

County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2000

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2000

CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee

10

Date and Time of Meeting	TUESDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2021, 4.30 PM
Please find be	elow correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting together with any responses received.
For an	y further details, please contact scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk

Correspondence following the Committee Meeting(Pages 3 - 18)



Ref: RDB/RP/CW/23.02.2021

24 February 2021

Councillor Chris Weaver,
Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance,
Room 519,
County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff CF10 4UW.

CARDIFF CAERDYDD

Dear Councillor Weaver,

<u>Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 23 February 2021</u>

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you, Councillor Wild, Councillor Michael and the officers for attending the Committee meeting on Tuesday 23 February 2021. As you are aware the meeting received items titled 'Draft Budget Proposals 2021/22 – Corporate Overview' and 'Draft Corporate Plan 2021 to 2024 & 2021/22 Draft Budget Proposals'.

The meeting initially considered the Corporate Overview and was followed by scrutiny of the draft budget proposals and sections of the draft Corporate Plan relevant to the terms of reference of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee. At the meeting Members had the opportunity to question the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders and supporting officers on their draft budget and Corporate Plan proposals for the coming year. The comments and observations made by Members following this item are set out in this letter.

Corporate Overview

• Invest to Save – At the meeting a Member commented on the invest to save schemes included in the capital section of the Corporate Overview presentation. He asked for clarification on how the schemes worked, the typical return on investment and the normal repayment period applied to such initiatives. As agreed with the Head of Finance at the meeting, the Committee would welcome a written summary on invest to save schemes

after the meeting. I would ask that you include a copy of this written summary in the reply to this letter.

- Socially Valuable Bus Routes A Member asked about the £432,000 that had been set aside for 'Socially Valuable Bus Routes' as a part of the 2021/22 Financial Resilience Mechanism. She was concerned that this funding might be applied based on historic data which might not be relevant in the post Covid period, and could ultimately result in the Council providing support for empty buses. She asked for assurance that the Council would try to assess post Covid trends before allocating any funding, and that the approach used by the Council to decide where the funds were placed was consistent with the approved Welsh Government methodology.
- Future Budget Scrutiny During the meeting I commented about the future budget challenges facing the Council, and suggested that it might be sensible for Scrutiny to be involved with future budget planning earlier in the year. It was pleasing that you welcomed such an approach, therefore, could you ask Finance officers to liaise with Scrutiny to agree a plan for earlier engagement in 2021/22.
- Capital Slippage Several Members raised the issue of capital slippage at the meeting, and asked for a breakdown of monies that had slipped into the 2021/22 capital budget, against monies that had been specifically allocated into this year. The Head of Finance explained that the 'Month 9 Budget Monitoring Report' that is due at Cabinet in March provided such a breakdown. I would be grateful if you could arrange for a copy of these appendices to be made available to the Committee.

Strategic Planning & Transport Portfolio - Draft Budget Proposals 2021/22

 Low Traffic Neighbourhoods – A Member asked about low traffic neighbourhoods, and if the Council had any current plans to introduce these in Cardiff. She commented that the introduction of these had been controversial in other parts of the United Kingdom, and if the Council had any such plans it would seem sensible to run a thorough community consultation in advance of taking any decisions. The Cabinet Member responded by explaining that work was currently happening on a Clean Healthy Streets project, but added that a growing number of residents had contacted the Council requesting the introduction of low traffic neighbourhoods. As a consequence, the Council is now in the process of gathering information to determine how such a scheme might work, with the caveat that nothing would happen without a proper consultation, probably focusing on a small pilot area first. The Committee welcome this approach, but ask for further clarification on:

- Details of the next steps that the Council will be following in deciding the future of low traffic neighbourhoods;
- An explanation of how the Council would look to deliver any local consultation before deciding if such a scheme is taken forward;
- The criteria that the Council might use to decide where it is appropriate to introduce a low traffic neighbourhood.
- Staff Resource Matching Funding A Member explained that he was delighted to see so much capital funding being made available for a wide range of schemes in the Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate. However, he was a little concerned that the existing staff resource might not be sufficient to deliver the large number of planned projects. The Director for Planning, Transport & Environment acknowledged that it was a challenge, but felt that the work was deliverable. The Committee welcomed this response, but have agreed to monitor the progress made against the new schemes as a part of the 2021/22 work programme.
- One Planet Cardiff Members were pleased to see additional amounts of £120,000 and £404,000 being allocated towards One Planet Cardiff.
 While some narrative was provided on where this money would be

invested, it would be appreciated if more detail could be provided on how and why this money would be spent.

