

Subject:	Extension of Rossendale Works and Futures projects	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	12 th February 2020
Report of:	Director of Economic Development	Portfolio Holder:	Regeneration and Economic Development
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
Contact Officer:	Guy Darragh	Telephone:	01706 252568
Email:	guydarragh@rossendalebc.gov.uk		

1.	RECOMMENDATIONS
1.1	To authorise the extension of the Rossendale Works and Futures Project to 31st March 2022. To award £60,000 match funding for the two years (April 2020 to March 2022) from the Employment and Transport Reserve which will bring in an estimated £80,000 in ESIF funding.
1.2	To authorise the Legal Services Manager (Monitoring Officer) to sign grant funding agreements with external bodies to maximise the potential of the Rossendale Works and Futures project.
1.3	To delegate minor amendments to this report to the Director of Economic Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The aim of this proposal is to increase labour supply, enabling business recruitment and subsequent business growth. It will tackle economic inactivity and raise income levels in some of the most disadvantaged households.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:

- **A connected and successful Rossendale that welcomes sustainable growth:** our priority is to ensure that we are well connected to our residents, key partners and stakeholders. We want to make the most of every pound we spend and we are always looking for new and innovative ways to make the resources we do have, work harder for us.
- **A proud, healthy and vibrant Rossendale:** our priority is to ensure that we are creating and maintaining a healthy and vibrant place for people to live and visit.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Loss of match funding

Match funding has been secured by a partner organisation with a grant funding agreement in place. Active Lancashire have funding for the duration of the funding request. The risk that this will be lost in minimum. If this was withdrawn then the project would immediately seek alternative match funding and the project would be reviewed.

Partnership arrangement breaks down

The partnership with Active Lancashire is strong and has been operational with a service

level agreement from April 2018. It is unlikely that this relationship will break down and the contract is managed through regular project group meetings where joint decisions are made.

Lack of engagement from businesses

Businesses need to come forward with placement opportunities. They are made aware of the project through one to one meetings, forums, websites and social media. The project has proved to be popular with local SMEs in the previous two years of operation and this risk is low.

Lack of engagement from individuals

The Rossendale Works Officer is based in the DWP Rawtenstall office one day a week and directly links with the job coaches who pass on referrals. Outreach activities take place across the borough and Rossendale Futures holds events borough wide. This project has proved popular with residents over the previous two years and the risk of lack of engagement is low.

5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

5.1 Rossendale Council Corporate Strategy

This project links closely with priority two of the corporate strategy, a connected, growing and successful Rossendale and priority three a proud, healthy and vibrant Rossendale. The Council is increasing Economic Development commitments and this project very much complements these aims by providing active delivery to both businesses and residents.

Economic Development Strategy

The Economic Development Strategy under priority five has identified employability as a key area. The Rossendale Works and Futures project are Rossendale Councils main activity to tackle the barriers faced by some residents and employers.

5.2 The need for the project

This project has had a positive impact over the last two years, some of the highlights include:

- 222 residents engaging in the project
- 200 residents taking part in activities or volunteering
- 67 residents completing placements
- 56 moving into employment

The wider benefits are not always easily measurable but increased wellbeing, life skills, household income levels and business expansion can all be attributed to the success of the project.

The Rossendale Works and Futures project is regarded as one of the leading employability projects in Lancashire. It is a partnership between Rossendale Council, Department of Work and Pensions and Active Lancashire. It has been visited by many other authorities and stakeholders who are looking to replicate its success in bringing forward residents to the labour market and supporting business growth. The outputs and lives transformed during the first 21 months of the project have greatly exceeded expectations and this is a project that we want to see continue and develop further in the coming years.

Employment (Jul 2018-Jun 2019)

	Rossendale (Numbers)	Rossendale (%)
Economically Inactive	34,000	76.7%
→ In Employment	32,700	73.7%
→ Employees	28,200	64.6%
→ Self Employed	4,500	9.1%
Unemployed	1,300	3.8

The latest NOMIS statistics state that 1,300 residents are defined as unemployed in the borough. Within this figure will be a mix of people at different stages of their employment journey. The Rossendale Works and Futures project is established to support these 1,300 residents.

5.3 Business and resident need

Businesses being able to recruit the right staff is a key issue that has been raised at our Rossendale Business Leaders Forum as well as during our Business Relationship Programme. Without quality staff, businesses are unable to expand, and this then become a barrier to growth and prosperity. The project has established close links with local expanding employers who have repeatedly used the project to recruit previously hard to fill vacancies.

This is a voluntary project and no unemployed resident is mandated to join the project. Those that progress through the project and access permanent employment will see income levels raised as well as boosting self-confidence and fulfilment. By doing so this helps the Council indirectly by reducing social issues in the borough as well as supporting economic growth.

