



f40 Executive Committee Meeting

Saturday, 28 July 2012 at Amerton Farm, Staffordshire

1. Attendance and apologies

Present: Ivan Ould, Leics (Chair); Doug Allan, (Secretary); Gillian Hayward, Gloucs (Vice Chair); Robin Walker MP, Worcester; Sam Ellis (Financial Consultant); Eunice Finney, Staffs; Joe Jefferies, NASUWT, Notts; Tony Norton, N Lincs; Chris Chapman, Cheshire; David Harty, Cambs; Gillian Allcroft, NGA; Jon Pearsall, Worcs; Bernadette Hunter, Staffs/NAHT; Jane Potter, Worcs.

Apologies: Margaret Judd, Dorset; Geoff Venn, Bedford; Francis Loftus, North Yorks; Chris Harrison NAHT; Christine Atkinson, ERYC; Helen Donovan, Worcs; Pauline Hibbert, Stockport; Clive Chorley, PGR, Worcs; Chris Levy; Edwina Grant, Central Beds;

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 21 April 2012 were **Approved** as an accurate record of the proceedings.

3. School Funding Review: Summary of Activity during last three months

- The agreed proposals for 'uplift' funding for the poorest local authorities was submitted to the Secretary of State (SoS) on 10 April 2012.
- Our formal response to the 'School Funding Review: Next Steps Towards a Fairer System' was lodged with the government on 21 May 2012.
- The SoS rejected our proposals in a letter dated 5 July.
- Our letter expressing "utmost dismay" at the rejection, was sent to the SoS on 16 July 2012.
- The SoS's acknowledgement of f40's great disappointment came in a letter dated 24 July 2012.
- News releases were issued by f40 at various stages in the above process, attracting significant regional publicity of the case for fairer funding.
- At the suggestion of the SoS, DA has established contact with Jane Cunliffe, one of the job-sharing Deputy Directors in the Funding Policy Unit. Key points from JC's email were:
 - She and Stuart Miller have taken over as Deputy Directors of a newly expanded Funding Policy Unit covering maintained schools funding, academies funding and policy for post-16 and high needs funding.
 - DfE lead on the policy development, so is working with Ministers to develop the national funding formula.
 - Lucy Andrew is leading on the development of the national formula within the Unit.
 - Dugald Sandeman has moved to the Education Funding Agency, which is working on implementation of the arrangements set out in the June publication for 2013-14, although clearly their work will also inform the development of the formula.
 - As EFA is part of the DfE, the two organisations will work very closely together, and with other sections of the EFA leading on Academies and post-16 funding.
 - JC recognises the disappointment caused by the Secretary of State's response to our request for uplift funding. She wished to reassure f40 that the DfE is continuing work in earnest on proposals for a national funding formula, including looking at its nature, composition and the transitional arrangements that are needed to reduce turbulence to budgets. Also considering with Ministers different timescales for its introduction.
 - The Government has not yet launched a formal consultation on the national funding formula, but JC would welcome a discussion with f40 to understand its particular circumstances in more detail and to be able to feed its views into the development of the formula itself.

4. Issues of concern

There was a general discussion about funding issues that are of increasing concern to members.

