



**f40 Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Saturday, 2 March 2013 at Amerton Farm, Staffordshire**

**1. Attendance and apologies**

Present: Ivan Ould, Leics (Chair); Doug Allan, (Secretary; Margaret Judd, Dorset; Joe Jefferies, NASUWT, Notts; Tony Norton, N Lincs; Chris Chapman, Cheshire; Bernadette Hunter, Staffs/NAHT; Francis Loftus, North Yorks; Jon Pearsall, Worcs

Apologies: Gillian Hayward, Gloucs ; Robin Walker MP, Worcester; Eunice Finney, Staffs; Ian Wilkie, Staffs; Sam Ellis (Financial Consultant); Geoff Venn, Bedford; Christine Atkinson, ERYC; Helen Donovan, Worcs; Pauline Hibbert, Stockport; Chris Levy; Gillian Allcroft, NGA;. David Harty, Cambs  
Edwina Grant, Central Beds; Jane Potter, Worcs; John Lewis, Devon.

**2. Minutes of the meeting held 20 October 2012**

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

**3. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair**

Current Chair, Cllr Ivan Ould, was nominated for Chair by Chris Chapman and seconded by Tony Norton. The appointment was unanimously **APPROVED**. In accepting the position, IO reported that he is up for re-election in May and whilst he was hopeful of success, his continuing involvement as Chair will be dependent on his party continuing in administration.

The Chair reported that because of personal circumstances, Gillian Hayward, who has been Vice Chair for several years, is unable to stand again this year, though she hopes to stand again in the future. DA reported that Executive Committee member Robin Walker MP had sent him a message offering to take the position of Vice Chair if no other member put him/herself forward. The appointment of RW as Vice Chair was unanimously **APPROVED**.

As RW had indicated that due to his parliamentary and constituency duties he would not always be able to attend f40 meetings, DA suggested that a second Vice Chair could be elected to fill any gaps. Francis Loftus put his name forward for this role and his appointment was **APPROVED**.

DA reminded members of the traditional practice of maintaining political balance on the Executive Committee. With this in mind it was **AGREED** that DA should make enquiries to see if a Labour MP from an f40 member LA might be prepared to join f40's Executive Committee. (Please note that DA cleared this approach with RW after the committee meeting). TN also **AGREED** to approach his local MP in North Lincs.

**4. Business Report (covering period since last Executive Meeting in October 2012)**

4.1 Westminster Hall Debate on School Funding – 23 October 2012 - This debate was requested by Worcestershire MP Harriett Baldwin and supported by a range of backbench MPs from low funded authorities.

4.2 Meeting held with Rt. Hon. David Laws MP, Minister of State for Schools – 19 November 2012 – Meeting notes previously circulated. At Minister's request f40 collected its members' views on the impacts they are facing as a result of current changes to school funding. A submission "Funding

Impacts by Strands” was made to the Minister on 18 December 2012 and a response was received on Friday, 11 January. This has been circulated.

4.3 Meeting with Sir Nick Harvey (Lib-Dem MP for North Devon) – 19 November 2012 – This meeting was requested by Sir Nick Harvey who has indicated his willingness to coordinate backbench support for fair funding among Lib-Dem MPs.

4.4 Invitation issued to poorly funded LAs who ought to be in membership of f40 – 23 November 2012 –

An invitation was issued to the Leaders of all the LAs which are in the bottom forty of the funding league table, but not so far in membership of f40, to join the group. Responses are still awaited.

4.5 All-Parliamentary Group on Education Governance – 10 December 2012 – f40 Chair Ivan Ould was principal speaker at this important event. Robin Walker MP chaired the key session.

4.6 Meeting held with the National Audit Office – 11 December 2012 – An f40 delegation attended a meeting with officers at the NAO who are undertaking a study of the Department for Education’s management of cost reduction. This provided f40 with an excellent opportunity to repeat our basic arguments about how unfair the arrangements are for school funding. Notes of the meeting have been circulated. It is possible that further meetings with f40 may be requested by the NAO.

4.7 Meeting with Stephen Twigg MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education – 11 December 2012

The proposal to seek a meeting with the Shadow Secretary was taken at the last Executive meeting and is part of our forward planning in lieu of the election scheduled for 2015. Notes of the meeting have been circulated. It is anticipated that the relationship with Mr Twigg and the Labour Party will be developed over time.

