

Rochdale Borough Council – Chief Executive

With a ‘once-in-a-generation’ opportunity to boost prosperity through one of the largest regeneration projects in the country taking shape, the coming years will be critical for the borough of Rochdale.

Atom Valley runs through parts of the borough along with Bury and Oldham, serving up plans for an ‘innovation mega-cluster’ that’s expected to deliver 20,000 jobs and 7,000 new homes.

For Rochdale Borough Council’s leader, Councillor Neil Emmott, it represents a chance to move away from ‘piecemeal solutions’ and finally address post-industrial decline by supercharging a prosperity agenda. Together with the Northern Gateway programme and town centre regeneration projects across the borough, Rochdale will see unprecedented levels of investment.

During the past few years several major projects have been delivered, including the Atom Valley growth plan, the Rochdale Riverside retail and leisure development, the major Heywood link road, the expansion of our business parks, and the restoration of the world famous Grade I-listed town hall.

That’s why the key attributes the leader of the council is looking for in his next chief executive are a stellar background in delivering major projects and an ability to build partnerships at every level and to effectively ensure the delivery of top-class public services.

‘Atom Valley will be one of the largest new employment sites in the north of England and is Greater Manchester’s biggest opportunity,’ he explains. ‘We need somebody with a track record in regeneration that is going to be able to take this once in a lifetime opportunity forward, help



us to attract investment and business and create high quality jobs. They must also recognise that if we want this to really benefit Rochdale then we need to upskill residents so they’re able to take them up.’

Crucially, the regeneration plans will also help to boost towns in the borough that lay outside of Rochdale, such as Heywood and Middleton.

‘I think the key is for the new chief executive to really understand the borough and recognise its diversity both in terms of cultural background and nationality and the places that make up the borough, all of which have their own identity.’

‘I’m proud of the good community relations we have in Rochdale, but we don’t take it for granted and it’s something the council and our

partners have to keep working on.’

The new chief executive will have firm foundations to build on. The council was ranked the top-performing council in Greater Manchester earlier this year and placed 57th out of 317 local authorities in the country. Cllr Emmott puts it down to a combination



Cllr Neil Emmott – leader Rochdale Borough Council

of sound financial management, good quality local services and a focus on supporting residents.

‘We need somebody with a track record in regeneration that is going to be able to take this once in a lifetime opportunity forward, help us to attract investment and business and create high quality jobs’

A Local Government Association peer review last year highlighted the council’s clear vision and collaborative culture among its strengths. Cllr Emmott describes the organisation as ‘a hands-on,

member-led authority’, adding, ‘where we work together effectively with officers’.

He believes the prominence of Greater Manchester’s mayor, Andy Burnham, and the growing role of the combined authority will benefit Rochdale under the new government. That’s why it’s essential the new chief executive brings influencing skills to the table, he says.

‘In particular we need them to help us push to address our lopsided public transport. Heywood and Middleton have no rail link whatsoever. The mayor has talked about getting either tram or train services to the towns and we need the chief executive to keep things like that on the agenda and make the case for investment.’ ■

