

5.1 Classification: Open		Decision Type: Non-Key
Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 09 September 2026
Subject:	Northern Gateway Mayoral Development Corporation Update (Part A)	
Report of	Leader of the Council	

Summary

1. The Atom Valley Northern Gateway Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) was established in January 2026. This followed the relevant statutory process, supported by Rochdale Council working in partnership with Bury Council and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).
2. The MDC will progress delivery of the Northern Gateway sites, providing a significant boost to employment opportunities, new homes, infrastructure and economic growth locally.
3. At its meeting in July 2025, where Cabinet approved creation of the MDC, it also noted that a further report would be presented outlining the operational arrangements for hosting the MDC in Rochdale, its associated operating costs and to confirm how these costs will be shared and funded between the MDC partners. This report sets out those arrangements.

Recommendation(s)

4. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - 4.1 Note and approve the MDC operational arrangements, costs, and cost sharing approach as set out at Appendix 2.
 - 4.2 Authorise and delegate to the Executive Director for Place and Director of Legal and Democratic Services the negotiation, preparation, and completion of the necessary contractual arrangements to provide for the MDC operational arrangements, costs, and cost sharing as set out at Appendix 2.
 - 4.3 Note and approve the GMCA's offer to contribute additional grant funding of up to £300,000 per year to in-part fund the MDC for a period of three years from 2026/27 to 2028/29.
 - 4.4 Authorise and delegate to the Executive Director for Place and Director of Legal and Democratic Services the negotiation, preparation, and completion of the necessary contract(s) in relation to the GMCA's additional grant funding to provide for the MDC (referred to at recommendation 4.3 above).

- 4.5 Note the GMCA's offer of an interest free loan of up to £877,000 to support Bury Council making its contribution towards MDC costs and authorise the Council's Finance Team to undertake the necessary assessments under the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and associated Prudential Indicators to determine its merits and the necessary approval process required before entering into such a loan, pursuant to the Constitution of this Council.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

5. In March 2025, Cabinet endorsed the creation of an MDC as the preferred delivery vehicle for the Northern Gateway and most appropriate route to achieve the Strategic Development Vision for Northern Gateway, endorsed by Cabinet in November 2024.
6. As set out in the report to Cabinet in July 2025, Rochdale Council will host the MDC with Bury Council to act as the partner authority for an initial period of 2 years with reviews every 5 years thereafter, with the operational resource costs of the MDC shared equally between the Councils.

Alternative options considered and rejected

7. A core principle of the MDC from the outset has been that both Bury and Rochdale Councils will contribute equally to its costs, therefore no alternative split of costs has been considered.
8. Alternative operational arrangements, including Bury Council being the initial host authority, were considered as the MDC proposal was developed. Rochdale Council was considered to have the operational capacity to be the initial host authority.
9. The review cycle for hosting arrangements was proposed to be 5 years throughout the lifetime of the MDC. This was reduced to 2 years for the first review as this was considered a suitable period for the MDC to stabilise, and a point at which the respective circumstances of the Councils, with respect to operational capacity to support the MDC, may have changed.

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Background

10. In March 2025, Cabinet approved the creation of an MDC as the preferred delivery vehicle for the Northern Gateway along with the boundary within which

the MDC will operate. A public consultation was subsequently undertaken by the Mayor, supported by Bury and Rochdale Councils and the GMCA.

11. In July 2025, Cabinet noted the outcome of the consultation and recommended to the GMCA to approve the creation of the MDC. In addition, Cabinet delegated the Northern Gateway Strategic Board to finalise the draft governance and operational arrangements for the MDC and noted the approval of the constitution sits with the MDC.
12. It also placed a requirement that these arrangements, the associated costs, and how those costs will be shared and funded between the MDC partners, would be reported back to Cabinet. These arrangements are set out in Appendix 2.
13. The MDC is governed by the MDC Board, with the following Members, who have full voting rights:

Stephen Dance OBE – Chair & Private Sector Member
Marian Sudbury OBE – Private Sector Member
Ian Marchant – Private Sector Member
Councillor Eamonn O'Brien – Leader, Bury Council
Councillor Dene Vernon – Bury Council
Councillor Neil Emmott – Leader, Rochdale Council
Councillor Stephen Anstee – Rochdale Council

This composition ensures local control and balanced Political leadership, while capitalising on specialist knowledge and experience brought by the Private Sector Members.

