



**f40 Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Saturday, 19 September 2015 at Amerton Farm, Staffordshire**

**1. Attendance and apologies**

**Present:** Ivan Ould, Leics (Chair); Doug Allan, (Secretary); Gillian Hayward, Gloucs Schools Forum; Joe Jefferies, NASUWT, Notts; Margaret Judd, Dorset CC; Chris Chapman, Cheshire Schools Forums; Steph Simcox, Worcs CC; Caroline Brand (Worcs CC); Bernadette Hunter, Staffs Headteacher; Zahir Mohammed (Bucks CC); Joe Tildersley (Solihull); Tom Crompton (Shaw Education Trust).

**Apologies:** Graham Stuart MP for Beverley & Holderness (Vice Chair); Nic Dakin MP for Scunthorpe (Vice Chair); Robin Walker MP, Worcester; Stewart King, Gloucs CC; Jon Pearsall, independent rep; Sally Bates, Notts NAHT & Headteacher; Liz Eyre, Worcs CC; John Champion, Worcs CC; David Harty, Cambs CC; Gillian Allcroft, NGA; Tony Norton, North Lincs; Helen Donovan, independent rep; Edwina Grant, LGA; Eunice Finney, Staffs parent.

Ivan Ould welcomed Joe Tildesley, Zahir Mohammed, Tom Crompton and Caroline Brand to their first meeting of the Executive Committee.

**2. Minutes of the meeting held 6 June 2015**

The minutes of were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

**3. Activities since last Executive Committee to be noted**

**3.1 News Release re appointment of new Vice Chair – 11 June 2015**

DA reported that he had issued a news release welcoming the appointment of Stewart Graham MP as a new Vice Chair of f40. **NOTED**

**3.2 Meeting with DfE Funding Group on 15 June 2015**

Notes of this very constructive meeting were circulated. **NOTED**

**3.3 NAHT presentation 16 June 2015**

FMRT member Anton Hodge attended an NAHT meeting in Newcastle to explain f40's approach to a new funding formula. **NOTED**

**3.4 Babcock Fair Funding Conference – 17 June 2015**

FMRT member Stewart King attended this conference and spoke about f40's proposals for a new fair funding formula. **NOTED**

**3.5 Meeting with Sam Gyimah MP, Education & Childcare Minister – 18 June 2015**

A delegation had attended this meeting that had been requested by the Under Secretary of State for Education & Childcare. It was a very useful and constructive meeting. Most importantly it was at this meeting where the commitment to base-lining the extra funding was made. The notes of the meeting had been previously circulated. **NOTED**

**3.6 Fair Pupil Funding launched 22 June 2015**

DA reported that a new group had been launched, initially in Worcestershire, but with the intention of spreading further afield, to involve parents and schools more actively in campaigning for fairer funding. DA has assisted the new group. **NOTED**

**3.7 Baselining of extra funding news releases – 1 July 2015**

DA reported that Graham Stewart and f40 had both issued news releases welcoming comments in Parliament made by the PM in relation to baselining of the extra funding. **NOTED**

**3.8 f40 Briefing for MPs – 14 July 2015**

The Briefing for MPs held in the Houses of Commons was a great success with approximately seventy MPs or representatives in attendance. The Under Secretary of State, Sam Gyimah also attended. A further Briefing Paper was prepared and circulated. FMRT member Margaret Judd (Dorset) made a presentation of our proposals, which was very well received. **NOTED**

### 3.9 Letter from Sam Gyimah MP, Under Secretary of State for Education – 16 July 2015

In announcing the per pupil funding rates for each local authority's school budget for 2016-17, the Under Secretary also confirmed the baselining of the extra £390m. **NOTED**

### 3.10 Total Politics Advertorial – July 2015

f40 paid for an advertorial in the special post-election edition.

### 3.11 News article – ASCL – 19 September

DA reported on a news article on today's (19 September) BBC News website, "Heads push over school funding disparities", which again shows that f40 and ASCL are on the same page in relation to fair funding.

