



f40 Executive Committee Meeting
Saturday, 28 September 2013 at Amerton Farm, Staffordshire

1. Attendance and apologies

Present: Ivan Ould, Leics (Chair); Robin Walker MP, Worcester (Vice Chair) ; Doug Allan, (Secretary); Joe Jefferies, NASUWT, Notts; Tony Norton, N Lincs; Chris Chapman, Cheshire; David Harty, Cambs; Margaret Judd, Dorset; Gillian Hayward, Gloucs; Jon Pearsall, Worcs; Stewart King, Gloucs; Steph Simcox, Worcs; Liz Eyre, Worcs.

Guests: David McIntosh and Alistair Thomas, Worcestershire Association of Governors (WAG).

Apologies: Nic Dakin MP (Vice Chair); Bernadette Hunter, Staffs/NAHT; Christine Atkinson, ERYC; Gillian Allcroft, NGA; Eunice Finney, Staffs; Sam Ellis (Financial Consultant); Helen Donovan, Worcs; Edwina Grant, Central Beds; Francis Loftus, North Yorks; Pauline Hibbert, Stockport.

2. Minutes of the meeting held 8 June 2013

DA reported that he had contacted the Schools Minister's office for feedback on the Case Studies lodged by f40 earlier this year, and was told that the information had been circulated to various DfE officials and was much appreciated.

DA also reported that it had not proved possible to organise an f40 presence at the three main party political conferences.

Other to this, the minutes of 8 June were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

3. Nic Dakin MP (Scunthorpe County)

At the previous meeting, and in order to maintain political balance on the Executive Committee, it was agreed that DA should approach Labour MP, Nic Dakin, with a view to him joining f40 as a Vice Chair. He has now accepted our invitation and is happy to support f40, though he may have difficulty attending Executive Committee meetings on Saturdays. **AGREED** that DA should seek a meeting with ND, possibly on 14 October when an f40 delegation is attending other meetings in London.

4. A new National School Funding Formula

4.1 LA Finance Managers Research Team

This team of volunteers from the ranks of LA Finance Managers has been met on three occasions to develop proposals for a new national funding formula. So far, it has looked at a range of propositions and modelling, resulting in a Paper "Towards a National Funding Formula for Schools – the F40 Perspective".

Notes of the last two meetings – 18 June and 27 August - had previously been circulated and are now available on the website. DA explained that the Susan Acland-Hood, Director of Education Funding, Tim Leunig, Senior Policy Adviser to the Secretary of State, and several other DfE officials had attended the meeting on 27 August and had been extremely helpful in outlining the department's current approach to a new formula.

SK – who chairs the research team – used a PowerPoint presentation to explain the background and propositions contained in the Paper. There was then a general discussion during which the following points were raised:

- IO pointed out that LAs have tremendous difficulty in planning due to uncertainty of annual budget announcements. SK suggested that the ideal would be a 3-year budget settlement.
- TN sought clarification about the words ‘formula replication’ and was reassured that this referred to duplication of involvement by DfE and EfA, rather than replication by schools/LAs.
- IO informed the Committee that in Leicestershire he had been astonished at an announcement this week that the EfA had provided £3 million to academies to cover incurred costs that had not been budgeted or mentioned in business plans!
- TN suggested adding a further factor relating to the age ratio between secondary and primary school pupils.
- RW suggested that the modelling of sparsity will require a great deal of work and he would like to see the LA Finance Research Team take a look at this. **AGREED** that DA will ask the team to consider this.
- MJ referred to Dorset’s sparsity map and flagged up the considerable difficulties being experienced. IO suggested that sparsity is becoming increasingly complicated, especially in relation to Transport policies and costs, and where neighbouring LAs have cross-border activity. SK said that he believes the DfE’s 2014-15 calculations of sparsity may have been introduced as a best guess guide, with the DfE watching carefully to see how they work through the system and impact across LAs.
- AT commented on why he thinks sparsity is so important in Worcestershire...but he suggested that the DfE is being too prescriptive.
- IO suggested that f40 and member LAs would have to be extremely astute when presenting its ideas on sparsity.
- TN referred to the duplication of funding for deprivation – as part of DSG and in Pupil Premium. The urban areas have been greatly advantaged and rural deprivation is still not properly recognised.
- AT suggested that FSM is an issue for rural areas: many parents in less well-off families simply will not claim!
- LE wondered what the Secretary of State’s view of small schools is – is he for or against? RW suggested that he would recognise the need for small schools in certain situations and locations, but it would be based on practicality. RW said it would be sensible for LAs and rural communities to ensure that their messages about small schools are constantly raised with Ministers.
- AT mentioned a “conspiracy theory” that LA small schools would be allowed to get into difficulty...and would then be converted to “free schools”.
- TN referred to the suggested transitional period for change and said it would be sensible to identify our priorities for action and delivery within this period. SK added that a quick transition – maximum three years - would ensure that there is no conflict with the next but one election (i.e 2020/21).
- It was generally **AGREED** that the listed factors were sensible, though SK was asked to look again at the list and possibly separate “Lump Sum” and “Sparsity”. IO said he was particularly concerned about them being grouped together.
- TN emphasised the importance of ensuring accurate measurements are applied in all factors listed, but particularly for SEN and deprivation. It is critically important to have the correct measures to achieve the right outcomes!
- IO pointed out how the Leicestershire/Leicester doughnut arrangement created a whole raft of issues.
- GH pointed out that the paper should have a reference to High Needs. MJ suggested this could be referred to in an expanded introduction which would explain the parameters of the Paper – that it’s essentially about mainstream schools, and what’s in it and what’s not. A reference to fact that Special Schools will be looked at in a separate paper. **AGREED** that SK will consider the best way of introducing this reference.