- TN said that in North Lincolnshire the allocation formula was revised and implemented in 2011 so it was relatively easier to apply it this year. The changes to the formula are exacerbating the problems for some schools/pupils. It is partly to do with Pupil Premium and SEN. Work out a way forward has proved to be extremely difficult. He suggested that it was important to maintain transparency of funding between schools at different levels.
- GH said that in Gloucestershire schools have just completed a round of consultation which has pin-pointed SEN as a key issue, but there are many more issues as well. Basic Allocation is an issue across all school levels. Calculations show a negative impact on needs distribution. The larger primary and smaller secondary schools are likely to be the losers from the change process. But there will be winners, as there always is. The county probably has too many schools and school places.
- JJ referred to what he described as “major turbulence” in Nottinghamshire schools and that there is likely to be considerable unhappiness with the changes going through.
- BH highlighted the disparity between those getting Pupil Premium and high-level funding and those that are not. There are real problems in this area.
- Jane P suggested that earlier comments also related to Worcestershire. She added that her LA’s problems were added to by fact they have a three-tier system and several small schools. The size of some of the adjustments between schools has shocked her. And things are made worse by the speed with which the changes have to be made.
- RW suggested that many schools have not yet woken up to the implications of the current changes in funding they are facing.
- CC said that both Cheshire councils would agree with much of what has been said today, but he suggested that they are probably a bit more relaxed about the changes at present. There’s a consultation underway, it is clear there will be winners and losers and that the viability of small schools will be called in to question, requiring more to consider federation in the future.
- DH said that corporately Cambridgeshire is moving to base budgeting, including Children’s Services. Currently looking for evidence to justify every element of budgeting and, as it is early days yet, it is unclear how this will develop.
- GA confirmed that the NGA is picking up on many of the issues raised at the meeting today.
- SE said that all of the issues raised today are featuring in his consultancy discussions across the country and he said it will be interesting to see how it all pans out.
- IO said Leicestershire also has a three-level system and the situation there is very complex. He is worried about the “unintended consequences of all the changes going through at present (he referred to the Beccles Free School issue as an example). Catchment areas are in dispute over the position of free schools, studio schools, and academies. The Transport Department tried to introduce 'nearest school' distances but politicians threw the idea out. It remains an unresolved issue. SEN is a serious worry. All special schools are currently classed as ‘outstanding’, with parents from outside the area and even abroad moving to the county to try to get their child(ren) into one! If mainstream schools can’t provide the level of SEN service required, funding is being held back for high-level use. IO also said he is concerned about the impact of the Troubled Family agenda. The setting up of Family Intervention teams may assist, but it is unclear how this will work at present. He reported that officers in Leicestershire have suggested unless there is some give elsewhere in finances, the county can only meet MGF for one more year.
- On a separate matter, IO said that he was aware that one academy is wanting to sell off part of its playing fields, and looking to the county to cover the associated costs of the disposal, despite the fact the county says the land is not the academy’s to sell!
- In conclusion, IO said that all LAs are having a very hard time at the moment, but that f40 poorly funded LAs are particularly hard hit. All the changes are having to be undertaken very quickly and that they are politically charged. **AGREED** that it would be useful to gather more information on the ‘unintended consequences’ that member LAs are experiencing. DA to invite members to submit issues to the group, which will either be passed to the LGA (which it is thought might also be interested in collecting examples) or direct to the Funding Policy Unit at the DfE.

5. Fair Funding Campaign Activity

In the discussion about future strategy the following comments were made:

- IO suggested that it is important to keep information channels open with all political parties, watch out for new personalities that arrive on the education scene and be prepared for any political ‘unintended consequences’. He suggested that contact should be made with Stephen Twigg MP, education spokesman for the Labour Party, as well as maintaining links with the Coalition parties. EF suggested that former f40 chairman, David Kidney, may be prepared to assist in establishing contact with Opposition leaders. GH suggested that former Minister, Jim Knight (now Lord Knight) might be a useful contact.
- CC said it is important to know exactly what the strategy is intended to achieve and thought it important to a) encourage the current administration and b) to encourage future potential administrations. We have won the fair funding argument, now it is about delivering a system that is fit for purpose. It is clear there will be no new money to assist the most poorly funded authorities, so it is about redistribution in the future. This is real political ‘hot potato’ for the government, but they have publicly stated that it is their aim to establish a new national system.
- SE said that it was his view that the government had rejected the uplift proposals as it would simply be further tinkering with a system that is bust. Gesture funding would further destabilise the system. IO added that in his opinion an uplift of the type requested may have been a very politically astute action to take, but the opportunity has now passed.
- CC said that one way forward would be to look at new comparisons between LAs funding as allocated with fewer factors and parameters. It should be easier to make comparisons on a range of issues, including assessing where the real ‘over’ and ‘under’ funding occurs. GH suggested that this would simply confirm what we already know: that the system is unfair.
- IO said that f40 has agreed to work with the government on achieving the right solution. The meeting with the Funding Policy Unit is the next step in that process.
- RW agreed that the group needs to work on its cross-party credentials. He also said that it could make sense to argue about the value of Pupil Premium in its current form: it hasn’t achieved what was intended and, in many areas, has exacerbated the problems.
- IO suggested that as long as academy funding is tied to LA funding, the financial future of academies and LAs is closely tied. Therefore f40 should begin to embrace academies as potential members of the group.
- Everyone **AGREED** that it is important to continue the campaign to ensure that the promise of a new allocation system delivers a system that is ‘fair and equitable’.

DA had circulated an updated Campaign Strategy and referred to key elements, including:

- **F40 Briefing Paper** – The Briefing Paper has proven to be an extremely useful tool in the campaign. The original version, prepared in December 2011, was updated in March 2012. DA and SE suggested that a complete re-write is necessary to reflect the current situation. It was **AGREED** that a much shorter Briefing Paper will be drafted. SE to draft and DA to circulate to Executive Members for comments. Once approved, DA to distribute to all contacts and to request that Lead Members/Directors consider using the Briefing Paper to encourage on-going campaigning for a fair funding system within their areas.
- **Historical Timeline** – The timeline showing the key events in f40’s campaign history has been extensively used in the campaign. DA circulated an updated version. This can be used in association with the Briefing Paper.
- **Timeline for Change** – it was **AGREED** that it would be useful to have a second timeline which flagged up what needs to be done and by when during the period of review leading to the new national funding formula. DA to examine how this might be developed.
- **Westminster Hall Debate** on fair funding took place on Tuesday 24 April. The debate, secured by Richard Graham, MP for Gloucester, was a great success in raising the issues within government and among other MPs.
- **Meeting with Funding Policy Unit.** Following the correspondence with the Deputy Director of the Funding Policy Unit (see above – Section 3) it was **AGREED** that DA should seek a date late September or early October for a meeting between an f40 delegation and the Unit in London.