5.4 Lancashire employability linkages

The Lancashire LEP coordinate employability through their skills hub. The Economic Development Team works closely with the LEP in this area. The emphasis is to add value to the provision within Rossendale, complementing other providers and maximising linkages rather than duplication of resources. As an ESIF project from May 2020 onwards this project it fits within the existing Lancashire provision but increases deliverability within Rossendale.

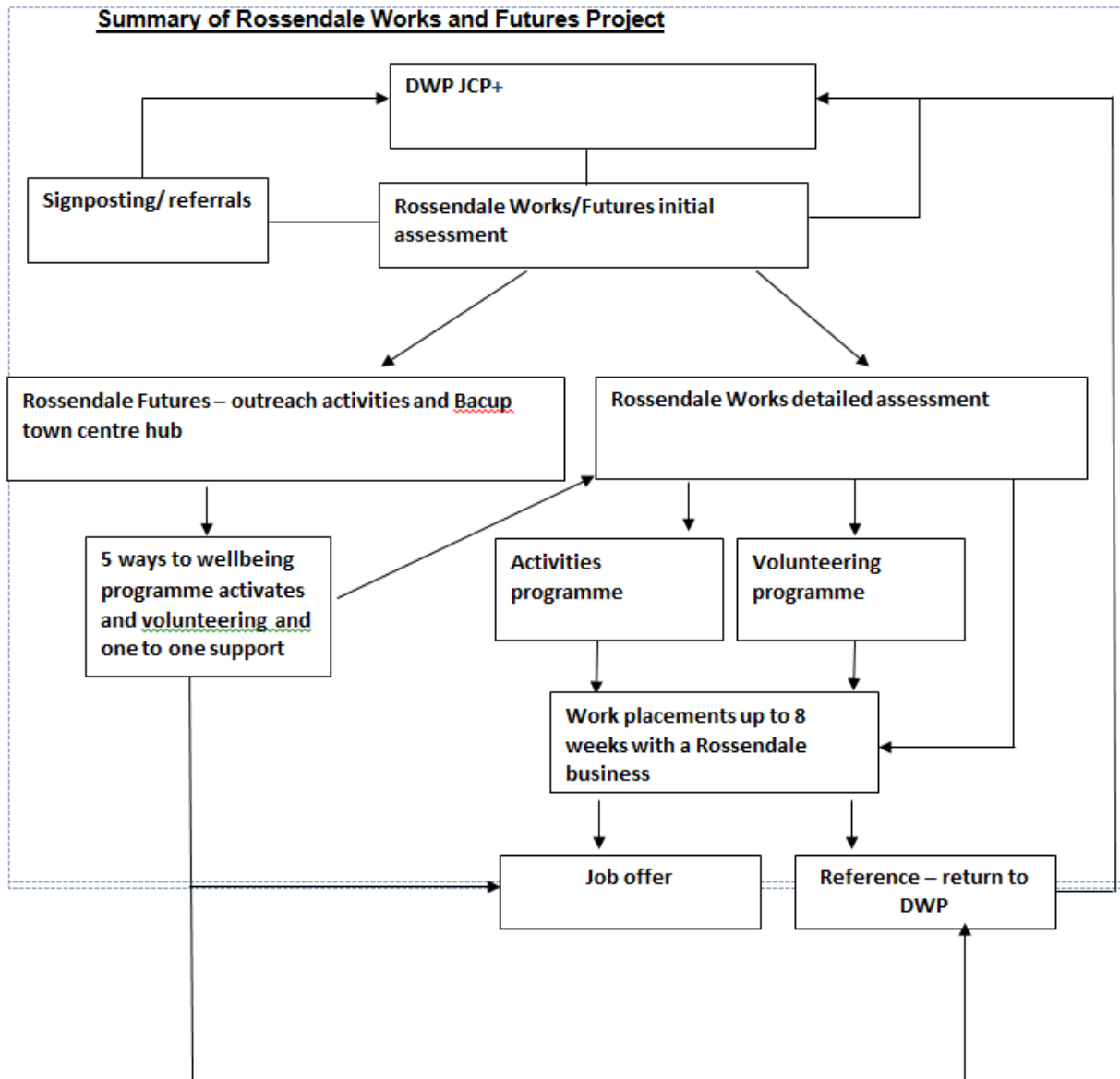
5.5 Rossendale Works and Futures

The Works project enables residents to engage in a 10-week programme of activities that build their confidence and life skills. Candidates attend twice per week and have a progression plan that monitors their progress and identifies any barriers that they need to overcome before accessing employment. They have access to one to one support and educational training.

After completing the up to 10-week programme candidates become eligible to be placed with a local employer that is seeking to recruit. They can spend up to 8 weeks on placement during which time they are supported by a Rossendale Works mentor. At the end of the placement they are offered either a permanent job or are given a reference.

