

Rochdale Development Agency Business Plan 2024 - 2029



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Rochdale Town Hall. £18m restoration Project Managed by the RDA

Introduction

Rochdale Development Agency (RDA) was founded in 1993 and for the last 30 years it has promoted the economic well-being of the borough by helping to deliver new economic investment, development and local jobs.

The Company is controlled by the Local Authority and has an independent Board made up of experienced individuals from the local business, culture and educational community and representatives of the Council.

The business plan has been developed to set out the strategic activities of the RDA over the next five years 2024-2029 and follows widespread discussion with staff alongside public and private sector bodies working across Rochdale.



Board Member Foreword

As we embark on this new chapter, it is my privilege to present our business plan for the upcoming five years. This document is a testament to our unwavering commitment to improving the socio-economic strength of the borough through collaboration and innovation.

The RDA's strategic priorities are clear and I am confident RDA will continue to make significant contributions to the boroughs prosperity, capitalising on the opportunities created by devolution and initiatives such as Atom Valley and the Rail Corridor Strategy.

The strategic activities outlined in this plan ensure we are well-positioned to achieve the priorities of Rochdale Borough Council and our aligned objectives, delivering long-term value. Together, we will navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities that lie ahead.

Our success is built on the foundation of our talented and dedicated staff and board members. Their passion, creativity, and hard work are the driving force behind our achievements. As we move forward, we will continue to nurture a culture of collaboration and innovation, uphold integrity, and empower individuals to reach their full potential, ensuring maximum benefit to the borough, its businesses and residents.

Daniel Meredith
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing

Purpose & Mission

From the inception of RDA over 30 years ago, it has successfully promoted the economic wellbeing of the borough of Rochdale. Since then the remit of RDA has grown, now having a much wider impact on the borough and its residents. This five year business plan provides the opportunity to refine the RDA's mission and establish an ambitious vision for the future.



Mission

To improve the socio-economic strength of the borough.



Vision

Rochdale will be a more desirable location with an innovative, productive and equitable economy.

RDA does this by co-operatively supporting the development and growth of the Rochdale economy through targeted interventions. These interventions are aligned to the socio-economic pillars shown in the diagram which all contribute together to achieve Rochdale Borough Council's strategic priorities.



Values



Collaboration

and



Innovation

with



Integrity

- ▶ We believe in the power of teamwork and collaboration to achieve our shared goals.
- ▶ We value diverse perspectives and encourage open communication among all team members.
- ▶ Together, we leverage our collective strengths to drive success and overcome challenges.

- ▶ We are champions of innovation, constantly pushing the boundaries of what's possible and embracing a culture of forward thinking.
- ▶ We foster an environment where creativity flourishes, encouraging bold new ideas and approaches.
- ▶ We encourage creativity and resourcefulness, driving continuous improvement and growth.

- ▶ We uphold the highest ethical standards in all our interactions and decision-making.
- ▶ Trust and transparency are fundamental to our relationships, both internally and externally.
- ▶ We take ownership of our actions and decisions, demonstrating accountability and reliability in all circumstances.

The Board

The RDA Board membership reflects the Councils control of the company and brings in experts of the sectors RDA works in. Board members are not compensated for their role and offer their knowledge and experience for the benefit of the borough and to help RDA best deliver the priorities of the Council.

Paul Ormerod (Chair)

Economic Development Lead

Paul Simkiss (Deputy Chair)

Local Business Lead

Steve Kuncewicz

Media & Marketing Lead

Julia Heap

Local Education & Skills Lead

John Holden

University Lead

Tom Besford – Observer

Culture Sector Lead

Steve Rumbelow

Chief Executive Rochdale Borough Council

Daniel Meredith

Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing

Stephen Anstee

Leader of the Opposition



Democratic Accountability

The Business Plan is the foundation for the Agency's operation and work programme. Following endorsement by the RDA Board an annual delivery plan which is consistent with the Council's strategic priorities is produced and forms part of the Economy & Place Directorate Plan.

The RDA produces quarterly progress and performance reports to the RDA Board and the Council. The RDA Board scrutinises the RDA's performance against the strategic priorities and activities identified in the business plan. This means reviewing important milestones and targets set out in the annual delivery plan and considering any actions that are needed to respond to under- performance, current pressures or new opportunities. These are then further reviewed by the Council's Communities, Regeneration & Employment Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

RDA reporting is also used as the basis for briefing the Council, its members and relevant portfolio-holders. Alongside monthly newsletters an annual presentation by the Chairman is also provided to all Councillors. Additionally all projects are taken through the Councils Cabinet and governance procedures.