- Fees & Charges Lines 435 & 444 Blue Badge Fraud & Car Park

 Season Passes At the meeting I asked about the large fee increases for lines 435 and 444, along with an explanation of how the fees actually worked. I was particularly interested to hear that we were in part benchmarking our car park season passes against other car park providers in the city, so a copy of any benchmarking information used in calculating the change in this parking fee would be welcome. Officers agreed to confirm this information in writing, so I would be grateful if you could include this as a part of the response to this letter.
- Street Lighting At the meeting, a Member raised some concerns about the public safety around the dimming of street lights. She wanted assurance that how and when the dimming occurred had been properly risk assessed to ensure that public safety was the primary concern. With this in mind, it would be appreciated if the following could be provided:
 - Details of measures that have been put in place to ensure that public safety is not compromised by the dimming of street lighting in Cardiff;
 - Details of the number of street lights that have been converted to LED in Cardiff, along with the total left for conversion.

Clean Streets, Recycling & Environment Portfolio - Draft Budget Proposals 2021/22

■ Food Strategy – A Member commented on the funding that had been allocated to support the delivery of the Food Strategy and asked for an explanation on exactly where this would be spent. Officers provided an outline explanation on where funds would be invested, however, stressed that more detailed work was still required. The Committee feel that this is an important piece of work, and so will look to review progress made

against delivering the Food Strategy as a part of the 2021/22 work programme.

- Household Waste Recycling Centre North Cardiff Members once again noted the £3.2million in capital funding that has been allocated for a new Household Waste Recycling Centre in North Cardiff. They expressed some concern at how long the process was taking, but were told that the delay was due to the challenges of identifying a suitable site in the area. So that the Committee is better able to understand the difficulties involved with finding a new site, I would ask that a summary is provided to the Committee that sets out the work that has taken place to date, the various sites that have been considered, reasons why certain sites were deemed inappropriate, and a list of any potential sites that are currently being considering. Given the sensitive nature of this sort of proposal, the Committee is happy to receive a confidential response or briefing.
- Lines 363 & 364 Cardiff Dog Home Fee Increases A Member expressed concern at the large fee increases for dog rehoming at Cardiff Dogs Home. The Cabinet Member explained that the increases were in line with other similar dog charities, for example, The Dogs Trust, but the Member was not convinced, feeling that the increase would simply help push up the cost of dog ownership, which in turn would continue to fuel the recent trend of dog thefts. The Member felt that you should reflect upon and reduce this fee increase.
- Shared Regulatory Services Members noted the changing role of Shared Regulatory Services during the pandemic, with one Member asking how the service planned to adapt to the changing demands as various aspects of the lockdown are gradually relaxed. Predicting how thing might change is very difficult, and so the Committee will look to review the Shared Regulatory Services Business Plan and Annual Report in the early part of 2021/22 to see if the demands being placed on the service are being matched by the financial support provided.

- Bereavement Cost Comparison At the meeting there was some discussion about increasing a number of fees and charges in the Bereavement Service during the pandemic. The Cabinet Member and officers explained that this was a part of a three-year schedule of planned price increases, and that these increases had been benchmarked against other private and local authority providers. The Cabinet Member offered to supply this benchmarking information, so it would be appreciated if this could be provided this as a part of your response to this letter.
- Fly Tipping Members note that the target set for fly tipping fines
 collected had been reduced for 2021/22; they understand that the change
 was made to help establish a more realistic target. The Committee will
 monitor progress against this revised target during 2021/22.