The Futures project is designed for candidates that have more complex barriers and require more intensive and longer support before accessing employment. It is currently focused at the request of the DWP on the Bacup area which has relatively high levels of economic inactivity. Candidates are supported by a 20-week programme that is a mix of activities, mentoring and skills training. Typically residents as they progress move into the main Rossendale Works project.

The relationship between the projects is shown in this flow diagram.



5.6 2018-2020 – pilot project

Cabinet approved the initial 2 year pilot of the project in November 2017 (see background paper report). The project has over achieved considerably its original targets, it attracted £20,000 of match funding in year 1. Outputs were higher than originally forecast across most measures in year one and two of the project.

From May 2019 to April 2020 the project has attracted £45,000 match funding direct from DWP which has enabled the Rossendale Futures project to also be established. The match funding attracted in the second year is much higher than originally forecast, boosting the project.

Outputs achieved for year 1

Output	Original targets in 2017 Cabinet report	2018/19	2019/20*
Number of candidates enrolled	100	80	142
Number taking part in activities – Works	30	80	47
Number taking part in activities – Futures	na	na	73
Number Volunteering – Works	30	12	Recorded as activities in line with DWP funding guidance
Numbers completing placement	40	32	35
Numbers into employment	20	27	29

*Figures represent part year: May 2019 to December 2019 – only 8 out of 12 months

5.7 Proposal April 2020 – March 2022

Rossendale Council match funding is necessary in order to secure matched funding from external funding bodies in order to deliver the enhanced employability projects in Rossendale.

The 2-year extension will be funded through a mix of resources.

In April 2020 the existing contract with DWP will be concurrent bringing in resources on a typical 40:60 basis.

May 2020 to December 2021: Active Lancashire as our main partners in the works and futures project have successfully secured funding from ESIF to deliver the More Positive Together Project. Rossendale Works and Futures has been included as a delivery partner within this Lancashire wide bid. This will ensure that the Works project as well as the Futures project continue and receive the necessary amounts of match funding in order to invest into the Rossendale projects. The slight increase in match funding from £25,000 2018-20 to £30,000 2020-22 is necessary to fully resource both of the projects and provide the appropriate level of activities. The figures below have been verbally agreed between the two parties but subject to minor changes.

Likely ESIF funding breakdown, per annum:

Rossendale Council	£30,000
ESIF	£40,000
Total	£70,000

Likely ESIF spend profile:	
Rossendale Works Officer	£30,000
Rossendale Futures Officer	£25,000
Room hire and activities	£15,000
Total	£70,000

The period January to March 2022 is currently unsecured in terms of match funding but the project will be working with partners and funding agencies to ensure that continued long term sustainability of the project. It is unlikely that the project would be able to continue without securing match funding.

5.8 **Forward Strategy**

The business case for the project will be renewed again in early 2022. The project has been identified as being a long term project under priority 5 of the Economic Development strategy and as such a more stable funding structure would be preferable in the long term. However, the opportunities presented by the external funding sources mentioned in this report should be maximised in the short term.

5.9 **Options Considered:**

To discontinue the project: This would result in a much reduced Lancashire employability offer within Rossendale and the outputs and associated social and economic advantages would be lost

To maintain existing RBC funding at £25,000 per annum: This would enable the main Rossendale Works project to function as present but the Futures project would only be partly resourced with part-time staff, reducing the impact on disadvantaged residents.

To award RBC match funding of £30,000 per annum (recommended): This would enable both the Rossendale Works and Futures Project to be fully resourced with two full-time staff and a comprehensive range of activities, maximising the impact of the project.

5.10 **Recommendations**

To award RBC match funding of £30,000 per annum 2020-2022 (recommended): This would enable both the Rossendale Works and Futures Project to be fully resourced with two full-time staff and a comprehensive range of activities, maximising the impact of the project.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

6. SECTION 151 OFFICER

6.1 Financial matters are noted within the report.

Members should be aware that the available balance in the Transport and Employment reserve is now forecast to be under £500,000 by 31/03/2020.

7. MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 All legal implications are covered in the body of the text.

All necessary legal documents to be completed following due diligence.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

8.1 No RBC policy implications and supports policy at a national level.

The EIA has not identified any detrimental issues or impacts and any such issues that may arise will be addressed in a proportionate manner.

Consultation has been undertaken with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, The Director of Economic Development, management team and full Cabinet.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Rossendale Works and Futures project is a proven success in increasing the supply of labour to growing and expanding businesses in the borough. It is also having a positive impact on disadvantaged residents and the communities that they live within. The recommendations in this report will ensure its continued delivery for the next 2 years.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
29 th November 2017 Cabinet Report C5 https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/1057/cabinet2019-20	RBC Website