Strategic Priorities

The strategic priorities of RDA flow from the Council Plan 2028 which sets out the ambition of Rochdale Borough Council to work cooperatively to reduce inequalities and deliver sustainable opportunities and services that will benefit people, place and planet.



Everyone is succeeding and living well (People)

- ▶ Support people to gain the skills needed to obtain higher value jobs and wages

A thriving, fairer and sustainable economy (Place)

- ▶ Provide space and support for high value business development, innovation and job creation
- ▶ Support people in attaining and maintaining good employment
- ▶ Create more supply, quality and choice in the housing market (social and high value homes)
- ▶ Enhance transport systems to make it easier for people to access services, jobs and amenities
- ▶ Regenerate town centres and deliver an enhanced heritage, culture and creative offer

Taking action on climate change (Planet)

- ▶ Support production and utilisation of local renewable and affordable energy
- ▶ Help to reduce the energy demand of homes, buildings, transport and infrastructure
- ▶ Implement nature based solutions to support healthy ecosystems, biodiversity and wellbeing



Strategic Activities



To meet the Strategic Priorities, a series of Strategic Activities have been established for the each of the different socio-economic pillars which work in collaboration not isolation. The Strategic Activities are developed into further detail in the RDA's Annual Delivery Plan which contribute to the overall output and impact of the RDA.

Key Initiatives

— Atom Valley

Atom Valley will have the transformational power of a nationally and internationally significant mega cluster of manufacturing innovation, attracting innovative businesses, and delivering high value employment to the area. It will impact numerous aspects of resident's lives in the three boroughs improving people's life chances by unlocking better jobs, housing and transport in a greener, fairer way.

The Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ) and Investment Zone spans across Rochdale, Bury and Oldham with the aim of creating 20,000 jobs and building 7,000 homes. The zone includes the Northern Gateway, Kingsway Business Park and Stakehill and can accommodate approximately 1,600,000 sq. m of new employment space.

Atom Valley is the largest growth area in Greater Manchester, designed to help re-balance the region's economy by bringing thousands of higher quality jobs, opportunities and housing to the borough of Rochdale and surrounding areas. Enabling Bury, Oldham and Rochdale to become net contributors to the Greater Manchester economy and help level up these areas within the city region and the country as a whole.

Atom Valley will attract UK and international firms who want to build new manufacturing plants, SMEs who want to scale-up into modern premises, spinouts and start-ups who are ready to move from the lab to the factory, as well as businesses and individuals who simply want to benefit from international standard R&D and skills facilities.

Atom Valley will capitalise on existing frontier sector strengths in advanced manufacturing, materials, and machinery in the local area. It will be integrated with Greater Manchester's internationally significant concentration of R&D and innovation assets in sustainable advanced materials and industrial digitalisation.



Atom Valley, initiated and led by the RDA

Key Initiatives

Rail Corridor

Passenger levels from stations in the borough have rocketed by more than a third in the last decade, for example 2.8m rail journeys made from Rochdale station alone last year. The popularity of rail travel means our stations are more important than ever before. Within easy reach of major cities like Manchester and Leeds, boasting thriving town centres and beautiful countryside, it's no surprise that people are choosing the borough, and demand for new homes and business space is increasing all the time. There are huge advantages to building near train stations. Commuting by train reduces carbon emissions, and people who live near stations tend to walk or cycle, further cutting environmental footprints while improving health.



Express train services mean travellers going between Rochdale and Manchester City Centre can be at their destination in 13 minutes. Commuters benefit from six trains an hour into the city centre and a Metrolink stop, which provides a direct link into Rochdale Town Centre and Kingsway Business Park, home to some of the borough's biggest employers. The good transport links enable the significant potential to grow audiences for the borough's Creative and Cultural Businesses and wider Tourism sector increasing leisure spend and employment opportunities.

Rochdale Rail Corridor is an ambitious scheme to revitalise neighbourhoods throughout the borough by building homes and workspace near to the Borough's five railways stations. We have identified capacity for around 7,000 new homes along the Calder Valley corridor, 76 per cent of which will be on brownfield land. These will be developed alongside a number of employment and leisure opportunities.