14. The Board is also supported by senior officers and representatives from the following organisations, who are Observers and do not have voting rights:

Bury Council
Rochdale Council
GMCA
Transport for Greater Manchester
Department for Transport

15. The Business Plan and Annual Delivery Plan of the MDC was approved by Cabinet in November 2025. Work to develop these documents is ongoing following the establishment of the MDC Board however, priority areas of focus are:

Investment Strategy;
Land Strategy;
Transport;
Infrastructure;
Social Value; and
Innovation.

16. A review of the Business Plan and Annual Delivery Plan will take place, in alignment with development of monitoring arrangements to ensure ongoing satisfactory performance of the MDC. Approval will be sought from Cabinet in advance of adoption by the MDC.
17. MDC resources have been aligned with the workplan activities to ensure the workplan is delivered in a timely manner.

Finance

18. Finance implications of the MDC are set out in Appendix 2.
19. The costs of the MDC, net of any external contributions, will be shared equally between Rochdale Council and Bury Council as host and partner authorities respectively.
20. The GMCA has offered to contribute up to £300,000 of grant funding per annum, for a period of three-years from 2026/27 to 2029/29, to the operational costs of the MDC. GMCA has offered an interest free loan to Bury Council for the Council's £877,000 anticipated remaining contribution towards MDC operational costs for the period 2026/27 to 2029/30, with the intention of repayment being conditional upon receipt of Business Rates from the site. Consideration of whether this is compliant with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators is to be carried out by the Council's finance function.
21. Rochdale Council's finance function will take a leading role in providing financial services to the MDC as host authority, supported by counterparts in Bury Council.

Legal

22. Under the Localism Act 2011, the MDC has a duty to retain responsibility for the exercise of its statutory functions, maintain appropriate governance, financial and accountability arrangements, and ensure that any hosting or shared-service arrangements do not obscure its legal responsibility, accountability or decision-making authority.
23. Officers, including both Councils' Legal Services, will support the development, agreement, and completion of legal agreements between the MDC and both Councils, securing the hosting and partnering arrangements set out in this report.
24. Officers, including both Councils' Legal Services, will support the development, agreement, and completion of legal agreements between GMCA and the Council in relation to any additional funding arrangements set out in this report.

Human Resource

25. As the host authority Rochdale Council will provide human resources support to the MDC. The costs thereof will be shared equally between Rochdale Council and Bury Council as host and partner authorities respectively.
26. As part of the hosting arrangements, any new roles in the MDC core team will be established by Rochdale Council.

Planning

27. In May 2025 full Council approved the establishment of a Joint Planning Committee with Rochdale Council to determine planning and related applications where they include land in both Bury and Rochdale administrative boundaries at Northern Gateway, Places for Everyone sites JP Allocations 1.1 and 1.2.
28. The operation of the MDC is separate to the operation of the Local Planning Authorities and the established Joint Planning Committee, which Bury Council will lead.

Links with the Corporate Priorities:

29. A key part of the Places for Everyone Plan is to rebalance the Greater Manchester economy by significantly boosting the economic output from the north through the delivery of new housing and employment that will benefit both Bury and its residents. The plan sets out strategic site allocations that will guide future growth and development in the Borough. The 'Let's Do It' strategy specifically refers to Places for Everyone as having a key role to play in the delivery of its objectives and priorities, in addition to the Corporate Plan 2024/25 seeks to deliver the Vision for 2030 which is for the Council to Achieve Economic Growth.
30. As Bury's largest employment allocation within the Places for Everyone plan, Northern Gateway supports delivery of the Vision 2030 and 'Let's Do It!' to stand out as a place that is achieving faster economic growth than the national average, with lower than national average levels of deprivation through the development of employment space to enable job creation and upskilling of residents, leading to economic growth:

Local – The project will generate jobs for local people, enhance economic regeneration and provide links with existing and new communities.

Enterprise - the project will drive economic growth and inclusion by creating more employment space for existing businesses to expand into and to encourage more local, national and international businesses to open in the Borough; helping to ensure residents have the best chance to access good jobs.

Together – Ensuring sustainable access into the site to maximise inclusivity and access to opportunities for members of the local community and working with partners to maximise social value opportunities to shape outcomes.

Strength - the project will provide space for new and expanding local business within a site that is well connected to local communities. This will provide opportunities for community wealth building through new business start-ups, increased local spend and the adoption of new skills whilst providing opportunity for all through provision of sustainable transport modes.

Equality Impact and Considerations:

31. The attached Equality Impact Assessment concludes that impacts are positive and will continue to be assessed as the project progresses.