Requests for following this scrutiny:

- Invest to Save Schemes Provide a written summary on invest to save schemes that explains how they operate, typical return on investment, and repayment periods.
- 2) Socially Valuable Bus Routes Provide assurance that the Council would try to assess post Covid trends before allocating any funding, and that the approach used by the Council to decide where the funds are placed is consistent with the approved Welsh Government methodology.
- 3) **Capital Slippage** Arrange for the appendices in the 'Month 9 Budget Monitoring Report' that address capital to be made available to the Committee.
- 4) Low Traffic Neighbourhoods To provide details of the next steps that the Council will be following in deciding the future of low traffic neighbourhoods; an explanation of how the Council would look to deliver any local consultation before deciding if such a scheme is taken forward;

- the criteria that the Council might use to decide where it is appropriate to introduce a low traffic neighbourhood.
- 5) **One Planet Cardiff** Provide details of how the additional funding for One Planet Cardiff would be spent.
- 6) Fees & Charges Lines 435 & 444 Blue Badge Fraud & Car Park
 Season Passes Provide clarification on lines 435 and 444 of the fees
 and charges schedule, explaining exactly what they are and how they
 operate.
- 7) **Street Lighting** Provide details of measures that have been put in place to ensure that public safety is not compromised by the dimming of street lighting in Cardiff; and the number of street lights that have been converted to LED in Cardiff, along with the total left for conversion.
- 8) Household Waste Recycling Centre North Cardiff Provide a summary of the work that has taken place to date, the various sites that have been considered, reasons why certain sites were deemed inappropriate, and a list of any potential sites that are currently being considering. Given the sensitive nature of this sort of proposal, the Committee is happy to receive a confidential response or briefing.
- 9) Bereavement Cost Comparison To provide a copy of the benchmarking information which compares the Council against other local authorities and other private providers, and which was used to support the price increase.

Recommendations to be monitored following this scrutiny:

1) **Future Budget Scrutiny** – That you ask Finance officers to liaise with Scrutiny to agree a plan for earlier engagement in 2021/22.

2) Lines 363 & 364 - Cardiff Dog Home - Fee Increases - To reflect upon and reduce this fee increase.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments and work with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders to provide a response to the content of this letter.

Regards,

Councillor Ramesh Patel

Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc:

- · Councillor Huw Thomas, Leader, Cardiff Council;
- Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member Strategic Planning & Transport;
- Councillor Michael Michael, Cabinet Member Clean Streets, Recycling & Environment;
- Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources;
- Ian Allwood, Head of Finance;
- Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport & Environment;
- Neil Hanratty, Director of Economic Development;
- Matt Wakelam, Assistant Director Street Scene;
- Davina Fiore, Director of Governance & Legal Services;
- Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services;
- Members of Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee.

SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE



Neuadd y Sir Caerdydd, CF10 4UW Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088 www.caerdydd.gov.uk County Hall Cardiff, CF10 4UW Tel: (029) 2087 2087 www.cardiff.gov.uk

Fy Nghyf/My Ref: CM45295

Eich Cyf/Your Ref: RDB/RP/CW/23.02.2021

Dyddiad/Date: 24 February 2021

Councillor Ramesh Patel
Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee
City of Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Annwyl/Dear Ramesh

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 23 February 2021 Draft Budget Proposals 2021/22

Thank you for your letter dated 24 February 2021 and the useful comments raised. I can assure you that Cabinet was able to reflect on the points raised prior to our meeting on 25 February 2021.

I know that Cabinet see great merit in the early involvement of Scrutiny in shaping policy and budget commitments. However, there are some practical challenges to consider such as the timing of any budget settlements from the Welsh Government. Steps were taken this year to broaden the Performance Panel to include policy / performance and budgetary issues. Looking forward, this may inform individual scrutiny committees to consider which budgetary issues warrant further early consideration in order to contribute to the revenue and capital budget proposals which will deliver a balanced budget for 2022/23 and beyond.