Key Initiatives

— Image of the borough

While Rochdale has rich positive history, birthplace of cooperative movement, and a key role in the industrial revolution however in more recent times Rochdale has been associated with negative events and publicity despite positive improvements to the borough. There is a real opportunity to change the narrative and promote Rochdale as a place to live, work, play. A rich culture, heritage and tourism offer is key to delivering against this agenda and would not only improve residents experience of place but attract visitors and high value businesses.

Changing the narrative requires direct intervention such as place branding which is a holistic and strategic concept that focuses on developing, communicating, and managing the identity and perception of a place. Place brands are based on perceptions of a place's strengths and weaknesses, including its reputation as a place to visit, study in, invest in or trade with. A place brand is a 360 degree view of a place. It is not simply a logo and a narrative, it is a place's overall image that is constantly evolving with every picture, comment, tweet, or experience.

A place brand is developed over time as an assemblage of content that we create and circulate, working alongside content created by visitors, residents and people working in Rochdale. The place brand will be built on not only what we tell people about our town, but by what others say, and by the experience that people have when they visit.

Changing perceptions and maintaining a positive image of the borough is essential to the success of all strategic activities RDA undertakes. With perception accounting for an average of 26% of tourism receipts, inward investment and talent attraction. Developing the 'This is Rochdale' campaign will challenge outward perceptions and promote the borough to our various target audiences, business sectors and residents alike.

Activities & Opportunities



Regeneration & Development

To support vibrant and sustainable communities, create new business and job opportunities and improve property standards regeneration and development is crucial. Place based plans, co-curated with local communities and key stakeholders ensure that the built environment responds to local need and acts as a catalyst to attract inward investment and extend the wider culture and Visitor offer.

The RDA has a track record in project managing complex multi-discipline regeneration schemes and a particular specialism in heritage projects. These skills will continue to be required as the borough improves.

The key aspect of this work is delivering the construction and refurbishment of property and land to programme and budget, therefore enabling the wider ambition of the area. The work can also focus on high priority areas to undertake very specific land use / property decisions and interventions where required.



Rochdale Riverside £80m development Project Managed by the RDA

Activities & Opportunities



Business Growth, Jobs & Talent

Existing businesses should be supported – introducing those services that can help a business thrive and grow. All the economic data shows that securing further employment from those already in the borough is likely to be more successful than the attraction of new businesses.

Business support is a fundamental activity for any economic development agency. In addition to seeking to increase the longevity of any business investment, existing businesses are a source of follow on investment, market intelligence and can act as positive ambassadors for the area generating further investment leads.

The RDA can broker introductions relating to recruitment, skills, land & property, supply chain, R&D as well as wider business introductions. The aim is to support the business to be as successful as possible – and in doing so position Rochdale as the most appropriate location for continued investment.



Students from Hollingworth Academy at Pembroke College, Oxford, made possible following a memorandum of understanding signed between the RDA, the academy and the college

Activities & Opportunities



Inward Investment

The RDA will need to continue to attract inward investment to the area – this will ensure that developments delivered achieve high levels of occupancy and also drive employment. The low salaries and the growth in lower productivity jobs in the area mean that work should focus on higher paid employment opportunities.

The inward investment activity of the RDA is well established. The organisation works with intermediaries such as MIDAS, through multipliers (such as property professionals) and by undertaking its own promotional activities.

Pro-active work will continue to focus on advanced manufacturing and materials opportunities to deliver the vision for Rochdale and Atom Valley.



SMMC Building at Atom Valley. Funding attracted by the RDA, the building will be project managed by the RDA

Activities & Opportunities



Environmental Sustainability

Rochdale Council declared a climate change emergency in 2019 and set a target for Rochdale to be carbon neutral by 2038.

The RDA has a responsibility to take meaningful action to reduce carbon emissions in both our operation and within the projects we are responsible for delivering or have influence over. This means supporting local business to adopt renewable energy technologies and the reduction of carbon production. Whilst delivering projects which produce clean energy and have a lower environmental impact. All staff in RDA undertake carbon literacy training as part of the ambition to be a carbon literate organisation.

Taking climate action will improve lives, not diminish them. It can deliver additional benefits such as improved health and job opportunities.



5.5 MW Chamber House Solar Farm project managed by the RDA

Activities & Opportunities



Culture & Placemaking

The Culture and Placemaking function aims to develop and promote a rich Cultural and Visitor Economy offer and establish a coherent place narrative for the borough as “a great place to live, work and play”.