- **Further meetings with Ministers.** It was **AGREED** that in view of the fact we will be meeting the Funding Policy Unit in the relatively near future, it would not be appropriate to seek further meetings with Ministers at this stage.
- **Ministerial Statements** – It was **AGREED** that it would be extremely useful to have a record of all Ministerial statements acknowledging that f40's case and the fact that the current allocation arrangements are unfair and inequitable. RW agreed to research these statements via Hansard.
- **Political Connections** – It was **AGREED** that it would be timely for f40 to investigate the level of support it can achieve from the main Opposition Party (Labour), particularly as we are halfway between elections and the new national funding will not be in place before the next election in 2015. As a first step, David Kidney has agreed to facilitate contact with Opposition Education spokesman Stephen Twigg. F40 will request a meeting as soon as possible.
- **Autumn National Conference** – it was **AGREED** that DA should contact the LGA (Local Government House) to seek a date in November when a one-day conference can be staged. The last conference was held on a Tuesday, which seemed to suit most participants. Likely timing 11am to 2pm. Potential speakers to include Education spokespeople for main three political parties (what will they be putting in their next election manifesto about a new funding formula?), NGA, EFA, Academies Association and LGA (Chair of Children & Young Person's Board).
- **Education Forum Keynote Seminar: The next steps for school funding and admissions** – f40 Executive Member – Robin Walker MP - and close associate Emma Knights, Chief Executive, National Governors' Association, have roles in this conference in London on 12 September 2012. RW certainly hopes to be able to promote f40's position during his contribution as chair of one of the Sessions.
- **Local Authority activity** – some member LAs have been much more active than others and it is felt that more grassroots activity to ensure local support among schools, governors and schools forums would be desirable. IO **AGREED** to write to the Schools Forum and Headteachers in Leicestershire to get them to think about the fair funding issue and what they can do to support f40. DA to use IO's letter and the new Briefing Paper as an encouragement to Lead Members and Chairs of Schools Forum in all other member LAs to be more active in support of the campaign within their areas.
- **Parental & Schools Campaign** – it was **AGREED** that this proposal should be re-examined in early 2014 with a view to a campaign later that year to coincide with political conferences and preparation of 2015 election manifestos.
- **Petitions** – there was doubts expressed about the value of petitions at this stage in f40's campaign, so this idea is on hold.
- **NGA Newsletter** – the NGA has **AGREED** to continue to carry supportive articles about fair funding in its publication.
- **Website** – to be kept up to date with information and campaign activities.
- **News Releases** – have proven to be important as a means of getting out messages about the fair funding issues, particularly in the regions. Further releases will be issued at appropriate times.
- **New Members** – it was agreed that the campaign would be strengthened if more poorly funded LAs were to join the group. There's strength in numbers! **AGREED** that DA should undertake further communication with those LAs who are near the bottom of the funding league table to encourage them to join. IO also to talk to Lead Members in potential member LAs. Also **AGREED** that DA should make contact with Academies Association as a first step in a process of bringing academies into the f40 fold.
- **Academies** – It was **AGREED** that an approach will be made to the body representing academies to consider how best to deal with the idea of it, or individual academy schools, joining the f40 campaign.

6. f40 Website

There was nothing to report.

7. Membership and Financial Update

DA confirmed that invoices for £1,000 subscription per LA were issued in April 2012 to the 32 LAs that were subscribing members in the previous year. As of 27 July, 23 LAs had paid and 9 had not,

despite a reminder having been issued. It was **AGREED** that DA should write again to encourage early payment.

None of the dozen poorly funded LAs which should be in f40 had responded to an invitation to take up membership. DA said that he had not heard further from Lincolnshire, though he understood they might join this year. IO said he would follow up on this one. DA reported that an Assistant Headteacher from Cornwall had been in touch to find out why his LA is not in membership. It is possible that his enquiries might stir the county council into joining.

DA reported on the Group's finances.

8. AOB

TN requested a separate discussion about SEN at some point in the future.

JP said that Helen Donovan had asked him to voice support for a 'parents/school' campaign at some point in the future and suggested that she would be content at the idea such a campaign might be on the cards for 2014.

9. Next Meeting

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held at 11am on Saturday, 13 October 2012.