



ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2021/22

[www.rossendale.gov.uk](http://www.rossendale.gov.uk)

Rossendale  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# INTRODUCTION

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This Annual Report has been developed to help the council report on its progress. It's the first one we have published. We are using this to provide clearer information for local people on what the council is achieving.

I am proud to lead a council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve the people of Rossendale. This is a council that has responded to the impact of Covid 19 and kept council services running.

Last year we agreed a new Corporate Plan: Our Place, Our Plan. This set out our ambition for the next four years and provides a structure against which we can report our progress. It's been a tough year. At times, Rossendale was one of the areas of the country hardest hit by the impact of the Covid lockdown restrictions. During the whole of the last two years, we have aimed to keep council services running as close to normal as possible to serve local people. And in this we have succeeded. We have also adapted the way we support local communities to help the most vulnerable. This included running Rossendale Connected, which supported over 5,000 people during the last two years.

In November 2021, we had a Local Government Association peer challenge, which examined how well we were doing. This independent review identified that 'the council clearly cares for its local communities.' The peer team found 'a council which is pro-active and ambitious', which was good to see. We believe we've achieved a lot in the last twelve months but we are keen to do more. We will keep doing what we do best – supporting each other and delivering for Rossendale.

We've done all of this on a small budget. In 2021/22 our budget was £8.9m. and we think we've achieved a lot with modest resources. This Annual Report does not feedback on everything we have achieved in the last year, but I hope you will get a sense of our commitment as we take a look back at the work of the council over the last year.

Alyson Barnes



Leader, Rossendale Borough Council

# 1

## THRIVING LOCAL ECONOMY

The local economy was hard hit by the Covid pandemic. Over the last year we have given out over £34m in grants to support local businesses. The early signs are positive, but the local economy is in a fragile state and we are undertaking sustained work to support local businesses to recover.



### Despite Covid we have been making some good progress in building a thriving local economy:

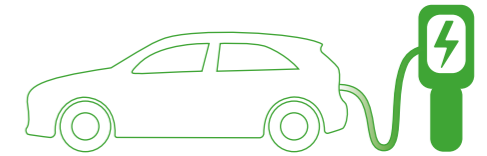
- **Haslingden** – the work redeveloping upper Deardengate has begun. This £2.3m project is improving 19 shopfronts and the public realm at the top of Deardengate. Work began in 2021 securing funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to begin the work with local businesses.
- **Rawtenstall** – the town square was redeveloped over the Winter leading to a much improved open public space adjacent to the bus station. The space has been opened up, provision has been made for small scale events and new planting and landscaping has taken place in the £300,000 redevelopment.
- **Bacup** – work began at the former Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank, ABD Centre and Trinity Baptist Church to either repurpose or improve the usage of these heritage buildings. The work on the Heritage Action Zone continues, improving key derelict buildings and the public realm in the town centre.
- We supported the relocation of major employers in the Valley such as Slingco and WeBuyBooks, helping to grow the number of jobs available to local people.
- In July 2021 the Whitaker Museum & Gallery reopened following a £2.2m redevelopment. This has created a modern and innovative new gallery/ event space, created new hospitality facilities and led to it being awarded the cultural venue of the year at the Lancashire tourism awards.
- Over 725 planning applications have been processed in the last year, making it one of the busiest years in recent times, assisting housing developers, local businesses to expand and residents to improve their homes.
- We continue to deliver Rossendale Works – working with the Department for Work & Pensions and Active Lancashire – this has placed 140 unemployed local people into paid work.
- Developed out further plots at the Futures Park Business Centre in Bacup, including Bright Futures Nursery, generating jobs for local people and income for the council.
- Secured £150,000 of funding to start feasibility work on re-opening the City Valley passenger rail line from Rawtenstall to Manchester.
- We agreed our Local Plan, which provides the framework for all longer-term decisions on housing, infrastructure development and space for business.



# 2

## HIGH QUALITY ENVIRONMENT

We recognise local people and visitors to Rossendale love our excellent natural environment. We declared a climate emergency in 2019 and have already delivered practical improvements to translate words into action.



