



## **Business Update – 16 October 2013**

Since the last Executive Committee meeting on 28 September, a number of actions have been followed through and here is an update.

### **Meeting with Nic Dakin MP, Monday 14 October 2013**

At the last meeting Nic Dakin was appointed a Vice Chair of f40. He agreed to meet Ivan Ould, Margaret Judd, Stewart King and Doug Allan whilst we were in London on Monday, 14 October. This was in part a first chance for him to meet f40 representatives, but also an opportunity for us to discuss our proposals for a new national school funding formula.

- With regard to f40's Paper, Mr Dakin said he would like to see some modelling demonstrating how the proposals might work, particularly including his own constituency of Scunthorpe County. We indicated that this would be possible in due course.
- Of particular concern to Mr Dakin is the political conundrum of 'winners and losers' in any new formula, alongside the importance of an appropriate period of transition. We indicated that the government is expected to launch a school funding consultation in December and that f40 hopes that by then the Labour Party will have a formal stance on a new school funding formula.
- The departure of Stephen Twigg as Shadow Secretary of State meant that our attempts to set up a further meeting with him had to be abandoned. Nic agreed to support a move to get an early meeting with Tristram Hunt, the new Shadow Secretary.

### **Meeting with the Rt. Hon. Oliver Letwin MP, Monday 14 October 2013**

This meeting was facilitated by f40's Vice Chair, Robin Walker MP. Mr Letwin is involved in Conservative policy development and party manifesto preparation. We had a very constructive discussion about the future of school funding from an f40 perspective, a new national funding formula, the political implications of change and possible timing for implementation of a new system.

- Mr Letwin reiterated the government's view that there is no doubt about the problem, that they have recognised the need for change, but also emphasised that there could be no new money, meaning that a redistribution was the only way forward – and that has political difficulties that need to be overcome. He indicated that the government was working up proposals and he acknowledged that f40 is working with the DfE to support the development of a new formula. He hoped that something would be in place for 2015-16 which would be based on sound principles and which the next administration, no matter what their politics, would undo. In other words, the new national formula must be one that people would find it hard to object to.
- There was some discussion about how f40 could help promote the argument for a new national funding formula among interested parties, including key players within the LGA, LAs in middle of the funding league table positions and other political parties.
- In response to Mr Letwin's question about funding for deprivation needing to be specific, Robin Walker said that f40 has reluctantly accepted the policy of pupil premium, but reiterated the very serious concern of double funding for deprivation, which is exacerbating funding inequalities.

## **Meeting with Schools Minister, David Laws**

This meeting was due to take place on 14 October, but has been postponed to Tuesday 29 October. The Minister has f40's paper "Towards a National Funding Formula for Schools".

## **Finance Managers Research Team**

The team is endeavouring to get a further meeting with Education Funding Director, Susan Aclund-Hood, and colleagues. We are anticipating a meeting in the near future.

The team has undertaken some research among f40 member LAs to establish the approach being taken to sparsity in 2014-15. The research is nearing completion and will be discussed at the next FMRT meeting. Details will be circulated to f40's Executive Committee members in due course.

## **Briefing for MPs**

For several reasons, we have had to reconsider the timing of an MPs briefing in Westminster. It is now looking as though this may be arranged in late January or early February, which fits well with the anticipated government consultation.

## **Backbench MPs letters to the Secretary of State**

F40 Vice Chair, Robin Walker MP has prepared a letter to Michael Gove emphasising the importance of a new national funding formula and the need to introduce it as quickly as possible. The letter has attracted the signatures of around 60 conservative MPs and will be sent to the Secretary of State this week (w/c 14 October).

Sir Nick Harvey MP has agreed to prepare a similar letter which could be signed by Lib-Dem MPs.

## **F40 Membership**

It is looking increasingly likely that Northumberland will take up membership. F40's Secretary is awaiting confirmation.

Approaches have also been made to North Somerset Council and it is hoped that it might also join in due course.

Doug Allan  
Secretary to f40  
16 October 2013