

Subject:	Rossendale Works Employability and Skills Project Extension	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Full Council	Date:	28 th June 2023
Report of:	Head of Housing and Regeneration	Lead Member:	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: Yes	Attached:	No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment:	Required: No	Attached:	No
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1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 1.1 To extend the More Positive Together 1.4 Project delivered in Partnership with Active Lancashire until March 2025 funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 1.2 To deliver a further programme of People and Skills support for Rossendale Works until March 2025 funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- 1.3 To delegate authorisation to the Monitoring Officer on Rossendale Council's behalf, to enter into a Service Level Agreement until March 2025 with Active Lancashire to deliver our new People and Skills programme relating to the UK Shared Prosperity Funding awarded in December 2022.
- 1.4 To establish a "Bridge to Employment" for Employability and Skills at Futures Park, Bacup on a temporary basis while the detail through the Levelling Up Fund is developed.
- 1.5 To delegate any minor amendments to the Director of Economic Development alongside the Section 151 Officer and the Lead Member.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In December 2022, Rossendale Council approved the award of £2.64m UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) to deliver a series of key initiatives until March 2025.
- Rossendale Council has a strong partnership with Active Lancashire to deliver two projects relating to People and Skills, MPT 1.1 that recently concluded and MPT 1.4 that concludes in December 2023 in line with the close of the European Structural Investment Fund.
- People and Skills is a key priority for investment through UKSPF and Rossendale Council's has a series of outputs and outcomes to achieve. These will be met through extending the More Positive Together 1.4 project, which works with people far from the labour market, focusing on well-being to get them closer to employment and through delivering a holistic project of Rossendale Works.
- A Youth hub has been trialled at Rossendale Council offices previously. There is a demand to re-introduce this without an age restriction.
- The employability provision will increase labour supply, enabling business growth through appropriate recruitment and raising the income levels of the most disadvantaged households.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In 2018, Rossendale Council launched its Economic Development Strategy that sets out themes for growth until 2033 and a series of actions to support them. The theme that this report supports is:

“Ensuring residents and communities reach their full economic potential, enhanced employment, skills and educational opportunities.”

Our Labour Market Intelligence data shows that Rossendale currently has an employability rate of 76.6% which is slightly higher than the National Average of 75.6%. However, Rossendale’s levels have reduced by 4.8% since the Covid-19 pandemic. Rossendale has a claimant count of 4%.

Nationally, there is a campaign to improve the numeracy skills of adults, and the Government has launched a scheme “multiply” to offer flexible courses to adults and businesses, providing the opportunity for more people to achieve a level 4 (formerly a C) GCSE or a “work ready” functional skill.

The Economic Development department works closely with the Lancashire Skills hub under the Lancashire Skills and Employability Framework to support the 3 themes, underpinned by an informed approach:

- Inclusive Workforce
- Future Workforce
- Skilled & Productive Workforce

4. DETAILS

4.1 Existing Employability and Skills Provision in Rossendale

Rossendale Council has been delivering a series of provision relating to Employability and Skills in partnership with Active Lancashire and the DWP since 2018 under the banner Rossendale Works.

The DWP provide support to help residents to secure job interviews however, their time and resource is unfortunately limited. There is a need to invest more time and energy for those individuals, to enthuse, unlock and overcome the hurdles they face. The Rossendale Works programme of support is designed to cover this need.

The recent iterations of Rossendale Council’s employability support have had a fantastic impact on Rossendale residents and here are some of the headlines.

Rossendale Works MPT 1.1 – Since April 2022, 116 local residents have enrolled for support. These are people that are closer to the labour market, such as those that have been made redundant that are struggling to get clear links with businesses and need our help to unlock that opportunity. Participants often claim Universal Credit while they job search but only benefit from one time limited 10 minute slot with the DWP every other week. Rossendale Works skilled members of staff provide a pro-active support mechanism, contacting relevant businesses on the individual’s behalf to secure them work placements or interviews to progress them into employment. 46 local people enrolled onto the programme have now been successfully supported into a full-time position and are now no longer claiming Universal Credit.

Rossendale Works MPT 1.4 – Since January 2022, Rossendale Works staff have closely worked with 87 local residents and despite the individuals having varying challenges, the











package of support has ensured that 22 of these participants have secured a full-time role within a local Rossendale business. The programme helps to engage local residents who often suffer with low self-esteem to encourage them to take part in health and well-being boosting activities, slowly introducing them to the labour market. The target audience is often those that are from backgrounds of entrenched worklessness or low prospects. This is anything from a coffee morning session to a boxing class. The team work closely with individuals to break down the barriers that are currently preventing them from entering the workplace and they will work closely with other providers and partners to identify and resolve any skills gaps relating to an individual.