## **4. Current Issues**

### 4.1 f40 Funding Proposals and Calculator – September 2015

DA reported that an updated set of proposals, spreadsheets and calculator had been circulated to all f40 MPs and LA members. This calculator could be used to check any constituency/LA area funding and compare with others. It is proving to be an extremely useful tool. Noted that this calculator would be updated from time to time and that this is just the current iteration. **NOTED**

### 4.2 Meetings with DfE Funding Unit – 6 July and 9 September

DA reported that f40's Finance Managers Research Team has attended two meetings with the Funding Unit within the DfE to discuss the development of a new formula for school funding. The Unit's new Director, Tony Foot, is extremely interested in the work that FMRT has undertaken and has made it clear that the proposals are welcomed and constitute a constructive contribution to the department's own work. The minutes of both meetings had previously been circulated and are now on f40's website. IO flagged up the issue raised by the DfE relating to fact that there will be no extra cash and that f40 should consider scaling-back its factor values. He suggested that this was necessary. **AGREED** that FMRT should undertake a further review scaling-back the factor values so that no additional cash is required.

IO expressed concern that Regional Commissioners could potentially take control of school funding, excluding LAs from any involvement. TC suggested that this was a very real possibility as Regional Commissioners are certainly gathering together increasing powers.

BH expressed her concerns about Early Years and the impact on schools budgets of 30 hour proposals. She suggested the prospects are horrendous for schools. MJ said that little was said about this matter at 9 September meeting, though the DfE question whether a Lump Sum should be considered for Early Years. CC said that this shows the importance of sticking to three separate blocks so that individual elements can be easily identified. MJ suggested that the providers are fighting hard for an increase in funding for early years provision, but under current arrangements, the final responsibility lies with local authorities.

There was a discussion about what the DfE refer to as "hard" and "soft" options, which effectively are about how much is done centrally and how much flexibility is given to local authorities to allocated school funding. GH referred to the needs-led approach adopted in Gloucestershire and how it has highlighted real issues with the lump sum. CC added that in his opinion local authorities need all the flexibility they can get. **AGREED** that CC should send further details of his ideas to DA so that they can be discussed at the next FMRT meeting. Also **AGREED** that FMRT should be asked to strengthen the wording regarding flexibility in the Proposals document.

SW raised the matter of sparsity and how it is handled differently by individual local authorities.

#### 4.3 Change of Chairmanship - FMRT

DA reported that as requested he had written to Stewart King to thank him for his excellent work as Chair of FMRT. DA also confirmed that Martin Wade (Cambridgeshire) has confirmed that he will take on the responsibilities as Chair of the research team. **NOTED**

#### 4.4 ISOS Research Outcomes – September 2015

DA had previously circulated an assessment of the outcomes stemming from the ISOS research into SEN funding. This assessment was kindly prepared by FMRT member Simon Please (Kent CC). There were concerns expressed about the disparity between funding provided and the situation on the ground. It was noted that despite logical argument, the government simply isn't providing sufficient to tackle the need. Despite this, members noted that schools won't simply let children suffer and they will do what they can to help. CC suggested that it was an area in great need of more resources and that groups like f40 should take the lead in arguing for more cash. He added that this was one area that might be better dealt with nationally. TC suggested that the idea of piloting sub-regional or regional approaches to joint strategic commissioning of provision for very high-need low incidence SEN is a good way forward. **AGREED** that, on behalf of the Chair, DA will draft a letter to the Secretary of State thanking her for recent announcements on funding (baselining of £390m) and for allowing f40 to work closely with the DfE Funding Group, but also expressing concern about DHS/DfE funding of services and the need for a strategic approach.

In response to a question from IO, MJ said that the DfE had promised data sets relating to SEN funding but that the information had not yet arrived. **AGREED** that DA will follow up on this.