4.8 Meetings of Finance Managers’ Research Team – This new team has been established to undertake some research work that is intended to inform f40’s arguments for a fair system as a new national funding formula is developed. It is looking at a range of propositions and modelling.

4.9 DfE School Funding Reforms 2013-14 – In late December 2012 f40 was informed by the DfE that eleven local authorities, including four f40 member LAs (North Yorkshire, Somerset, Staffordshire and Worcestershire) have been selected to work with the DfE on development of school funding reforms for 2013-14.

4.10 Meeting with the Local Government Association – 22 January 2013 – An f40 delegation met with members and officers of the LGA at Local Government House. The minutes of the meeting have been circulated. A further meeting is planned for the near future.

4.11 Backbench Conservative MPs meeting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer – 23 January 2013

This meeting was a follow up to a letter that was signed by sixty backbenchers and was an opportunity for Executive Committee member, Robin Walker MP (Worcester), to put the case for doing something before 2015 to deliver fairer funding between rather than just within authorities.

4.12 Schools Minister’s request for information on the impact of funding changes on schools –

A request for information about how schools in f40 areas are struggling with budgets as a consequence of being in a relatively lower funded authority was sent to Directors of all f40 authorities on 14 January 2013. On 31 January a reminder email was sent with an extended deadline for responses. A report featuring the responses received was forwarded to the Schools Minister in time for the meeting on 19 February.

4.13 Academy Survey – F40’s survey to assess the working relationship between academies and their former maintaining LA was launched on Wednesday 6 February. Interim results were provided to the Schools Minister on 19 February. Final details will be circulated in due course.

4.14 Meeting with David Laws MP, Minister of State for Schools – 19 February 2013 – A second meeting with the Schools Minister was held as a follow up to the first held 19 November 2012. Notes of the meeting have been circulated.

4.15 Meeting with the DfE’s Funding Policy Unit – 19 February 2013 – This was the second meeting with Jane Cunliffe and her team. The main thrust of the discussion related to the Review of School Funding Arrangements 2013-14. Notes have been circulated.

## **5. Discussion about above activities and on-going business**

5.1 Schools Minister – the second meeting had been polite and friendly, but the view is that f40 may have to be more focussed in presenting its position. We need to concentrate on the proposed new formula and ensure we influence its development and implementation. We have made our point about the problems with Pupil Premium, our concerns about the delay in introducing a fairer system and made the case for an interim solution. It is now obvious that the government will not give way on these matters so there is no point in repeating them.

In presenting our case we must emphasise that our argument is aimed at a fairer deal for children, whether in maintained schools or academies. We need to demonstrate what we would like the new formula to look like. Whilst the DfE deals with LACSEG, it does not have a direct interest in other LA funding arrangements, so arguments about the impacts of general cuts need to be made elsewhere.

CC suggested that there had been a mis-match in some of the group’s activities, resulting in our concentrating on certain issues in a negative way. We need to adopt a more positive stance so that we can really influence developments and be taken seriously. BH agreed that f40 needs to put forward ideas to the government for consideration.

5.2 Funding Review Unit – there was a view that the meeting on 19 February had not been as productive as it could/should have been. There were administrative reasons for this, but again the point was made that we need to push the agenda and demonstrate ways forward, rather than complain about decisions taken. Despite this, BH identified what she called the “the disconnect” between what the DfE is doing and what is actually happening in schools – the arguments may make government Ministers and officials uncomfortable, but they need to hear it as it is. JP wondered if it is just budgets that creates the “disconnect” and there was general agreement that that is the case.

Again CC said it is important that f40 puts forward sensible ideas and suggestions...and explain the impacts of government ideas and decisions. If we can suggest good and practical ways forward the government will listen...and if we get a better system, we will assist the lowest funded.

MJ said that there is tremendous pressure on the government to find a way forward that is fair to everyone – but it will be politically difficult as there will be a new set of winners and losers...and considerable lobbying from those who may lose anything at all. She suggested that it would be 2015-16 before any change would come about (and even this will depend on the outcome of the 2015 election).

IO said this is exactly why f40 needs to embrace those MPs who fought their last campaign on a ticket of school funding improvement. They have seen nothing and have been failed by the government. They will be unhappy about facing the electorate again.

F40 has been promised a further meeting at the close of the Review of School Funding Arrangements 2013-14. DA to liaise with the FPU to secure a meeting at the right point (i.e. before final decisions and recommendations are made).