Both projects have been hugely successful. Rossendale residents lives have changed as a result and local businesses have benefitted. In all cases, the ESIF outputs and outcomes that were originally set have been met and often, exceeded. In a short amount of time, our team of 4 dedicated people have made a significant impact on the lives of almost 200 people. Wider benefits are not easily measured but these projects have a tangible impact on people's household income, health and well-being. The projects can also be attributed to the growth of local businesses.

The projects are delivered in partnership with the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) and Active Lancashire with Rossendale Council taking the management lead and identifying where the gaps in provision for local residents are. Rossendale Council's employability provision is unique and has been an exemplar that other areas are keen to replicate for their residents.

4.2 Data

The below data has been taken from a dataset in Xplore, it shows how many residents are searching for work in Rossendale:

Conditionality Regime ^{IV} 	Searchin g for work	Working - with requirement s	No work requirement s	Working - no requirement s	Plannin g for work	Preparin g for work	Unkno wn or missin g regime	Total
Month ⁱ 								
March 2022	1,728	850	1,711	1,112	118	281	..	5,794
April 2022	1,650	798	1,773	1,190	122	282	..	5,819
May 2022	1,602	856	1,804	1,166	122	287	..	5,840
June 2022	1,588	888	1,838	1,129	137	307	..	5,888
July 2022	1,570	879	1,907	1,183	146	311	..	5,996
August 2022	1,555	858	1,924	1,234	149	311	..	6,040
September 2022	1,523	848	1,965	1,286	148	308	..	6,086
October 2022	1,545	880	2,003	1,288	135	313	..	6,163
November 2022	1,547	815	2,065	1,330	130	326	..	6,217
December 2022	1,568	748	2,094	1,362	128	331	..	6,230
January 2023	1,540	739	2,138	1,430	123	339	..	6,309
February 2023 ^r	1,523	706	2,192	1,427	118	358	5	6,331
March 2023 ^p	1,549	706	2,240	1,457	118	351	..	6,430

The Rossendale Works MPT 1.1 and 1.4 projects are designed to work with these residents.

4.3 Future Proposal

As part of the Council's commitment to provide thorough and bespoke employability and skills support to local residents, a programme was recommended into the Council's successful UKSPF submission, which has earmarked funding up until March 2025.

Part of the funding will extend the MPT 1.4 project from December 2023 until March 2025, keeping on the dedicated project officer and providing a budget for outreach activities such as those listed above. The service will provide support to residents with deep-rooted challenges relating to employment and skills.

The second part of the funding will focus on the wrap around support for Rossendale Works until March 2025.

This will be a key bridge to get people into employment. Our team of dedicated mentoring staff will design a bespoke package of support for each individual enrolled onto the project (targets are below), creating an action plan to encourage their development. This could include enrolling participants onto a range of activities as well as getting them the relevant qualifications to improvement their employment prospects.

Differing from previous years, the programme will have a dedicated and paid element to support mental health on a part-time basis. This is a requirement that has been identified throughout the delivery of the project to date and a clear opportunity to add value and adjust the mindsets of some of the people the project aligns with.

Rossendale Council's role is the overall management and responsibility of the programme of support. The Council will provide the support to Active Lancashire and other partners to ensure delivery is smooth and progress is maintained in addition to reporting all outputs and outcomes to UKSPF. Rossendale Council will provide the member of staff to run the engagement and softer skills support. The Economic Development Officer and Head of Housing and Regeneration will provide day-to-day line management. Rossendale Council will also provide space for a "hub" as referenced below and the Business Advisor will promote the project will our local businesses.

Active Lancashire's role encompasses the following:

1. Outreach engagement support
2. Creation of personal action plan- identify barriers, provide benefit support and referrals
3. Organising appropriate skills sessions
4. Arrange a programme of activities
5. Work alongside the Business Advisor for placements in local businesses
6. Partnership arrangements for the hub, including arranging the rota and ensuring the smooth running with the DWP
7. Deliver mental health and volunteering support
8. Collect data, monitor individuals and report figures at structured meetings
9. Market and promote the project
10. Arrange a minimum of one annual jobs fair with support of the Business Advisor and Economic Development Officer
11. Ensure the skills put forward through the national "multiply" agenda are readily accessible for Rossendale residents.

