narrative

Supporting adults into employment

8.2 The **Rossendale Works** employability programme began as a one-year pilot in 2018 that has proved to provide an effective delivery model. The programme works with local unemployed people to improve their confidence and find a pathway back to work through volunteering or sporting activities. Upon completion of the programme, RBC organises four to eight-week work placements with local employers. It is a partnership between RBC and Active Lancashire as delivery agents and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as funders.

8.3 The Economic Development team has secured a variety of revenue grants since 2018 to support the Rossendale Works officers and activities to continue and evolve over time. This includes an initial £20,000 award from Sport England and various funders to run the pilot in 2018/19; £45,000 from DWP to roll-out the programme in 2019/20; and a £65,000 European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) award for each of 2020/21 and 2021/22.

8.4 Complementing and building upon the success of Rossendale Works, the DWP grant allowed the **Rossendale Futures** programme to be introduced in May 2019, providing a holistic approach to improving participants' wellbeing by offering free activities. It works on a more personalised basis with those who are furthest from the labour market, providing the additional support needed to move towards work.

8.5 As a result of the additional funding secured, the delivery team has grown from one to four funded posts, allowing the programme to work with more people in need of support across the borough. The benefits of people securing work – from an economic and well-being perspective – are widely recognised with the programme playing an important role in supporting individuals and the Rossendale economy to benefit.

8.6 An example of the programmes supporting a local business is shown below.

Flexipol Case Study

Flexipol is a plastic and packaging manufacturer that is part of a wider group called Sinovia. Flexipol has a manufacturing site in Haslingden that employs 180 people and has a turnover of £28-£29m per annum.

Flexipol was approached by RBC's Economic Development team, who have supported the business in various ways. The team advised on a planning application for an expansion of the site, made links with RBC's Property team, and explored the potential for Flexipol to secure grant funding.

Flexipol has attended the Rossendale Works Skills and Employability Fairs, hoping to raise the profile of the company and its activities by engaging with local schools. Flexipol felt that the fairs were a good initiative and hopes future events will help them to identify individuals who were looking to explore apprenticeships or a career in engineering.

Flexipol has hired two members of staff through the Rossendale Works scheme and are keen to give opportunities to local people. Whilst the two individuals are no longer working for Flexipol, the commitment to hire locally and the connections made within RBC have benefitted the company. They have been particularly impressed with the team's enthusiasm:

"The Economic Development team and Megan have been fantastic, the communication and enthusiasm is great. They are direct and have a 'no nonsense' approach. They manage our relationship and are open and honest."

The engagement with the Economic Development team has led to the Operations Director of the Haslingden site being appointed to the Chamber of Commerce. This has helped to raise the profile of the company, and also allowed businesses in the area to engage with the wider vision for Rossendale. Flexipol are aware and supportive of RBC's efforts to improve Rossendale, including their investments in heritage buildings and supporting the evening economy, and the company proactively share their vision.

Supporting young people

8.7 In October 2020, the team secured £50,000 of DWP funding for **Rossendale Youth**, a bespoke project to support 18-25 year old Rossendale residents into employment. The funding will be used for a Youth Officer post to oversee the scheme which delivers holistic and tailored support to young people participants and provides short, four to six-week work placements to enhance their employability.

8.8 The Economic Development team has worked closely with schools and their advisers through site visits and talks. Most notably, the team has arranged and delivered annual **Rossendale Works Skills and Employability Fairs**, for Year 9 and 10 school pupils, apprentices and wider residents. These have been very well attended. The July 2018 fair, held at the Adrenaline Centre in Haslingden, attracted around 1,000 pupils, 400 members of the public and almost 60 businesses. The 2019 fair at the same venue attracted similarly large numbers of attendees. Although it was not possible to host an event during 2020, the fair is scheduled to return in later years.

Delivering joined up services and new development




8.9 In addition to the employability support detailed above, the Economic Development team established the Rossendale Employability and Skills Forum which brings together training providers to work in a more co-ordinated way and identify any gaps in delivery. RBC has also signed the Lancashire Skills Pledge, which aims to support businesses to invest in skills and training.



8.10 In 2019, RBC launched the derelict commercial buildings project, in conjunction with the national Empty Homes Week. The Economic Development and Property teams hosted an open day and invited property owners in to discuss their issues and advise on securing tenants. Work to develop the Bacup FHSF bid also involved identifying derelict and under-used buildings in the town centre and the Economic Development team are looking at future funding opportunities for re-purposing these buildings.

Outcomes and Impacts

8.11 Table 8.2 sets out the headline outcomes and impacts against the Priority 5 success measures, identified in the Economic Development Strategy for the period 2018/19 to 2020/21.