The primary goal is to maximise the socio-economic impact of the borough’s existing and emerging Arts & Culture, Heritage, hospitality, retail and visitor economy sectors, enhancing and animating the built environment, increasing footfall, leisure spend, attracting inward investment and improving life chances for local residents.

An enabling and facilitating function, the Culture and Placemaking Team works collaboratively and with a broad range of stakeholders to establish appropriate policy frameworks and programmes to enable these key sectors to thrive and grow.

The RDA recognises that our ‘places’ and the sector have unique characteristics, challenges and opportunities and seeks to tailor policies, strategies, and investments to address their specific needs and aspirations.



Fire Festival, curated and project managed by the RDA

Operational Environment

The Business Plan is influenced by factors at the national, sub-regional and local level. It is also shaped by current economic and market conditions, as well as by our understanding of the current project commitments that carry forward from one financial year into the next. Clearly the financial and organisational pressures arising from ongoing reductions in public sector funding are also increasingly a factor but the RDA continues to focus on identifying new opportunities for the purpose of improving the socio-economic strength of the borough.

National Factors

- ▶ Performance of the national economy and the property & construction sectors.
- ▶ Challenge of rising construction costs ahead of rental growth in bringing forward new development.
- ▶ Political support for greater delegation of funding & decision-making down to the City Region level.
- ▶ Competition with other countries and regions to secure inward investment.
- ▶ Regeneration funding allocations by Central Government.
- ▶ Cultural and heritage policy and funding allocations by Arts Council England and Heritage Lottery Fund and other agencies.
- ▶ Innovation and research funding allocations by UK Research Council, Research and development institutions and educational institutions.
- ▶ Emphasis on environmentally sustainable development practices.
- ▶ Emergence of new technologies and artificial intelligence.

Sub-Regional Factors

- ▶ Growing influence of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority with increased delegation of funding to City Region level under the devolution agenda.
- ▶ Identification of Growth Locations and the allocation of a GM Investment Zone at Atom Valley as one of GMs two investment zones along with ID Manchester.
- ▶ Ongoing opportunities to access support programmes and sources of finance to support local business growth.
- ▶ Continuing close engagement with the Greater Manchester Growth Company, particularly the GM Growth Hub, Marketing Manchester and MIDAS to access their specialist support services.
- ▶ Adoption of Places for Everyone by Greater Manchester, unlocking land and development opportunities.
- ▶ Support of cultural interventions through GMCA's Cultural Strategy and the trailblazer Devolution deal for GM.
- ▶ Initiatives aimed at upskilling the local workforce and training opportunities to meet the needs of emerging industries or sectors.

Local Factors

- ▶ Borough-wide economic growth, regeneration and spatial planning strategies.
- ▶ Levels of community engagement and support for new development
- ▶ Supply of high quality employment property and developable sites.
- ▶ Council commitment to delivering strategically important regeneration and infrastructure projects.
- ▶ Ongoing pressures on public finances and an associated need to promote more cost-effective delivery arrangements.
- ▶ Ongoing pressures on personal finances reducing spend on local business and leisure.
- ▶ Perception of place and the number of positive pull factors.
- ▶ The availability and quality of digital infrastructure, including broadband access and connectivity.
- ▶ Collaboration and partnerships with key institutions, including Arts Council 'Priority Place Status'.

Key Influences

— Critical Success Factors

- ▶ Pro-active place promotion changing perceptions and increasing positivity to the borough
- ▶ Pro-active and focused engagement with businesses and entrepreneurs
- ▶ Pro-active and focused engagement with private sector developers, investors and institutions
- ▶ Pro-active and focused engagement with funding bodies and institutions
- ▶ Close & collaborative working with Rochdale, Bury & Oldham Council, GMCA & other partners
- ▶ Building capacity and fostering constructive public/private partnership working
- ▶ Maintaining & fostering an investor-friendly environment and a pro-active approach to marketing
- ▶ Adaptability in identifying and promoting innovative solutions that unlock the potential for growth & development.
- ▶ Data driven decision making, with continuous monitoring and evaluation

Key Influences

Key Relationships

The Council is the RDA's main relationship, however to successfully improve the socio-economic strength of the borough of Rochdale, it can not be done in isolation, other key relationships are:



Activity Delivery

How RDA activities are delivered can be articulated against a systems map that was produced collaboratively with all staff.

