



f40 Executive Committee Meeting **Saturday, 4 September 2010 at Amerton Farm, Staffordshire**

1. Attendance and apologies

Present: Ivan Ould, Leics (Chair); Gillian Hayward, Gloucs (Vice Chair); Doug Allan, Secretary; Lindsey Wharmby, Retiring f40 Finance Consultant; Sam Ellis, New f40 Finance Consultant; Joe Jefferies, NASUWT, Notts; Tony Norton, N Lincs; Robin Walker MP, Worcester; Clive Chorley, PGR, Worcs; Helen Donovan, Worcs; Jon Pearsall, Worcs; Eunice Finney, Staffs; Chris Chapman, Cheshire East; Margaret Judd, Dorset; Geoff Venn, Bedford

Apologies: David Smith, Wigan; Mick Brookes; Peter Doyle, Devon; Mike Sladen, Cambs; David Harty, Cambs; Francis Loftus, N Yorks; Chris Levy; Harriet Baldwin MP, Worcestershire West and Donna Sager, Stockport.

IO welcomed Robin Walker MP to his first f40 Executive meeting and expressed the hope that he would provide the important Parliamentary link that the Group has lacked since the resignation of David Kidney. RW commented that as a fervent supporter of f40's aims and objectives, he hopes to be able to speak in Parliament on funding issues and work with the Group to best achieve fair funding for all children. He indicated that he has already submitted one Early Day Motion in the House and will undertake more activity in the future.

IO said that two new MPs representing constituencies in Leicestershire had indicated their support for f40.

2. Education Funding Consultancy

DA announced that, after three years' work on behalf of f40, LW is retiring from consultancy work. IO thanked her for the sterling work undertaken on the Group's behalf and presented her with a small gift to mark her departure. LW thanked the Executive and commented that she had always enjoyed her work with f40 and had genuinely shared members' commitment to fair funding.

DA introduced SE to the Executive as the Group's new funding consultant. SE has previously had involvement with f40 via East Riding of Yorkshire Council, where he was involved in the development of the funding model later adopted by f40. SE will be contracted to f40 via ASCL and his contract has been negotiated by DA and approved by the chair and vice chair. **Agreed**

3. Chair and Vice Chair Appointments

DA advised that IO and GH had kindly agreed to take on the responsibilities of chair and vice chair of the Group following the departure of former chair David Kidney MP. It was felt that the position ought to be reviewed and that Executive Members ought to either confirm the appointments or select replacements. CC moved that IO and GH should be confirmed as chair and vice chair respectively. **Agreed**

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2010 were **approved** as an accurate record of the procedures.

5. Current Activities

a) DSG Formula Review Consultation

DA confirmed that as requested by the committee, the Group's formal submission had been lodged with the government in May. He also referred to the paper – 'Summary of Consultation Responses', circulated by the government as part of the current consultation, 'Schools Funding 2011-12: Introducing a Pupil Premium'. This paper, which is available on the DfE and f40 websites, carries several significant references to f40. There was a discussion about how the current government will use the valuable, evidence-based information gathered during the May consultation. It would be a shame if it were wasted. Although RW thought that the information would be used to inform future decisions, he **Agreed** to ask a question in the House about the government's intentions in this respect.

b) Consultation on School Funding 2011-12: Introducing a Pupil Premium

On 26 July 2010, the government launched a further review of school funding which seeks views on the proposed arrangements for the operation of the pupil premium and the distribution of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2011-12. This consultation, which closes on 18 October, is closely linked to the Comprehensive Spending Review, which is also in October.

IO expressed the view that it is critically important that f40 continues to be heard in any discussions about the future funding of education. If we don't achieve our goals in the CSR, we will have lost the ability to meaningfully influence matters for another three years. F40 has got to present constructive arguments to be heard – not to gripe.

IO also said that he understood that a motion about Free Schools and Academies would be discussed at the forthcoming Lib Dem Conference.