4.4 Targets

The following outputs have been set as part of the UKSPF bid:

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Number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services (numerical value)	120
Number of economically inactive people supported to engage with the benefits system (numerical value)	30
Number of socially excluded people accessing support (numerical value)	50
Number of people supported to access basic skills (numerical value)	120
Number of people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment (numerical value)	30
Number of people supported to engage in job-searching (numerical value)	120
Number of people receiving support to gain employment (numerical value)	120
Number of people receiving support to sustain employment (numerical value)	40

The following outcomes have been set as part of the UKSPF bid:

Number of economically inactive individuals in receipt of benefits they are entitled to following support (numerical value)	30
Number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support (numerical value)	30
Number of people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills funded by UKSPF (numerical value)	120
Number of people in supported employment (numerical value)	120
Number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services (numerical value)	20
Number of people engaged in job-searching following support (numerical value)	120
Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support (numerical value)	120
Number of people sustaining employment for 6 months (numerical value)	60
Number of people with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL) (numerical value)	50

4.5 Rossendale Employability and Skills Hub

In 2021, Rossendale Council opened up Futures Park as a “hub” for 16-24 year olds. This provided an opportunity to bring services to young people, breaking down some of the barriers to work. Two DWP work coaches were situated in the One Stop Shop. Furthermore, a rota was developed so that partners such as Princes Trust, Citizens Advice, Mind, Lancashire Adult Learning to name just a few, were readily available to the young adults, in addition to the physical health and well-being activities provided by Active Lancashire as part of the Rossendale Works project. This closed when the Council’s funding from the DWP concluded.

Due to its success (both from a resident and partner point of view), this model was put forward in the Council’s Levelling Up Fund submission, with a location to be based in the town centre targeting residents of all ages.

While the detail of the venue and location is to be determined, it is proposed to re-establish this hub in Futures Park, removing the age restriction. The model can then be “picked up and dropped” to the venue once developed through the LUF bid.

The hub will be managed by Rossendale Works with overall responsibility to the Economic Development Team who will monitor its performance and success. There is no anticipated cost involved in the arrangement at Futures Park. The Health and Safety and Facilities Management teams will assist as necessary and be responsible for any risk assessments required from partners.

4.6 Funding breakdown

The UKSPF has been allocated to the projects as follows:

Project	2023-2024	2024-2025	total
Rossendale Works More Positive Together Jan 24-March 2025	£30k	£50K	£80k
Rossendale Works Sept 24- March 2025	£85k	£180k	£265k

Rossendale Council will retain £90,578. This will cover the MPT project officer’s salary and on-going costs, a contribution towards the Economic Development Officer and Head of Housing and Regeneration salaries and the Council’s time in the management and administration of the project.

A Service Level Agreement will be entered into with Active Lancashire for the amount of **£254,422** until March 2025. This is broken down as follows:

1. 3 x existing FTE staff posts (equivalent to) – there are 5 staff working on the project in a mixture of full and part-time positions
2. 1 x new mental health support part time position
3. 1 x new volunteering specialist support part time position
4. Activity associated costs, including venue hire and delivery
5. Marketing/ branding and promotion
6. Training and equipment
7. Overall management and administration

5. RISK

All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- **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**

There is now a dedicated Business Advisor in the Economic Development department tasked with sourcing work experience opportunities. In addition, the funding will employ a member of staff for 2.5 days a week to solely focus on relationships with businesses. Businesses are made aware of the project through one to one meetings, forums, websites and social media and pro-active searches are completed with those directly recruiting. 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**

Rossendale Council will provide space in Futures park for the DWP to have a direct presence weekly to easily share referrals to the Rossendale Works Employability Projects. 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.

6. FINANCE

6.1 The projects within this report form part of the Council's UKSPF programme and will therefore be fully funded by the UKSP grant funding.

6.2 There are no additional costs to the Council associated with this scheme.

7. LEGAL

7.1 The legal implications around the legal and grant funding agreements are covered in the body of the report.

7.2 It is considered desirable in the best interest of the Council that the execution of the project's Service Level Agreement be with an organisation already engaged by the Council to ensure an efficient and effective programme delivery.

8. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

The policy implications are outlined within the body of the report. The original EIA has been reviewed and there are no new emerging issues. Outputs relate to protected characteristics including females, young people, disabilities and BAME which has a positive impact on protected characteristic groups.

9. REASON FOR DECISION

The principals of this decision align with the Council's core values and is identified as a key growth theme in the Council's Economic Development Strategy. This package of support will be an important mechanism to reduce Rossendale's levels of unemployment, increasing our skills and supporting our local businesses recruitment needs.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
EIA	Futures Park