We have been making some good progress in maintaining a high quality environment:

- We have emptied over 2.6 million household waste bins over the last year.
- Been awarded 'Green Flag' status for Stubbylee Park, recognising how much we have recently improved the park in Bacup and now we will be looking to move onto other key parks in 2022.
- Undertaken intensive 'clean up days' in Healey Dell and Haslingden to tackle known areas of littering and fly-tipping.
- We have recycled 34% of household waste, reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfill.
- Picked up over 1,700 fly-tips whilst also getting the average time for picking up fly-tips down to 6 days.
- Supported the many community groups across Rossendale to tackle littering and to make many of our green spaces colourful with new planting.
- Introduced a new approach to street sweeping to ensure town centres are swept more frequently to keep these areas clean and tidy.
- Set aside £1m in a new carbon fund enabling local businesses and community groups to reduce their carbon footprint and ran our first Climate Change conference.
- Planting 8,250 new trees as part of a new Rossendale Forest.
- Installed new electric vehicle points at Futures Park and at 3 other council owned car parks.
- Launched 'Operation Trident' which is prosecuting 30 people for fly-tipping as well as issuing over 700 fixed penalty notices for littering and dog fouling to act as a deterrent and keep areas clean.
- Started to move all our vehicle fleet onto Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil to reduce our vehicle carbon footprint by over 90%.



# 3

## HEALTHY AND PROUD COMMUNITIES

We want people to live long healthy lives and take pride in their local communities. We're looking to increase the number of new homes available to local people and also ensure residents have access to good quality health facilities and services. Much of this has been achieved by working with other organisations, especially in the health sector and with voluntary organisations.

### Even in a year challenged with the Covid pandemic we have achieved a lot:

- Supported Rossendale Leisure Trust to take over the management of The Hill, The Ashcroft and the Whitaker Museum, safeguarding the future of Rossendale's key leisure and cultural assets.
- Invested £100,000 in improving Whitworth leisure centre.
- Agreed a new health strategy for Rossendale, with a clear plan to prevent ill health working with the NHS, local GPs and community groups.
- Agreed planning permission for over 300 new homes across Rossendale, making a significant contribution to the total supply of new homes.
- Our Overview & Scrutiny Committee investigated how to improve access to GP appointments locally.
- Supported over 1,000 families with funding or wider support to recover from the Covid pandemic.
- 64 Rossendale homes were improved by providing disabled facilities grants for people to adapt their homes.
- Worked with local athletics groups to build the new running track at Marl Pits leisure centre.
- Managed the local 'test and trace' service to track Covid infections during the pandemic to ensure a quicker response.
- Advised local businesses on being Covid safe during the pandemic.
- Helping potentially homeless families to find accommodation.

### PLANNING PERMISSION FOR OVER 300 NEW HOMES



# 4

## EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT COUNCIL

We want to deliver good quality services, provide good value for money and respond to the people who use our services effectively and quickly. We are investing in digital technology to give residents more options to use our services. For a small council we have a number of large projects which we are looking to manage effectively. We have achieved a lot in the last twelve months:

### We have achieved a lot in the last 12 months:

- We operated a full waste collection service throughout the Covid pandemic, and all our other services continued to operate albeit through an adapted approach.
- New benefit claims were processed within 16 days, which is one of the quickest in the region.
- We paid 11,269 invoices, many of which ensure local businesses get paid quickly.
- All our major projects were managed, a number of which concluded this year, delivering improvements to Futures Park and the new Whitaker Museum.
- We agreed a new Digital Strategy, providing us with a clear roadmap of projects to improve online delivery for residents.
- We were recognised by the Local Government Association as an 'ambitious council which had achieved much'.
- We managed three elections in May 2021.
- Completed the first part of our review of all the councils land and building assets.
- We ran the 'Rising Stars' programme to develop the senior council officers of the future and employed 6 apprentices to grow the next generation of council staff.
- 85% of staff stated they enjoyed working for the council.
- All the outcomes summarised in this Annual Report were delivered within the council's £8.9m budget.



# 5

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We have achieved much in the last year, but we recognise we need to do more over the next year to deliver for residents. Each year we produce a detailed action plan. For 2022/23 the plan has over 90 specific actions. We will have a specific focus on:

### We will have a specific focus on:



- Improving the experience customers have when they contact the council, including quicker responses to enquiries.
- Improving all three of our town centres, using a multi-million pound Levelling Up Fund bid to drive real improvement in Bacup, Haslingden and Rawtenstall.
- Agreeing a new action plan focused on Waterfoot.
- Continued targeting of people littering and fly-tipping, aiming to reduce the overall number of incidents and making our towns and villages look clean and tidy.
- Planting over 6,000 new trees, as the next phase of the Rossendale Forest.
- Looking to drive up the amount of household waste we recycle.
- Making improvements to Victoria Park and Whitaker Park.
- Agreeing a new Housing Strategy to provide a clear focus on both private sector, rented homes and increasing opportunities to work with registered providers meeting specialist housing needs.
- Driving real improvements in mental health services for Rossendale, working with agencies in the health sector.



Each quarter we report our performance publicly to the council's Cabinet.

You can read this performance information online:

[www.rossendale.gov.uk/info/210191/council\\_priorities/10680/council\\_performance/3](http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/info/210191/council_priorities/10680/council_performance/3)

**Rossendale**  
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