Some specific comments in respect of the points made are included below:

- Benchmarking information in respect of Bereavement Fees is attached. This
 was collated in October 2020 when officers were reviewing the fee increases
 for this coming year and an assumption of a 2% inflationary increase was made
 for the other Authorities. Once all fees are published, the data will be updated
 and I will of course be happy to share a copy showing the 2021/22 actuals.
- I attach an Appendix A, which sets out an explanation and summary of invest to save schemes.
- I attach an Appendix B, which provides further detail on One Planet Cardiff expenditure.
- Socially Valuable Bus Routes The bus services funded by this money supports multiple areas/wards across the city helping residents access work, education and health provision including for example Grangetown, Caerau, Ely, Llanishen and Fairwater. It is not currently possible to assess post-Covid



demand but as bus patronage recovers with the advent of the vaccination rollout, the performance of these supported services will be monitored. It should be noted that these services are supported because passenger levels are below those required for the service to be operated commercially. The working arrangements through the BES2 Agreement will also identify an assessment process for reviewing the bus network that will also take into account the impacts of COVID.

• Low Traffic Neighbourhoods - the Council has sought funding from the Welsh Government's Active Travel Fund to undertake investigation work to assess the feasibility of implementing Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in Cardiff during the 2021/22 financial year. This work will build on the public engagement exercise and study undertaken by Living Streets in 2020 which focussed on Plasnewydd. The study identified opportunities for introducing measures to create a healthy street environment and highlighted the potential for developing a Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) in Plasnewydd.

With funding secured, the Council will commission a more detailed investigation of the feasibility of implementing a LTN in Plasnewydd. The work will involve data gathering (traffic flows and speeds) to identify patterns of movement and engagement with the local community including local amenity groups in the area. This activity will inform the development of initial proposals for filtering out through-traffic and implementing greening and other placemaking improvements in line with a 'streets for health' approach.

We hope that funding will enable us to investigate the feasibility of an LTN in one other area of the city in addition to Plasnewydd during 2021/22.

The aim of this work will be to devise LTN schemes, which can be delivered in financial year 2022/23. Each scheme will be developed as a pilot, which will be fully evaluated and will provide 'proof of concept' and learning to inform the development of detailed criteria for selecting other areas of the city where LTNs can be delivered.

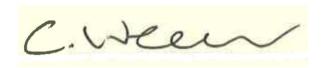
Providing the pilots are successful, our ultimate aim would be to roll out LTNs to all parts of the city where they can help to create healthier streets and neighbourhoods and support the Council's wider active travel agenda.

- Line 435 Blue Badge Fraud Proposal to charge a maximum of £360 to recover the costs of the Blue Badge enforcement & investigation (benchmarking with other Councils have been undertaken). Please note the Court decides the level of fine applicable on a case by case basis.
- Line 444 Car Park Season Passes the increase in charge reflects that season ticket charges have remained static for a number of years and is in line with the parking strategy.
- Street Lighting conversion to LED 1,250 residential street lights have been converted (Radyr pilot) and 23,750 are programmed to be converted in the next 18 months.

- Dimming A Central Management System (CMS) was introduced when LED street lighting was implemented on the strategic road network. The LED street lighting on the residential road network will also have a Central Management System and will synchronise with the existing system. The CMS allows Officers to raise and lower lighting levels to support improving energy efficiency; whilst allowing the management of any concerns relating to lighting levels.
- Household Waste Recycling Centre North Cardiff as communicated in Council, there were a number of sites assessed but none were deemed viable due to location, financial viability and key transport routes. Strategic Estates will continue to identify any potential sites for further review. Capital Funding is included in the Capital Programme.
- Dog Fees The fees proposed are reasonable compared with other rehoming charities and also ensure the new owners are aware that taking on a dog has a long term financial commitment as well as a welfare one. The recent thefts of dogs are very much aimed at the 'higher end' breeds which are often sold for in excess of £3,000

I hope that this letter captures all the points raised in your letter and thank you again for your support in the budget process this year.