IO said that he is concerned about the comments about Top-Up Funding. In Leicestershire the LA is at the point of having to only provide statutory services as there simply isn't the funding to supply anything else. LAs cannot top up if they don't have the resources. Others recognised the problem but suggested that it is partly an issue of budgetary management.

#### 4.5 Parliamentary Petitions

DA reported that Graham Stuart's office is co-ordinating a petitions campaign in every f40 constituency. This involves a separate petition for each constituency and is made complicated by the fact that separate petitions may be needed in individual schools if children/parents are from different constituencies. DA confirmed that he had forewarned all Lead Members in f40 member authorities to expect the details to arrive from their MPs. Subsequently Graham Stuart's office had circulated the petitions to MPs who should have passed them down to local authorities. Unfortunately there is some doubt that this has happened in all areas as some members of the Executive had no knowledge of the arrangements. **AGREED** that DA will contact Simon Clarke in Graham Stuart's office to discuss ways of further raising awareness of the Petitions, including asking Lead Members to be more active.

GH suggested that the message on the top of each petition could be strengthened to persuade local parents to sign, but DA later confirmed that the wording on this type of petition is agreed by the Parliamentary Petitions Office and cannot be altered at this stage.

BH asked if NAHT could do anything to support the process, perhaps by circulating more copies or encouraging its members to sign up. Similarly, other organisations such as ASCL and NGA might help. **AGREED** that these avenues will be explored.

GH said that any member or supported of fair funding who hasn't been asked to sign a petition should contact their MP and f40 should include details on its website. **AGREED**

#### 4.6 MPs letter to the PM

DA reported that Graham Stuart is also coordinating a letter to the PM which he hopes as many as 80 to 100 MPs representing poorly funded areas will sign. To date around 40 have signed up.

**AGREED** that Lead Members in f40 authorities could assist in increasing the names by asking their local MPs to confirm that they have signed up.

#### 4.6 Future Meetings of FMRT

The Committee authorised DA to organise future meetings of FMRT as required. The next meeting would be scheduled late October to coincide with the Spending Review. **AGREED**

#### 4.7 Future Meetings with DfE

DA indicated that the DfE had indicated it was prepared to have further meetings with FMRT and that logically the next meeting would be after the FMRT meeting late October, so probably in November. IO said he would like to be invited to sit in on the meeting. **AGREED**

### **5. Role of Academy Trusts**

DA reminded Members that at the MP's Briefing in February 2015, Graham Stuart MP, asked what was being done to ensure that the large multi-academy trusts are involved in the fair funding campaign. He pointed out that these trusts have potentially a great deal of clout and could be great allies to f40. As a result, DA wrote to around 25 Academy Trusts on a list obtained, plus the Catholic Education Service and Church of England Schools Service, to introduce them to f40.

To date, DA has had responses from the: Ormiston Academies Trust, School Partnership Trust Academies, TEN Group and Shaw Education Trust. Tom Crompton from the Shaw Trust was in attendance at this meeting and spoke about his own and his Trust's firm commitment to fair funding. DA asked about internal dilemma surrounding re-distribution of school funding, but TC said that it is the principle of fair funding that is paramount.

SW referred to previous discussion about the involvement, or lack of it, of academies in some areas on Schools Forum. JJ said that in Nottinghamshire it would appear academies are taking no meaningful role. However, most members present thought that academies in their areas were well represented and involved and that this strengthened the role of Schools Forum. It was suggested that Schools Forum represent a kind of devolution in education. IO suggested JJ should ask his LA to raise any concerns via the East Midlands Councils Forum.

IO said that he is encouraged by the interest from multi-academy trusts and that he looked forward to working together with those who saw common interest with the fair funding campaign.

### **6. Autumn Conference**

It is several years since f40 organised a full conference, preferring to concentrate its efforts on briefing MPs. DA wondered whether the Executive would like to consider organising a conference open to all members at some point when the proposals for a fair funding formula are more settled. **AGREED** that this matter will be reconsidered at the December 2015 meeting and in the light of the Autumn Spending Review.