At the core of the process is the place – Rochdale Borough and its residents. Alongside this are stakeholders which are the key relationships that need to be developed and managed to improve the socio-economic strength and growth of the borough.

RDA provides a full range of services across all stages of an activity in order to maximise its success. There are also four key themes that cross cut all stages and are essential to achieving the strategic objectives

Organisational Development – is the operation and people management of the organisation and leads the corporate priorities.

Data & Evaluation – is the continued monitoring and review of the activities and impacts they make.

Governance & Relationship Management – includes public consultation, stakeholder management, decision making and procurement.

Marketing & Promotion – manages the campaigns contributing to perception of place, maximising the opportunity for positive messaging through all stages of activity delivery.



Organisational Priorities

The corporate priorities of RDA are established to grow and develop the organisation, its impact and its staff. In an environment of recruitment and retention challenges the RDA needs to be positioned to attract the best skills and talent. RDA has a distinct workforce and culture that is critical to its continued success and effectiveness of its delivery of the Strategic Priorities.

Highly Skilled

- ▶ Training and development is available for all staff through a structured personal development process
- ▶ Formal qualifications are encouraged and supported by the organisation

Empowered

- ▶ Workspace accommodation is fit for purpose and meets the requirements of the organisation
- ▶ Staff are supported with new technologies to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- ▶ HR function is developed to match the requirements of the organisation

Impactful

- ▶ The environmental impact/carbon footprint of the organisation is reduced
- ▶ The social impact is increased and staff are supported through a corporate social responsibility programme
- ▶ Internal communications is improved and activities are connected

Development
Agency

Some of the RDA Team



Organisational Activities

Vision



RDA will have a **highly skilled and empowered** workforce who deliver the RDA mission with **impact**.

Corporate Pillar

Training & Development

- ▶ Supported individual learning
- ▶ Individual personal development plans
- ▶ Group training
- ▶ Mentoring & Coaching