Yn gywir/Yours sincerely,



Y Cynghorydd/Councillor Chris Weaver Aelod Cabinet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance

cc Councillor Huw Thomas, Leader, Cardiff Council;

Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member Strategic Planning & Transport; Councillor Michael Michael, Cabinet Member Clean Streets, Recycling & Environment;

Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources;

Ian Allwood, Head of Finance;

Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport & Environment;

Neil Hanratty, Director of Economic Development

Matt Wakelam, Assistant Director Street Scene;

Davina Fiore, Director of Governance & Legal Services;

Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services;

Members of Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee.

Appendix A

Written summary on invest to save schemes that explains how they operate, typical return on investment, and repayment periods. Finance

<u>Unsupported borrowing - Opportunity afforded by the Prudential Code</u>

Changes made in the Local Government Act 2003 gave Local authorities the opportunity to make real choices in the form of unsupported borrowing for Capital schemes. Local authority capital expenditure was previously controlled by Central Government. This change allowed Councils to deliver improvement in services whilst putting in place measures to protect the interests of the Council Tax and Rent payer (Prudential Code).

Unsupported Borrowing must be repaid from Council tax or rents, specific revenue budgets, future savings or income streams.

Types of Unsupported Borrowing

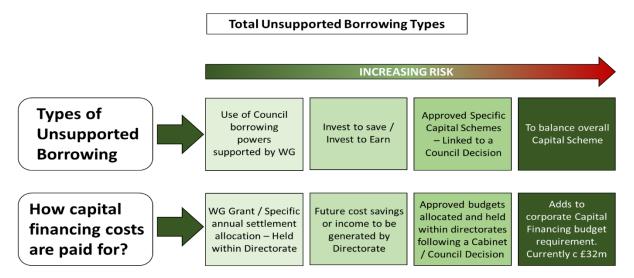
There are currently no nationally imposed restrictions to the quantum of borrowing that can be undertaken to pay for capital investment.

The Council approves its own affordable borrowing limit as part of the Local Government Act 2003 and this is set at a level consistent with the programme of capital investment proposed.

There are two main types of borrowing to pay for capital investment which form part of the Council's borrowing requirement and is managed as part of the Treasury Management Strategy:

- 'Supported Borrowing' costs of servicing are included within the annual Revenue Support Grant (RSG) the Council receives from Welsh Government.
- 'Unsupported Borrowing' costs of servicing to be met from Council tax, rent, savings, additional income or sale of assets. The types of unsupported borrowing typically undertaken by the Council and how capital financing costs are paid for are shown below.

The diagram below is an extract from the Capital Strategy and details the four main types of unsupported borrowing undertaken by the Council to date and how revenue costs (capital financing costs of servicing that borrowing) are paid for.



Revenue Budget Impact of Capital schemes funded by Borrowing

The revenue budget impact of borrowing for capital schemes include:

- The costs of operating / maintaining new assets.
- The capital financing costs of servicing any borrowing required to pay for investment (interest and the Council's approach to making prudent provision for repayment of capital investment paid for by borrowing).
- The revenue costs of preparing and delivering projects.

Requirement for a Business Case demonstrating affordability

Any projects given approval to proceed on the basis of paying for themselves over a period of time, require a robust business case. The capital programme includes an allowance of £500,000 p.a for the S151 officer to approve small projects during a year. All other projects are generally identified in previous and future budget proposals as separate line items and progressed only after confirmation of a business case.

Directorates must repay the internally calculated costs of servicing any borrowing over the life of the project from their budgets. This budget can either be in the form of:

- Revenue income assumed from the project
- Revenue savings deemed to be generated as a result of the project
- Grant income from Welsh Government towards the project to be received over its useful life.

Any business case will need to demonstrate that assumed interest costs and repayment of the initial capital expenditure over a prudent period can be afforded. This period is generally deemed to be an estimate of the useful life of the expenditure being incurred, but the prudent period is determined by the S151 Officer in line with a policy approved by Council as part of the budget process.

Directorates will need to repay the costs of any invest to save / earn schemes, irrespective of whether the income or savings initially assumed are actually generated. They therefore represent a long term risk to directorate revenue budgets and so on going monitoring of performance and any models initially assumed to capture savings and income is essential.

