

MINUTES OF f40 MEETING
Held at County Hall, Nottinghamshire
25 September 2004

Attendance/Apologies

Lists of those attending and those apologising are attached.

Messages for Consideration

1. Doug Allan read out a note from Cllr Peter Clarke indicating that he intends to resign his position as chair. He indicated that he believes the organisation is mature enough to find someone else to continue the group's work. He stated he has really enjoyed his association with f40 and valued the support of the f40 authorities and DTW. The meeting agreed that Doug Allan should write a note thanking Peter Clarke for his work over the last five years (copy attached).

(Please note that after the meeting Doug Allan spoke to Peter Clarke who indicated that he will maintain his links, although not the chairmanship with f40 until the next elections in May 2005. He does not intend to seek re-election to Gloucestershire County Council.)

2. David Kidney MP was unable to attend the meeting because of constituency business but he wrote a message which was read out. It said, "I am most disappointed that I am not able to attend today. As you may be aware, I have campaigned alongside you all for the aims of the group and, since the formula changed in 2003, have continued to pressure ministers and departments for further reform. I wish you all well with the research which is being carried out on funding entitlement and I will keep other MPs informed of what is happening. Naturally, I will help in any way that I can in the future."
3. David Thorpe from Leicestershire asked for a message to be brought to the meeting's attention relating to the discriminatory nature of education funding and the potential for a case under Article 14 of the Human Rights Act.

The meeting heard that f40 had previously examined this idea and had concluded that it would be enormously expensive, difficult to prove and the legal opinion was that any action of this sort against the government was likely to fail. Doug Allan to write with an appropriate response to Mr Thorpe.

National Developments

David Smith, Finance Director at Wigan, gave a fascinating presentation on the key national developments impacting on education funding. The full presentation is attached to these minutes.

There was a comprehensive discussion about the presentation and some of the key points are:

- Future funding arrangements relating to council tax proposals will be very difficult for most authorities.
- Most authorities will struggle, perhaps even more than in the past.
- There will be presumptions about efficiency savings achieved.
- Authorities are likely to be able to reinvest savings made - but they will have to demonstrate that they have made them to the satisfaction of the government.
- The government is determined to further change the relationship between schools and LEAs. Pressure will be placed on LEA budgets as well as on individual schools.
- The government appears to want to micro-manage schools' budgets just as they have done with LEAs.
- Those LEAs spending over and above SSAs appear to be subsidising those spending less than SSA. This is a crucially important point, although very complex, f40 may wish to lobby to achieve the best possible solution they can.

The meeting thanked David Smith and said that his presentation should really be seen by all F40 authorities and staff working in education finance. The meeting hopes that individual authorities will ensure this happens.

Funding Model

At the last meeting of f40, Jon Mager, Director of Education at ERYC, gave a presentation on a funding model that he and his local education colleagues were developing. That model has moved on considerably and Jon gave a further presentation to demonstrate its capabilities and potential for use by all f40 authorities.

The model now includes both secondary and primary school levels of funding. It can also be used at LEA or individual school levels.

A copy of the notes circulated at the meeting are attached for general consumption.

Key points arising from the presentation are:

- The model is a needs based funding model.
- LEA and individual school levels.
- Needs no understanding of hard sums.
- Allows for variation between different sizes of schools.
- Allows detailed interrogation - the if and the when questions, which are crucial to the process.
- Has the potential for even further development by any authority and to suit individual requirements.
- Is totally flexible.

The model is now ready to be shared with other f40 authorities and ERYC is seeking volunteer f40 authorities to test it in their own circumstances. Names of volunteer councils were collected and they will attend a special workshop in Beverley at a date to be agreed.

ERYC is seeking legal advice on intellectual copyright as a means of protecting the model's integrity and the council's position.

The cost of development of the model to ERYC and any future development costs is an issue that needs further consideration.

The meeting concluded that the model is an excellent step forward for those involved in the complicated matter of education funding. Delegates expressed their gratitude to Jon Mager, Sam Ellis (who demonstrated the model) and Lisa Forster and said they looked forward to the results of the testing with other authorities.

Executive Meeting

Doug Allan to call an f40 Executive Meeting at an early date to consider:

- The appointment of a new chair.
- The affirmation of the actions taken relating to the funding model.
- Current F40 membership and finances.
- Future campaigning for F40.

END

Doug Allan

DTW

26 September 2004