



**f40 Executive Meeting  
Amerton Farm, Stafford  
Saturday, 25 November 2006**

1. Attendance

Mick Brookes, NAHT  
Helen Donovan, Worcs  
Liz Eyre, Worcs  
Ivan Ould, Leics  
Shona Johnstone, Cambs  
Doug Allan, Secretariat  
Chris Levy, NAG  
Tony Norton, N Lincs

Eunice Finney, Staffs  
Jon Pearsall, Worcs  
Gillian Hayward, Glos  
Chris Chapman, Cheshire  
David Kidney MP, Chair  
Carol Dean, Staffs  
Joe Jefferies, NASUWT

Apologies

Barbara Westwood, Bury  
Barbara Wilson, Derbyshire  
Alan Charles, Derbyshire  
John Herbert, Leics  
Donna Sager, Stockport

Shane Blackshaw, Glos  
Peter Handford, Derbyshire  
David Smith, Wigan  
Keith Abbott, Kent  
Kevin Green, Beds

2. Notes of meeting held 9 September 2006 were agreed. Gill Lane wrote to the chair to say she was very pleased to receive the gift and card on her retirement from f40.

3. Funding 2008-09 and CSR 2007

a) *Special Interest Groups Briefing 20/9/06*

This was the first time the DfES had organised this sort of meeting. f40 thought it was extremely valuable. It was interesting to hear what other groups have to say and to identify common threads. The officials and Schools' Minister (Jim Knight) also appeared to find the event useful.

b) *f40's Initial Submission*

This was lodged with the DfES and was the main topic of discussion at the meeting with the Minister (see below).

c) *Visit to Schools' Minister, Jim Knight, 19/10/06*

It was a very good meeting and positive stance taken by Minister. He welcomed f40's evidence and stressed the importance of submitting more in the lead up to the Spring consultation. What f40 said certainly appears to have resonated with the Minister and Dugald Sandeman (who wasn't at the meeting but has commented about our position at other events).

d) *Meeting with Lord Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, chair LGA (31/10/06)*

Also a very positive meeting. f40's position was reflected by LGA's general position on local government funding – which was publicised the next week. Some useful contacts made and meetings planned with Paul Rigg, Finance Director at LGA.

e) *Meeting with Geoff Rawnsley, NGA*

DK to meet in the near future. GR sits on SFIG. MB said he too is a member, but had yet to be able to make it to one of their meetings. He is not sure that SFIG is the platform that f40 needs. It is more to do with the machinery of funding. GH said she had spoken to GR. He said the papers are highly technical, arrive late and are virtually unreadable. He is unsure what role of SFIG is and what its value is to f40.

MB said it would be useful to form an alliance of Union/NGA representatives who could work together to ensure that they could to some extent manage the SFIG agenda.

f) *Green Paper*

IO spoke about the implications of new roles on fostering and other childrens' services. Major implications for local authorities, who will feel the financial impacts. The pressures are also causing 'internal resentment' within local authorities (e.g. different services are resentful of funding allocations to other services).

f40 believes the Green Paper proposals must be funded properly, but is concerned this may not happen.

g) *Evidence Gathering*

There was extensive discussion about the issues that should be covered in the next stage of evidence gathering.

Authorities are having to consider what services they can drop. Those that are not statutory. This is very disappointing and we need to inform the DfES and LGA about these.

There was some discussion about the role of the LEA – advantages of scale. Without the role there will be a disintegration of services and no common standards.

SJ said a central team in Cambridgeshire is about to be disbanded. Similar issues reported in other authorities, including Cheshire and Leicestershire.

At the meeting with Lord Bruce-Lockhart, he indicated LGA were interested in receiving more information about services that may be cut because of poor/lack of funding.

GH/DA reported that their letter to Directors seeking further evidence has virtually been ignored, although an excellent report from East Riding of Yorkshire has been received.

East Riding report to be circulated to Directors and Executive as an example of what f40 needs from each member authority.

f40 needs evidence of all impacts on LEA/schools from existing and impending legislation.

MB raised Section 52 funding and problems of variation across the country. The different levels for many authorities can be enormous. He referred to possible 'Achilles Heels', which we must be careful about, e.g. charges being made for running the Funding Forum and school balances (recently published CIPFA statistics show another rise). MB referred to CIPFA figures which generally suggests balances are within a reasonable % level. He also said late allocation of funding from LEAs to schools can lead to larger balances than usual – but they will be allocated.

IO suggested Childrens' Services are a major worry, as are Extended Schools. The costs of redundancy are going to fall on local authorities. It's the fundamental f40 argument – if you get the basic funding wrong you are totally disadvantaged. He also referred to Schools' Forum, which can make decisions about funding which the LEA have no control over.