Table 8.2: Priority 5 impacts

Strategy success measures	RAG	Indicator
'Rossendale Works' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of participants Number completing a work placement Number in a job or volunteering opportunity 		Since 2018, Rossendale Works/Futures has supported over 300 people across the borough, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80 into full time jobs 180 into physical activity 67 into work placements 37 into volunteering roles 35 into further training
Reduction in the percentage of benefit claimants		The number of benefit claimants in Rossendale rose by 1,925 between January 2018 and November 2020. This is an increase in the percentage of working age residents claiming, from 2.1% to 6.5%, a trend which will have been heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is in line with the trend at the Lancashire level.
Reduction in unemployment		The unemployment rate in Rossendale fell from 4.3% in July 2017-June 2018 to 2.9% in April 2019-March 2020. This is in line with Lancashire trends. However, as with all areas, this is expected to rise given the Covid-19 impact on businesses.

Strategy success measures	RAG	Indicator
Increase in educational attainment rates		The qualification levels of Rossendale residents fell between 2018 and 2019, from 88.2% with Level 1 or higher to 83.7% ¹¹ . Progress 8 attainment data ¹² for five Rossendale secondary schools in 2018/19 shows they are performing: above average (1), average (2), below average (1) and well below average (1). Since 2017/18 these ratings have improved slightly.
Reduction in percentage of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training.		Between 2017/2018 and 2019/2020 the number of NEETs fell from 56 to 46, a reduction from 3.5% to 2.8% of young people (aged 16-17) within Rossendale ¹³ . This rate is currently higher than the Lancashire-12 rate of 2.6% but below the North West rate of 3.3%.

8.12 Wider outcomes and impacts of the Economic Development team's activities under this priority include:

- £245,000 of external funding secured to deliver employability activities.
- More informed residents of all ages who are better equipped to access and progress in employment and therefore improve their life chances and earning potential.
- A GVA impact of £170,000 per annum from funded Rossendale Works, Futures and Youth programme posts and £4.7 million by participants supported to access employment.
- Savings to the public purse as a result of people accessing employment of £1.1 million and benefits of £1.5 million as a result of the reduction in NEETs.
- In the assessment's business survey, around three quarters of respondents strongly agree/agree that Rossendale is a more attractive place to live (77%) and that they have greater pride in Rossendale now than two years ago (73%).

¹¹ Annual Population Survey

¹²

<https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/schools-by-type?step=default&table=schools&parliamentary=Rossendale%20and%20Darwen&geographic=parliamentary&for=secondary&basedon=Progress%20&show=All%20pupils>

¹³ <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/media/903498/neet-article-new-format-final-for-web.pdf>

9 Conclusions

Overarching Findings

9.1 The economic development and property teams have made considerable progress against the Economic Development Strategy for Rossendale (2018-2033), despite a challenging delivery context. Important achievements have already been secured, as well as setting the foundations for further impacts to be generated in the future, across all five priority areas.

9.2 During a challenging delivery period, the team has remained committed to delivering against the priorities outlined in the Economic Development Strategy for Rossendale while still retaining the flexibility to explore new funding opportunities as they arose (with the strategy helping to ensure that clear priorities had already been identified to provide the basis for bids) and help both businesses and residents to respond to unprecedented challenges presented by Covid-19 which have impacted across the economy.

9.3 The assessment shows that 22 actions identified in the strategy have already been completed and strong progress has been made against a further 16. The narrative in the previous sections also demonstrates that the team has delivered a wider programme of activities that have contributed to overall ambitions.

9.4 Key achievements include:

Establishing the foundations for increased revenue generation from property: Revenue from the Council's assets has already increased and the new processes established along with the results of the assets review which is currently underway will allow this income stream to grow over time. Property has previously been an under-utilised element of the Council's portfolio but this is on track to change.

Helping to attract and retain businesses in the borough: The teams' activities have played an important role in ensuring a number of businesses are located in Rossendale. Large employers stand out in the findings, including the provision of new premises at Futures Park to allow Orthoplastics to be retained in the borough (safeguarding 174 jobs and with plans for a further 100 jobs to be created in the future) and the facilitation of a site purchase in Stubbins to attract Melba Swintex to Rossendale, attracting 160 jobs and creating a further 40. These have been important achievements for the local economy, providing both high numbers and good quality jobs.

Supporting businesses and individuals to be resilient and succeed: Due to factors outside the Council's control, the past year has presented challenges for businesses and residents across the borough. The team has worked hard to support people as best they can with the addition of a business advisor post an important factor in allowing a Covid-19 response offer to be made available to help protect jobs in the borough. The Rossendale Works employability programme has been successful in supporting previously unemployed residents into work with its recent expansion to support young people and those furthest from the labour market a positive development.

Building Rossendale's profile: Through social media activity, press releases, references in Lancashire wide publications and word of mouth, Rossendale's profile as a visitor location and investment location has continued to build as a result of the team's activities. Whilst current circumstances have impacted severely on the visitor economy, as attractions begin to re-open, the capital investments made and planned and the marketing activities completed are expected to attract higher visitor numbers that will support the sustainability of facilities whilst also allowing the benefits of the Adrenaline Valley to be captured more widely across the borough. In the assessment's survey of businesses, 70% strongly agreed or agreed that Rossendale has improved its profile as a place to live, work, visit and invest over the last two years.