The section below highlights some of the investment historically undertaken. Some projects may be short term and have a longer period of repayment than others so typical returns and repayment periods will differ for each.

Examples of existing projects undertaken by borrowing to be repaid from Revenue or other Budgets

- Creation of Cardiff International Whitewater
- Homelessness Single Assessment Centre
- Schools 21st Century Schools Band A and Band B financial Models
- Streelighting dimming and LED conversion
- Radyr Weir
- Energy Retrofit Schemes
- Town Centre Loans
- Highways and Schools Local Government Borrowing Initiative
- Controlled Parking Enforcement and Moving Traffic Enforcement set up
- Cardiff North Cemetery
- Vehicle Replacement Strategy Buy versus lease

- Core Office Strategy
- Investment in Leisure Centres as part of GLL contract
- Parks implementation of 3G Pitches
- Private Sector Rental Scheme Loans
- Acquisition of Red Dragon Centre

Examples of projects included in the 2021/22 programme based on borrowing to be repaid from Revenue or other Budgets (Subject to business to approval of business case)

- Cardiff Heat Network Limited Loan
- Pilot projects for supported living
- Coastal Erosion Local Government Borrowing Initiative
- Pentwyn Leisure Centre Redevelopment
- International Sports Village Redevelopment
- Contribution to City Deal expenditure in advance of central government grant
- Indoor Arena Enabling and Direct Funding replacement for income strip

Appendix B One Planet Posts

5yr plan - PTE Additional Resource	Perm/T emp	Impact/Delivery
White Paper Resource		
Programme Manager	Perm	Lead delivery on key transportation projects in the City Centre/across the City e.g. Castle Street/Transport interchange & East Side Canal Quarter contained in the White Paper. Ensure quicker delivery of Parking Strategy/Traffic Regulation Orders in a customer focussed way - streamlining e.g. technology mapping/providing clear mitigation for Sustainable Travel Transport choices. Manage key delivery of innovative Transport solutions e.g. technology including smart corridors.
Metro, Bus/Strategic Corridors	1yr	Successfully deliver £1mn assessment spend. Ensure Cardiff Crossrail moves to next design/delivery stage – clear public announcement. Ensure New crosscity bus routes/wider city strategy is delivered/public. Ensure bus measures aligned with Castle St/Smart corridor outcomes are delivered.
Electrical Team - Telematics	1yr	Delivery of multiple schemes associated with the sustainable and active travel agenda and Transport White Paper ambitions. Design of new signalised traffic junctions. Configuration of existing junctions to tie into new scheme designs - Smart Corridors. Delivery of multiple intelligent transport system solutions.
Electrical Team - Street Lighting Design	1yr	Delivery of multiple schemes associated with the sustainable and active travel agenda and Transport White Paper ambitions. Design of new signalised traffic junctions. Configuration of existing junctions to tie into new scheme designs - Smart Corridors. Delivery of multiple intelligent transport system solutions.

One Planet		
Programme Manager/Lead	Perm	Co-ordinating the delivery of the One Planet Cardiff strategy and climate emergency response. Defining, procuring and project managing key renwable energy and energy efficiency projects. Tracking National policy change, best practice and managing periodic strategy review.
Housing Retrofit Officer (Domestic Energy)	1yr	Developing a strategy and delivery framework for upscaled domestic energy Retrofit (beyond current HRA/ARBED scope). Key liaison on City Region and Health dimensions and in securing appropriate funding, skills development and suppy chains. Direct delivery of initial phase of domestic retofit projects for privately owned housing in the city.
EV Delivery Officer	1yr	Deliverability on site will be dependent on funding being allocated 1. Installation of 22kw chargers at 11 car park sites. 2. Installation of further 10 residential EVCPs. 3. Delivery of long term EV Delivery Strategy.
Senior Carbon & Climate officer	1yr	Detailed carbon modelling and impact assessment accross the One Planet Cardiff projects. Monitoring and reporting on Council wide Carbon reduction action. Assisting in the delivery and project management of key renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

Overall Support & Resource		
Finance	1yr	Financial Co-ordination - One Planet/Carbon Footprint Council Wide