### **7. Proposed Meeting with NUT**

DA reported on communications with the NUT and the proposal that f40 and NUT officials should meet for discussions about fair funding. Attempts to find a suitable date and f40 representatives to attend are ongoing. To save having to make a special journey to the capital, it was suggested that a meeting should be arranged to coincide with another London-based meeting. **AGREED**

### **8. Membership Report and Finances**

DA reported that the group now has 38 members following the applications from Buckinghamshire and Hampshire. Work aimed at recruiting more new member authorities continues, with Wiltshire West Sussex, Norfolk and Surrey, in our sights.

The vast majority of LAs have paid their 2015-16 subscription. Follow up action is being taken to ensure outstanding fees are paid soon.

## 9. Website Development

DA reported that it is five years since the current f40 website was created and a proposal has arrived from DTW, who developed and manage the site, for a major update. The proposal has been circulated to Executive Members. The cost of the work will be £6, 600 plus VAT. **AGREED** that the work should be undertaken in accordance with DTW's proposal

## 10. Any Other Business

- 10.1 GH flagged up the fact that Sam Gyimah MP has agreed to be the main speaker at the forthcoming NGA national conference. **NOTED**
- 10.2 GH mentioned a letter sent from Neil Carmichael MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee to the Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan. It followed a recent appearance by the SoS before the committee, where fair funding had been raised. The committee welcomed the government's commitment to fairer funding and stated that it would be examining the department's proposals for reform once they are issued for consultation. It asked for the likely publication date and asked for confirmation that 16-18 year olds funding will also be included. IO said the involvement of the Education Select Committee was welcomed and he thought that an early meeting with Neil Carmichael, facilitated by Graham Stuart, and including our FMRT, should be sought. **AGREED**
- 10.3 IO spoke about his concerns re migration and asylum seekers, particularly the potential for receiving many children from camps across the Middle East. He indicated that the majority of these arrivals will end up being settled outside of the capital and he expressed the hope that individual local authorities will be properly funded for any additional costs involved. JT mentioned the asylum centre in Solihull which has welcomed many children in recent years and has an impeccable record of success with youngsters.
- 10.4 JJ expressed concern about the introduction of more Free Schools and the impact on local authority school places and budgets. He said that a new Free School in Berkshire had cost £16m, was a boarding school charging £11,000 per year, was twinned with Eton, and impacted on local maintained school places. The cost is phenomenal and unnecessary. SS added that in Worcestershire a Free School that the authority did not support as being basic need, has gone ahead and resulted in a reduction of DSG for all schools. IO said that whilst disagreeing with the policy, and being concerned on the monetary impact on mainstream schooling, he ordinarily would be against f40 getting too involved as it would dilute its focus. However, if Free Schools are impacting on DSG then it is part of f40's fair funding argument and we may need to voice our concerns. **AGREED**
- 10.5 JT mentioned that the SoS is visiting Solihull on Tuesday 22 September 2015 and he would let DA know how the event goes. One key issue that Solihull will be presenting to SoS is that 7,000 pupils cross the border into Solihull every day, but none of them bring their funding with them. IO said this was an issue that many f40 representatives make regularly in discussions with Ministers and the DfE. JJ thanked f40's Executive Committee for its hard work over the years on behalf of all poorly funded local authorities.
- 10.6 ZM raised the problems that Buckinghamshire is experiencing in relation to recruitment and retention of teaching staff. The situation is often compounded by neighbouring authorities which compete by increasing packages on offer. IO suggested it is a national issue, though worse in some areas than in others. He suggested that the DfE don't appear to recognise the difficulties.

## 11. Dates of future Executive Committees

The next meeting is scheduled for 11am on Saturday, 5 December 2015. Suggested dates for 2016 are: 5 March, 25 June and 1 October and 10 December. Please note these dates in your diary.