Progressing plans for the town centres: Across the town centres, considerable progress has been made to establish clear ambitions and programmes of activity that are tailored to each place. The opportunities and challenges of each location have been recognised and resource has been secured to allow plans to be taken forward. Further achievements will continue to be seen in later years as a result of the ambitions that have been outlined and the local structures created.

Engaging local businesses and residents in the development of Rossendale's plans: The Economic Development team has been proactive to ensure that the plans being developed in Rossendale acknowledge local needs and aspirations and are locally supported. Extensive consultation programmes have been completed that have secured high levels of engagement and provide the basis for the Council to continue to work with local people to deliver change and capture local benefits.

Impacts Achieved

9.5 The assessment has found that the impacts of the two teams' activities have been wide ranging, reflecting the breadth of activities delivered, and considerable in their scale. The previous assessment sections outlined priority specific impacts but the key monetised impacts identified across the assessment themes are:

- The **12.26 FTE posts directly supported** within the Economic Development and Property teams will generate a **GVA impact of £725,000 per annum**.
- Securing **annual revenue income of £703,000** from the Council's property portfolio during 2020/21, a significant uplift on previous levels, and a **capital receipt of £200,000** and with scope for further increases being explored.
- Attracting **external funding of almost £7.6 million**, supporting both additional staff capacity and the progression of capital schemes with a further £12.9 million of funding applications in preparation or being considered.
- **Inward investors spending at least £5.5 million¹⁴** in the borough as part of their relocation activities.
- Supporting **80 residents into employment**, generating benefits for individuals as well as the local economy. If all of these residents were previously unemployed, this will represent an **annual fiscal benefits saving of £1.1 million** and, based on an average annual wage for Rossendale residents, will **support wages of £1.7 million per annum**.
- Based on the businesses identified through this assessment¹⁵:
 - Inward investment has **attracted 160 jobs** into Rossendale and **created a further 40 jobs**.
 - Support for **existing businesses has safeguarded 450 jobs and created 10** (with scope for a further 100 jobs to be created over time).
 - Together, these posts will support an **annual GVA contribution of £39.0 million** to the local economy, rising to £44.9 million should the 100 additional jobs materialise.

9.6 Considering impacts against the Economic Development Strategy for Rossendale's objectives shows the following areas of progress.

¹⁴ Based on information available through the Economic Development team with the actual figure to potentially be higher.

¹⁵ Recognising that this will not capture all benefits experienced by supported businesses (as only a sample has been consulted) and will therefore under-estimate the total impacts secured.

Table 9.1: Progress against Strategy objectives

Objective	Progress made
Attract private sector investment for employment sites and residential development worth c£550m	A complete record of private sector investment has not been seen as part of the assessment. Examples do however show that private sector investment has been attracted to new development opportunities, including the development of Futures Park. The employment land identified through the emerging Local Plan further adds to the potential.
Secure over £200m of public sector investment required for rail and road infrastructure	Bids have been submitted for £7m of transport infrastructure investment and wider lobbying activity is drawing attention to the need for investment. Public investment secured for other interventions totals £7.6m.
Create over 1,600 new jobs, with more than 400 jobs in growth sectors	A partial understanding of employment impacts has been secured through the assessment, based on the businesses consulted and information shared by the team. This captures 50 new jobs to date with the potential for this figure to rise to 150 over time, including a number in growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing, with the actual figure to potentially be significantly higher.
Achieve greater prosperity for all by raising income levels	The attraction of new employment opportunities into Rossendale and the activities of Rossendale Works have provided new opportunities for residents. Published datasets show that incomes have risen over the assessment period.
Increase the business rate base on underdeveloped and under-utilised sites	The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on business rate impact but the development of new sites and ensuring that Council land and property assets are put to more productive use will have increased business rates income.

Value for Money

9.7 When viewed against the core monetised impacts outlined above, for a relatively small cost (c£615,000 funded by the Council over the assessment period and c.£315,000 within the latest financial year) the team has delivered a strong return on investment. The analysis suggests that, for every £1 the Council invests in the teams and their activities the returns generated are:

Nature of benefit	Return per £1 of Council expenditure
GVA impacts of Rossendale Works activity	£89.00 per annum (assuming all employment has been sustained) against Rossendale Works staff costs
GVA impact from attracted, new and safeguarded employment in the borough	£69.60 against the Economic Development and Property team costs over the period
External funding secured	£16.70 relative to Economic Development team costs over the assessment period
Property portfolio income	£10.00 relative to Property team costs, and forecast to rise
Inward investment secured	£9.80 , based on Economic Development and Property team costs over the assessment period
The GVA impact of direct staff posts supported	£2.30 per annum

Concluding Remark

9.8 The Economic Development and Property teams have made substantial progress against the Economic Development Strategy for Rossendale actions as well as delivering a series of wider, linked activities – as opportunities have arisen – to support the economic growth of the borough. The achievements outlined in this report have been delivered by small, but growing, teams which have allowed both a series of actions to be achieved in full and considerable progress to be made against others. This momentum needs to be maintained to allow the strategy's objectives to be achieved in full.

Ongoing support for the two teams is needed to achieve this and to enable positive impacts for the residents, businesses and economy of Rossendale to continue to be secured.