The following points were made during a discussion on where education funding is heading:

LW said that the consultation presented a mixture of sensible and muddled thinking. No ball-park figures are available for the Pupil Premium, making discussion and planning very difficult. Suggestions that new money would be identifiable in the Pupil Premium are wide of the mark. There are significant issues for the LA part of the DSG. It is going to be very confusing. The government constantly refers to 'targeting individuals', but this system simply does not do that. However, in the current consultation, the fact that there are low-funded authorities appears to have registered with government. F40 authorities will probably benefit.

IO suggested that the Schools Forum system may not survive in its present form in the proposed arrangements for education funding. He also suggested that DfE has only limited capacity for dealing effectively with new academies: if all secondary schools were to change status there would be absolute chaos. Those schools remaining outside academy system would stay with LEAs.

CC said it is very important that f40 emphasises to the DfE that its interest is in fair funding – not gaining at the expense of others.

HD said that in her opinion the proposed pupil premium would not tackle the basic inequality in the system.

LW stated that whatever level the Pupil Premium is set at, it must be fit for purpose and assist in the fair funding of education for the 'average child', with additions as appropriate for special and additional needs.

IO said that historically some LEAs had put more of their own money into education and that funding was taken away in DfE calculations, meaning those authorities lost out. He indicated that the DfE had dismissed claims that this practice had been unfair. However, he suggested that LA contributions were an example of 'localism' which rebounded on those who paid more.

TN said that he believed f40 should continue to flag up the new and additional cost pressures that authorities face, mainly as a result of government demands. We must emphasise to Ministers the fact that schools are different...and they have different costs.

SE referred to some research he had recently undertaken that demonstrated the diversity in school costs. He also suggested we should be careful about using the word 'average' as it can distort and mislead. 'Typical' or 'target' values are a better reference point. He also suggested that if schools get 'freedom' and become academies, they may end up paying more for services, particularly for teachers. Higher costs could lead them to financial ruin.

TN wondered if better-funded authorities would lose out under 'Spend plus'. IO suggested that politics would play a crucial part in final outcomes.

LW had been asked to prepare a draft response for discussion by the Executive Committee. Her paper was circulated. SE had contributed to the draft and DA had edited into f40 style. DA indicated that the draft response was in two parts – a preamble signed by the chair and vice chair, followed by the formal consultation response. The draft was discussed paragraph by paragraph, and a number of changes were suggested.

- Paragraph on f40's core 'fair funding' philosophy to be added. Basic entitlement with appropriate top-ups, and explain the difficulties the lowest funded authorities face. Care to be taken to ensure that this wording is not counter-productive.
- Paras 1 and 2 – ok.
- Para 3 to be beefed up to state that we feel it is important the government makes best use of evidence-based material emanating from May 2010 consultation. We appreciate that the government has changed, but it was excellent information that ought to be still made use of in creating a new formula.
- Para 4 to state basic support for the pupil premium, as long as it is accompanied by sensible balance of appropriate top ups.
- Para 5 to be strengthened to reflect concerns about the potential levels of grant involved, the importance of making use of the right baseline position, and that it is unclear whether or not the 'pockets of deprivation' money, that f40 fought hard to gain, are included,
- Para 6 – f40 would argue for maintenance of current level of DSG – not a cut! Reflect on inaccuracy of Academy funding formula.
- Paras 7 and 8 – ok
- Para 9 – add a reference to double-accounting issue raised by Gloucestershire CC.
- Para 10 – more positive on f40's core principles
- Para 11 and 12 – ok
- Paras 13 to 15 – attention to be drawn to limitations of FSM. Refer to fact that 40% of children take sandwiches, when they would qualify for FSM, but don't claim because of stigma. Parents don't realise that by not claiming they are damaging school's funding.
- Para 16 – refer to fact that OWTC is only any good if better data can be provided.
- Para 17 – refer to super-output areas.
- Para 18 – Tone down last sentence.
- Para 19 – ok
- Para 20 – delete final sentence. Bring this bullet forward – it is extremely important.
- Para 21 – strengthen and add three core messages that sum up f40's requirements:

1. Basic Entitlement
2. Realism in a period of cuts – but need for fair funding is paramount
3. Pupil Premium with local discretion

In the formal response element, the following changes will be made:

- Point 1 – we will say 'yes' to the question and also refer to confusion that the existing system creates
- Points 2, 3 and 4 – ok
- Point 5 – add words that reflect the importance of supporting Service Children

- Points 6 to 10 – ok
- Additional Comment paragraph – Refer to sparsity and to fact that funding should reflect actual, not historical cost.

