

Minutes of the Directors' Forum and Executive Committee

Held at County hall, Worcestershire

27 March 2004

Attendance

A full list of those attending both meetings , together with apologies received, is attached.

Directors' Forum

1. David Smith, Director of Finance and IT at Wigan MBC gave a presentation about the national position in terms of the outcome of the 2004/05 settlement, passporting, the 2005/06 FSS workplan, the recent budget statement and the Balance of Funding Review. David's slides are attached.
2. John Mager and Henry Jackson from East Riding of Yorkshire Council introduced the Funding Model that they have developed to help analyse and assess Secondary School budgetary requirements. It was initially developed as part of a deal with head teachers and the Secondary Headteachers Association, who agreed to cooperate with the LEA in its production.
3. The demonstration included the introduction of a range of varying parameters to indicate how changing circumstances might impact upon the cost analysis in a school. JM was confident that the model could be used in all f40 authorities as a management tool and as a method of assessing pupil entitlement against real costs. He suggested that the model could help Headteachers answer difficult questions which relate to continuing school improvement. He stressed however, that to be effective in a wider arena, certain key parameters would need to be agreed.
4. The model works at two levels - at an individual school level for school budget modelling, and across the whole secondary school sector. ERYC has only developed the model at Secondary level at this stage, but to move it on to deal with the Primary sector would be relatively simple.
5. The model does not relate to 6th Form education - as that sector is funded by LSC.
6. Delegates were very interested in the model and could see the value in working up one model that meets the needs of all individual authorities, as well as the f40 Group of authorities.
7. Discussion emphasised the need to tackle the Primary sector model in tandem with the Secondary model. Delegates believed it would be essential to deliver both versions to Headteachers simultaneously.

8. Some delegates voiced concerns that the model is called a “national” model and JM agreed that the Group could be trapped by a national model. Far better, he said, to have a system that reflects the local dimension.

9. It was agreed that the following Executive Committee should decide on the way forward.

10. John Mager and Henry Jackson were warmly thanked for giving the demonstration.

Executive Committee

1. The delegates attending the Directors’ Forum were thanked for being prepared to stay to attend the Executive Committee.

2. In the absence of the Chair (Councillor Peter Clarke) it was agreed that Jon Pearsall (Parent Governor, Worcestershire) should take the chair.

3. The minutes of the last meeting held in Stafford on 29 November were agreed as an accurate record.

4. Funding Model

The model presented at the Directors’ Forum was welcomed as a real opportunity for the f40 Group of authorities to adopt and help develop further. It was viewed as a potential springboard for future planning relating to funding at both school and LEA levels.

Delegates were reminded that the core purpose of f40 is to seek and achieve fairer funding for all children’s education. The model will be able to help us meet our goals.

Some delegates suggested that the development and proposed refinement of the model was exactly the right action for the f40 Group to be taking at this point in time. They said that there was a critically important message from today’s meeting that should be brought to the attention of those councils at the bottom of the funding league who have not retained their f40 membership or not taken up membership for the first time. It is that f40 is now dealing with finding solutions to the funding problem, not just complaining that it isn’t fair.

It was agreed that more worst funded authorities might join if they are made aware that some very positive work is underway.

As an indication had been received that there might be some local media interest in the proposed Funding Model, there was some discussion on how the proposal should be presented and by whom. In the end no reporters attended after the meeting. It was, however, agreed that a statement for the media should be prepared for issue by DTW to the nationals on Monday 28 March and to f40 Directors for transmission to their local journalists via their council’s press offices.

David Kidney MP for Stafford reminded those present that f40 is a relatively new force in lobbying circles but that it had been relatively successful in raising its profile and becoming a force that government now recognises. The development of the proposed funding model, he suggested, would give the Group the important focus and direction it requires at this crucial point in time. Once we have developed the model and we are content that it can help determine a fairer and more equal system, we must once again go on the lobbying trail to prove our credentials, capacity and capability.. The model appears to be a way for f40 to get back on track and maintain the momentum. He added that the Group should not sit back and wait for 2006 to arrive. There is much to be done before then. There are big debates going on across the country and f40 needs to be in there expressing its views and inspiring people, especially parents and governors, to be active.

It was agreed that:

a) The East Riding of Yorkshire will work with a group of between six and nine f40 authorities to test the model in different authority scenarios. Those councils wishing to join the group to email JM or HJ asap.

b) Any authority wishing to have a copy of the model should contact JM or HJ.

c) Any council that has developed any similar model and is prepared to share the information should contact JM/HJ in order that the methodologies and best practice etc can be shared with the working group.

d) JM is to consider what extra resources he may require to facilitate the additional work programme that is proposed. F40 will consider contributing towards the cost of ERYC's leadership on this project.

e) The model should be referred to as the "Basic Pupil Entitlement Model". It should be a model that relates to real costs and be focused on per pupil budgeting.

f) The working Group should meet urgently to begin work on the development of the model and should aim to report on progress at the next Executive Committee meeting, which is to be held on Saturday 19 June 2004.

g) As the settlement for education is in place for a three year period - 2003/04 to 2005/06 - the future activity of f40 should essentially be about being able to demonstrate that the Group has a positive contribution to make in finding a solution to the current unfairness and inequity.

h) DTW will send the minutes of the Directors' Forum and Executive Committee to those authorities that should be members, together with a further invitation for them to take up membership.

i) DTW will prepare a press statement for release on Monday 28 March. Jon Mager agreed to vet the draft statement before it is issued. The statement will

be issued by DTW to national education correspondents and forwarded to all f40 Directors for onward transmission to their local media.

5. Membership and Finances

DTW reported that 20 authorities had so far paid their current subscriptions. 18 have paid £2,000, one £1,000 (but is in the process of paying the balance of £1,000) and one, Rutland has contributed by agreement, a reduced fee of £750.

Five authorities have indicated that they wish to be members but have not yet paid their fees. Reminders have recently been issued.

Thirteen authorities have said they do not wish to take up membership and ten have not responded to the invitation to be members.

The balance in the f40 account on 26 March is £27,729

DTW reported that the only drawdown on the account at present is to pay the company's fees for secretarial/PR support.

It was agreed that:

- a) DTW will circulate a current membership list with the minutes of the meeting.
- b) DTW will encourage more authorities at the bottom end of the funding league to join f40
- c) David Kidney agreed to contact MPs for those councils that have not joined or rejoined f40 to encourage them to question those authorities about the decision not to take up membership.

6. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be held at **10.30am on Saturday 19 June 2004** at the Staffordshire Showground, Stafford.

It was agreed that the meeting would once again be an open forum and that representatives of all member authorities would be welcome.

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