- SS drew attention to the impact of all changes on transport policy and budgets. There is an unavoidable link between sparsity and transport costs, which she felt the DfE might not so far adequately understand. SW thought a reference to this issue might be needed in the Paper.
- GH also raised the recent announcement about free school meals and its impact on LAs and schools. She suggested that this is another area where the government has acted without understanding the potential difficulties or the unintended consequences.
- In conclusion, IO thanked SK and MJ for their work on the Paper, and asked them to pass on the Executive's thanks to the rest of the LA Finance Managers Research Team. IO suggested the research work on a new national funding formula is extremely important and has given f40 a real sense of involvement in the development of a new formula.

The presentation is now on the website. The final version of the Paper will be uploaded as soon as it is approved.

4.2 Next Steps for finalising and presenting the Paper, and continued lobbying

DA outlined a timeframe for the on-going development and presentation of the Paper and the following was **AGREED**:

- SK/MJ/DA will make appropriate amendments for approval by the Chair and Vice Chair during week commencing 30 September 2013.
- On approval, the Paper will be uploaded to f40's website and distributed to all members.
- The Paper will be made available to Schools Minister David Laws in advance of the scheduled meeting on 14 October. The f40 delegation will be IO, RW, SK, MJ, LE and DA.
- The Paper will be made available to Oliver Letwin MP in advance of the scheduled meeting on 14 October 2013. Oliver Letwin is responsible for Conservative Party policy and the next manifesto.
- A scheduled meeting with Shadow Secretary of State Stephen Twigg had to be postponed. DA will now contact f40's new Vice Chair, Nic Dakin MP, to ask him to facilitate a meeting with the Shadow Secretary of State. The Paper will form the main agenda item and the aim will be to get the Labour party to adopt the f40 approach in the run up to the next election. In addition, The Shadow Secretary will be asked how the Labour Party might support a proposed MP's Briefing.
- DA to seek a further meeting with the SoS's Senior Policy Adviser and the Director of Education Funding at the DfE to discuss f40's final Paper and to consider additional collaboration in the development of the DfE's proposals and modelling.
- The Paper will be presented to MPs representing f40 LAs at a special briefing in the House of Commons in either late November or early December 2013. The meeting will be sponsored by Vice Chair Robin Walker MP.
- DA to contact Nick Harvey MP to see what support the Liberal Democrats can offer to support the Briefing.
- DA to write to the Secretary of all education Trade Unions and supply a copy of the Paper.
- Once all the above activity is underway, DA will send the Paper to the Green Party and UKIP for information and will offer them a meeting to discuss fair funding.

4.2 Additional campaign activities

- Cambridgeshire Motion – information about Cambridgeshire County Council's special Motion, approved unanimously by the County Council on 16 July, was recently circulated to all f40 member LAs. DA to encourage all member LAs to consider similar action as part of a process of ensuring the government is constantly aware of the need for fairer funding through a new national funding formula.
- RW explained that he has prepared a letter to the Secretary of State to emphasise the importance of the new school funding formula and the need to introduce it as soon as possible. He is hoping to attach the signatures of 100 MPs. DA to contact Nick Harvey MP to ask him to consider a similar letter from the Lib-Dems.

5. Worcestershire Association of Governors (WAG)

At the previous meeting (8 June) DA reported on communications received from WAG , which has the aim of achieving a fairer school funding system, but has a different approach for achieving it. It was agreed that WAG should attend this meeting to hear more about f40's approach and for members of the Executive Committee to receive a presentation on WAG's strategy. AT and DMcl presented, pointing out from the start that it is WAG's strategy and is not that of Worcestershire County Council. WAG's PowerPoint presentation and strategy document are available from Malcolm Richards - chair@waguk.org

IO thanked the WAG representatives for attending the Executive Committee meeting, listening to the presentation of f40's school funding proposals and presenting their own position. He suggested that convergence of positions would be useful as there is strength in a single approach.

6. Academy Magazine

DA reported that he had been in discussions with the editor of the Academy Magazine about a free, double page editorial (1200 words) in their January edition. The magazine is distributed to all Ministers and DfE officials and claims to be quite influential. Deadline for copy is late November.

AGREED that DA should proceed as discussed and provide a first draft for consideration mid-November.

7. Membership and Finances

DA reported that 30 LAs had paid this year's subscriptions and only two remain outstanding, though the LAs in question have suggested the "cheque is in the post". That means that we have maintained our membership numbers yet again. There has been no movement from the LAs that had shown interest in f40 – Lincolnshire and Cornwall.

DA reported that the group's finances are in good shape and there are sufficient funds for current and future campaigning.

8. Dates of future meetings

DA reported that the next scheduled meeting is in the diary for 14 December 2013, but the Chair, IO, is now unable to make that date. It was **AGREED** that the meeting would be moved to the previous Saturday, 7 December.

It was also **AGREED** that a Special Meeting(s) would be called if necessary during the forthcoming School Funding Consultation period.

DA reported that future meetings are scheduled for 1 March, 7 June, 6 September and 6 December 2014. Members are asked to make a note of these dates in their diaries.