Agreed – that LW and DA will prepare a revised version which will be circulated to Executive Members for information and approved by the chair and vice chair.

Then the second draft will be sent (by the Secretary) to Directors, Lead Members and Chairs of Schools Forum in all f40 member authorities, with a deadline for return of comments. Appropriate dates for conclusion to be set by the Secretary, bearing in mind the submission will be used at the forthcoming meeting with the Schools Minister.

The final version (which may have altered again after the meeting with the Schools Minister) must be with the government by 18 October 2010.

c. Correspondence/Meeting with Ministers

DA reminded members that, as instructed, he had despatched a letter to Nick Gibb MP, who is a Minister in the DfE and who had attended our London conference in November 2009. The letter was essentially a repeat of correspondence originally sent to Vernon Coaker MP, whilst he was a Minister. We received a reply from Schools Minister, Lord Hill of Oareford, inviting f40 to meet him in London.

The meeting has been set for 4pm on Thursday 30 September and will be held at Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street. We have been granted only 30 minutes to make our case.

DA has invited Directors of member authorities to suggest items that should be raised. These, and other matters raised today, will form the core discussion. **Agreed** that LW and DA should extract 3 to 5 points that should be the subject of discussion on the day. These should include:

- Presentation of proposed consultation submission
- Basic f40 philosophy, aims and objectives
- Moving to a new system – ensuring fairness
- Making use of evidence-based material gathered during May consultation.

Agreed that the following Executive Committee members should attend the meeting: IO, GH, RW, LW, MJ and DA (Secretary). **Agreed:** DA to inform the Minister's office of the names of those in the delegation.

6. f40 National Conference

The last national conference was staged in November 2009 and DA queried when the Executive Committee might wish to hold its next conference. After a discussion it was agreed that the Spring of 2011 is likely to be the most appropriate time. **Agreed** that the matter be raised again on the agenda for the next Executive Committee meeting.

7. Membership

The Secretary reported that at the end of the last financial year, the membership of the Group was 32 local authorities. Invoices in respect of annual subscriptions for 2010-11 were issued in April, resulting in payment from 29 authorities, resignations from two and a pending payment from one other.

8. f40 Website

DA advised committee members that the website was fairly old and was rapidly becoming outdated, in terms of structure, platform and presentation. He indicated that he had received costs from DTW – who originally designed the website and maintained it over the years – for a complete

refresh of the site. **Agreed** that DA should organise and supervise an update of the site to a maximum budget cost of £5,000.

9. AOB

DA referred to an approach he had had from the publishers of Total Politics, a monthly magazine aimed at government decision makers. The proposal was for f40 to purchase space in a forthcoming issue for a debate about funding issues. The cost was quoted as £4,450. Another idea put forward by the company was for them to organise events at which Ministers and MPs would attend, such as a breakfast briefing. After some discussion it was **agreed** not to take up the offer.

RW indicated that he would be happy to take up issues in Parliament on f40's behalf and ideas should be fed through to him.

IO suggested that the Secretary should write a letter on his behalf to Mick Brookes, who has now retired from NAHT. **Agreed.**

10. Next Meeting

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held at Amerton Farm, Staffs at 11am on Saturday, 15 January 2011.

In case of inclement weather, members will be invited to check on the day that the meeting is still on by calling EF at Amerton Farm on 01889 270294. DA to remind members of this facility when he circulates the agenda for the January meeting.