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## **EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2011**

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**EX.001/11    BUDGET   2011/12   –   CONSIDERATION   OF   CONSULTATION  
FEEDBACK**  
(Key Decision)

**Portfolio**      Governance and Resources

### **Subject Matter**

The Leader reported the submission of the following documents in response to consultation on the draft Budget proposals:

(a) Minutes of the budget consultation meeting with the Large Employers Affinity Group - 7 January 2011

(b) Minutes of the budget consultation meeting with representatives of Trade Unions - 7 January 2011

(c) Minutes of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel - 6 January 2011

In addition, comments received from staff / a member of the public in response to the budget consultation process had been circulated to Executive Members prior to the meeting.

The Chairman of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel made reference to the very complex nature of the budget process which in turn made the Executive's Budget Proposals difficult to understand. It was difficult to consult with the public and other Members of the Council on that basis. He further referred to the consultation methodology adopted by Cumbria County Council in relation to its budget and suggested that in future the Executive present its budget proposals in plain English.

The Chairman further indicated his agreement with the decisions taken by the Executive and the City Council regarding the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

In response, the Leader acknowledged that the budget was complex in nature and the Executive had been working to a very tight timetable. There was, however, a great deal of information available in the public domain. He emphasised that, unlike the County Council, the Executive had made its draft budget proposals available for consultation since they recognised the importance of adhering to the proper process. That exercise afforded people the opportunity to comment and input into the budget proposals.

Referring to the decision taken by the City Council on 11 January 2011 concerning the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy, the Leader stressed that money remained available in the budget for future applications for rate relief. The next step involved the development of criteria under which applications for discretionary rate relief would be considered and Members of Overview and Scrutiny would have a role in development thereof for the benefit of the community.

The Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder felt that both the City and County Councils could learn lessons from each other in terms of consultation on their respective budgets. The Portfolio Holder thanked the Chairman of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel for his support, commenting that he did not consider it appropriate for individual applications for discretionary rate relief to be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny. Such decisions were delegated to the Executive under the Council's Constitution. The Portfolio Holder added that he had already sought the assistance of Overview and Scrutiny in the development of that criteria.

The Community Engagement Portfolio Holder said that Officers and Portfolio Holders recognised the need for Overview and Scrutiny to feed into development of the criteria.

The Leader thanked all those who had taken the time to respond to the budget consultation process. He believed that the majority of people sympathised with the very difficult and challenging financial position in which the Council found itself, and recognised that difficult decisions had to be made to ensure the future sustainability of the authority.

The Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder paid particular tribute to the Large Employers Affinity Group and representatives of the Trade Unions for their very helpful contributions at the budget consultation meetings held on 7 January 2011.

**Summary of options rejected**    None

## **DECISION**

1. That the Minutes of the consultation meetings with the Large Employers Affinity Group and Trade Union representatives, attached as Appendices B and C; the Extract from the Minutes of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel and comments received from staff / a member of the public be received.
2. That the consultation feedback be received, it being noted that the comments had been taken into account by the Executive when formulating its final recommendations for the City Council's 2011/12 budget to be submitted later in the meeting.

## **Reasons for Decision**

To take into account any consultation feedback when formulating recommendations on the 2011/12 Budget.