Environmental Impact and Considerations:

32. Environmental impacts and concerns will be assessed and monitored as project delivery commences and will be in-line with existing Council policies. The Northern Gateway Development Framework will seek to meet policy requirements, including physical, social and environmental impacts including biodiversity net gain.

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
MDC operational arrangements, costs, and cost sharing approach are not noted, preventing the further implementation of the MDC Business Plan and annual Delivery Plan and delivery of critical path workstreams identified as essential to drive forward the delivery of the site.	• Continued engagement with and involvement of senior officers, legal, finance and HR professionals; • Regular reporting through the established Northern Gateway governance arrangements.
Approach to funding, through commitment from GMCA to in-part fund the MDC and the agreement in principle to access an interest free loan from GMCA for the remaining Bury Council contribution, is not noted resulting in insufficient budget to fund MDC operational costs and putting at risk the agreed cost sharing approach with Rochdale Council.	• Agreement of the overall operating costs of the MDC to be formally presented to the Council. • Agreement to fund the MDC, and the level of funding to be provided, delegated to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Director of Finance

Procurement Implications:

No direct procurement implications.

Legal Implications:

33. The Atom Valley Northern Gateway Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) is a statutory body established under Part 8 of the Localism Act 2011 and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017. The purpose of an MDC is to secure the regeneration of its defined mayoral development area.
34. The Atom Valley Northern Gateway Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) was established in January 2026 following approval, in part, from Cabinet which delegated Bury Council's operational oversight of the MDC to the Joint Strategic Board.
35. This report responds to Cabinet direction that it be provided with an update on the development of the operational arrangements for hosting the MDC in Rochdale, its associated operating costs and to confirm how these costs will be shared and funded between the MDC partners. This report sets out those arrangements.
36. The proposed financial arrangements should be verified and validated by the Council's Finance Service.
37. There is no statutory requirement for the MDC to be hosted by, or operate independently from, a combined authority or local authority. However, as a separate statutory corporation established under the Localism Act 2011, the MDC must retain responsibility for the exercise of its statutory functions, maintain appropriate governance, financial and accountability arrangements, and ensure that any hosting or shared-service arrangements do not obscure its legal responsibility, accountability or decision-making authority.
38. Consequently, formal hosting arrangements will need to be developed and adopted which should at least include;
- a Hosting Agreement and/or Shared Services Agreement between MDC and Rochdale, and
 - an associated Partnering Agreement between Rochdale and Bury.
- The contractual arrangements above could also be achieved by a tripartite Hosting and Partnering Agreement.
39. The Council's Legal Service is currently and actively engaging with peers at Rochdale to obtain assurance on its hosting arrangements with MDC and to draw up the necessary contracts.

40. Upon Cabinet approving the GMCA's additional grant funding to support the MDC the Council's Legal Service will consider and advise on the contractual arrangements proposed by the GMCA upon which the Executive Director of Place and Director of Legal and Democratic Services will determine whether or not to complete contract documents under their delegated authority provided under this Report.

41. Insofar as the GMCA's proposed interest free loan. Officers have been advised that any such must be referred for assessment by Finance Services Treasury officers as explained in the Report. Following this assessment any decision to enter any such loan will be made pursuant to the decision-making process of the Constitution which may well require a referral back to Cabinet for approval.

Financial Implications:

The financial implications are outlined in the report. The outcome of the review of the GMCA's proposed interest free loan will be brought back to Cabinet for approval.

Appendices:

1. Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment (PART A)
2. Appendix 2 – MDC operational arrangements and costs summary (PART A)

Background Papers:

1. Cabinet Report and appendices July 2022
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s32171/Atom%20Valley%20Mayoral%20Development%20Zone%20North-East%20Growth%20Location.pdf>
2. Cabinet Report and appendices November 2024
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s41766/Northern%20Gateway%20-%20IZ%20Funding%20Atom%20Valley%20SOBC%20Part%20A.pdf>
3. Cabinet Report and appendices March 2025
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s43535/Northern%20Gateway%20-%20MDC%20Approval%20to%20Consult%20and%20Collaboration%20Agreement%20V1.5.pdf>
4. Cabinet Report and appendices July 2025
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s45293/Northern%20Gateway%20-%20MDC%20Approval%20to%20Proceed%20v1.3.pdf>
5. Cabinet Report and appendices November 2025
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s46664/Northern%20Gateway%20Cabinet%20Report%20-%20PART%20A.pdf>
6. Council Report Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Adoption March 2024

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s39350/Final%20PfE%20Adoption%20v1.pdf>

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning
MDC	Mayoral Development Corporation
GMCA	Greater Manchester Combined Authority