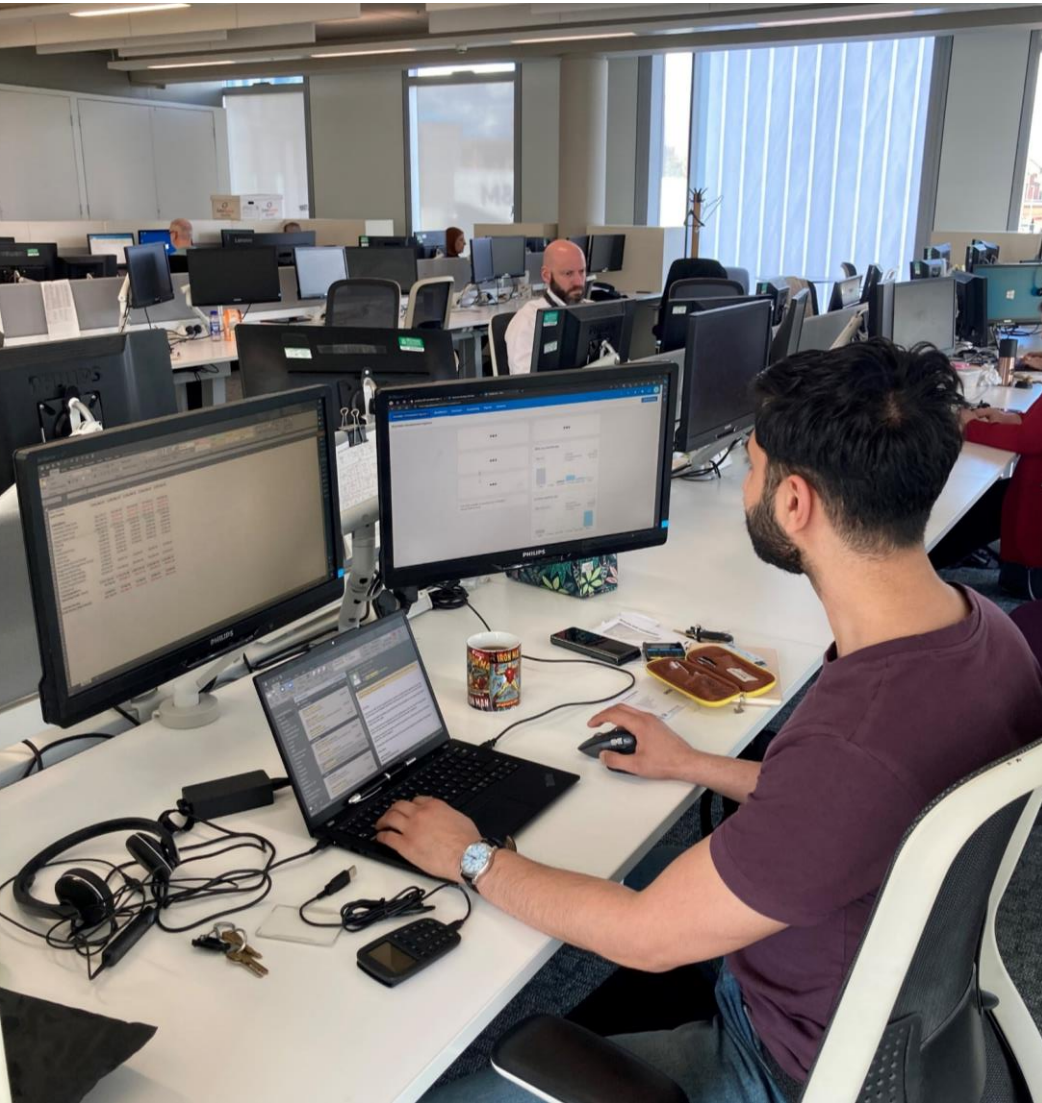
Staff Empowerment

- ▶ Office utilisation & reconfiguration
- ▶ CRM implementation
- ▶ AI implementation
- ▶ Updating of PMO & reporting
- ▶ Robust HR Support

Corporate Impact

- ▶ Carbon reduction
- ▶ Supported corporate social responsibility activities
- ▶ Internal communications
- ▶ Brand promotion / recognition

Organisational Activities



Training & Development

Training and development is a catalyst for innovation and improved service delivery. Staff with the most up to date knowledge and skills are better equipped to tackle the challenges and opportunities facing the organisation.

A commitment to ongoing training ensures employees remain engaged and motivated, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction and retention which are critical to the stability and success of the organisation.

It is an important method of addressing recruitment challenges by upskilling staff to take on senior more difficult to fill roles. RDA has a long history of developing and retaining talent. To achieve this an effective personal development plan will be produced for each individual member of staff.

Organisational Activities



Staff Empowerment

Empowered staff can achieve more, beyond training and development the use of smart technology, provision of appropriate workspace space and clear processes and procedures will enable this.

A reworked workspace will facilitate improved collaboration and teamwork through the mixed use of space. Reducing the physical barriers between teams enabling knowledge and idea sharing, fostering the culture of collaboration and innovation.

Careful and meaningful implementation of new technologies, including AI will enable repetitive and low value processes and tasks to be reduced and automated. Supporting staff to focus their time on high value tasks that require human creativity, problem solving, critical thinking and relationship management. Commitment to employee wellbeing and ensuring staff have the right tools for the job, will make our work more productive and effective.

Staff strategy day, Pioneers Museum, Rochdale



Organisational Activities



Corporate Impact

It is important the RDA demonstrates its contribution to corporate impact. Both to meet the requirements of the public sector but also its role to encourage others. Particularly private business and its ability to maximise benefit to the borough, to achieve this the RDA must lead by example.

All RDA staff have an allowance to be used for volunteering within the borough. The organisation will support this by structuring volunteering opportunities with key partners and organisations that align to the strategic objectives of RDA.

To contribute to the carbon neutral target of 2028 RDA will provide training and adapt working practices that reduce the environmental impact of our operation, such as supporting sustainable transport options. The impact of RDA is also to be better communicated with staff and partners.



Funding & Resources

Rochdale Development Agency prides itself on being entrepreneurial, nimble and adaptable with flexibility to adapt to external factors and new opportunities which arise, subject to resource allocation. The operation of RDA and its staff is primarily funded by the Council through a service level agreement and against capital projects. It is critical that time and resource is carefully managed and allocated, only being focused on activities that provide the greatest benefit to the socio-economic pillars.

The nature of grant funding for projects means it is often hard to predict when funding is announced and when it can be claimed, and the resource required to deliver against it, however the RDA endeavours to be well positioned, ready to identify and grasp any suitable opportunity. RDA is not a profit driven organisation, and therefore targets a near breakeven position each year. Periodic benchmarking is also undertaken to demonstrate best value of the RDA and the services it provides.



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