TN raised the issue of falling roles and balances – which are often inter-linked. Schools in Lincolnshire are rapidly falling in size – but the costs remain virtually the same, or can even be higher per head. He also said average funding of schools in his area is low – so every child is disadvantaged from the start. Even class sizes are growing.

CD said the issue of balances has been dealt with positively by the Schools Forum. They are backing Stockport Council's policy.

HD said many urban authorities are running huge balances, whilst other schools on the urban fringe or rural are running deficits.

LE said she wanted to tease out the 'national' nature of the Childrens' Centres issue.

TN said the real issue of 'hidden costs' is that you can't get the real statistics. But he emphasised that there is a great deal of integrity among fund holders.

TN said that there were still many 'postcode lottery' issues in education funding.

LE wondered if the minutes of f40 could be passed on by Directors to schools. IO wondered whether a letter or the minutes should also go to Leaders and CEOs so that they can support the evidence gathering. DK to consider this idea.

DK referred to small schools funding and how they should benefit from rurality funding. They do benefit from Sparsity. Should f40 argue for funding for small rural schools? LE said she thought it was necessary, but MB said his experience was that there is reluctance to see the budget skewed to support small schools, which obviously are a drain on resources.

TN said that some schools in North Lincolnshire have no new 'intake' which makes viability difficult to deal with. It's a very problematic issue. The rapidity of change is a real problem.

IO/MB argued that f40 should not get too involved in this argument. That was generally agreed.

In conclusion, DK suggested f40 should put in three further sets of evidence between December 2006 and February 2007:

1. General issues  
Gillian Hayward, Gloucestershire, will continue to lead on the current round of evidence gathering, and a submission will go in December.
2. Childrens' Services  
Shona Johnstone, Cambridgeshire, agreed to lead on collection of evidence for a submission in January.
3. 14-19s  
Liz Eyre, Worcestershire, agreed to lead on collection of evidence for a submission in February.

Those authorities represented at the meeting agreed to take action within their organisation to get things moving. In particular Leicestershire, Cheshire and Staffordshire agreed to forward information on all elements asap.

DK said he would be happy for the group to tackle member authorities that have unexplained large balances, which impact on f40's funding arguments. He said he would be prepared to write to authorities, if any could be identified, as examples we are worried about. This could help our discussions with Government. MB advised caution in this regard.

h) *Conversion of Submission for HM Treasury*

DK thought it would be sensible to put the f40 evidence into a slightly different format for use by Treasury. He wondered if DS (Wigan) might help. IO suggested we could take advice from LGA on how to best present information to the Treasury.

DK to approach DS to ask him if he can help with this conversion and to raise with Paul Rigg, LGA, at forthcoming meeting.

i) *Spring Conference*

Agreed that there should be a conference in the spring of 2007.

DA to talk to Solihull/Warwickshire authorities in West Midlands about a venue.

Need a main speaker from Government.

Could include LGA and others with an interest.

MB said he could ask his union's finance expert, George Phipson, to speak.

4. Funding Entitlement Model

DA to circulate a list of authorities that have purchased or been given a copy of the model.

5. Website

The new website went live in October and members acknowledged that it is very attractive and an excellent source of information.

6. Membership and Finances

There are 24 paid-up members in the Group. New members this financial year are Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Warwickshire.

There was some discussion about trying again to attract authorities from the lower end of the funding league table who should be members of the group.

DA to again write to authorities, with copies to the Leaders of Councils and Cabinet Members.

IO agreed to talk to politicians from those authorities he regularly meets, including Plymouth and Dudley, both of which dropped out last year.

7. Any Other Business

HD said she has had correspondence with DfES about comparisons now that the Dedicated School Grant system has changed. She has evidence that rankings have changed and year on year comparisons are now difficult. DfES has said they are thinking about the issues.

LE suggested that correspondence about funding issues between f40 authorities and Ministers should be supplied to the f40 Secretariat and displayed on the website. Correspondence often contains useful nuggets of information, which could be useful to all members.

DK said he regularly writes to his colleague MPs and offers meetings about f40 business. Agreed that he will circulate any future letters to Executive Members.

IO to consider what f40 can do at a fringe meeting at the Northern Education Conference, which this year is to be held in Preston in early January. f40 will cover expenses for a drinks reception, if that would be beneficial. IO to consider whether he would need additional support from other f40 members.

8. Next Meeting

27 January 2007 at 10.45am at Amerton Farm, Stowe-by-Chartley, Staffs.