5.3 Finance Manager's Research Team – There was some discussion about how this team (and a wider range of Finance managers now listed on a new f40 database) might help develop an approach to creating a fairer allocation system. DA reported that the team, which is currently quite limited in membership) has developed a draft paper, which needs to be circulated and discussed by a wider audience within f40. MJ and Stewart King (Gloucs) will have a version of their paper ready at the end of this week (8 March) which DA will circulate to f40 Executive Members and to all listed Finance Managers. He will request comments and additional ideas for improvement of the approach being presented. **AGREED.**

It was also **AGREED** that if it is seen to be beneficial, the Finance Managers Research Team could organise a day seminar at which invited Finance Managers could work together to test the proposals for a new system...and also add new, even radical, ideas to the paper. If this goes ahead, f40 will pay all the expenses associated with the seminar, including costs for travel/accommodation etc. One suggestion was to hold such a seminar as an added day to the School Funding Conference, which many Finance managers already attend. This would depend on timings.

#### 5.4 Review of School Funding arrangements 2013-14

DA reminded all members that the review is underway and that it closes on 26 March 2013. He explained that he had asked Sam Ellis to draft f40's response and, to do this having reviewed as many f40 member LA responses as possible in order to ensure f40's own response emphasises the key issues identified. DA has requested copies of responses from member LAs by Friday, 15 March. F40's response will also provide answers to a range of questions that the DfE hasn't asked, but which are crucial for the lowest funded LAs.

CC suggested it might be appropriate to recommend we stick with MFG with sensible and agreed principles attached. TN said that MFG is packed with anomalies – the quantum must be right!

IO said he was trying to organise a meeting with all Leicestershire MPs to discuss school funding in general. The Review would be part of the agenda. He hoped similar meetings would be organised in all other f40 LAs.

#### 5.5 Other school funding matters

TN referred to SEN funding and said in the future SEN will be combined in a new formula, rather than given as funding for a statement which spent directly on individual SEN pupils. He added that Pupil Premium continues to throw up anomalies – he was recently asked by a parent to fund their child's music classes from the fund. The Pupil premium is not a specific allocation for a specific child.

TN expressed concern that the new funding arrangements would be based on historical factors, despite promises from Ministers that that wouldn't be the case. He asked for ideas about the factors that are leading to variations.

Ever-FSM has given additional funding to secondary schools, which is unfair as primary schools also have disadvantaged pupils and have smaller budgets than secondary schools.

Finally, TN spoke about sparsity and that, in his opinion, it can be a double-edged sword: how can the goal of trying to direct more funding to urban areas be reconciled with the failure to recognise the reality of rural deprivation. Is the department trying to replicate existing funding arrangements by identifying factors that will continue to fund schools in the future at similar levels to current funding levels. TN referred to SEN funding and said in the future SEN will be combined in a new formula, rather than spent directly on SEN pupils. He added that Pupil Premium continues to throw up anomalies – he was recently asked by a parent to fund their child’s music classes from the fund.

## **6. Future Actions**

6.1 It was seen as important that f40 should continue to work with the government on the development and implementation of the new funding formula. It would be desirable to have more meetings with both Ministers and officials as the agenda moves forward.

**AGREED** that DA will continue to liaise with the office of the Schools Minister and FPU.

6.2 It is also important that f40 should develop links with the Labour party. This should involve further meetings with the Shadow Secretary of State. It will also include improved links with labour MPs in member LA areas and an attempt to get a Labour MP onto f40’s Executive Committee.

**AGREED** that DA will manage these matters.

6.3 It was suggested that DA should contact the academies that have completed f40’s recent Survey about their relationship with their LA to see if any headteacher/principal would be interested in joining f40’s Executive Committee.

**AGREED**

6.4 The first batch of school Case Studies describing the impact funding changes are having on schools was well received by the Schools Minister and he indicated that he would welcome more examples. **AGREED** that DA will encourage LAs to contact their schools to request Case Studies.

6.5 The NAHT is about to conduct some survey work into school funding issues. BH said that the results would be made available to f40.

**AGREED**

6.6 Several members suggested that it was time for f40 to undertake a further parental campaign, even though it is recognised that creating a message that is easily understood may be difficult. Whilst there was no disagreement with the principle, the idea will be put on hold for the time being and will be raised again at the next meeting.

**AGREED**

6.7 The idea of having ‘pop up’ banners presenting key f40 messages on display at various meetings of educationalists held across the country, particularly the regular gatherings of Governors, was raised by JP. Also an A4 information sheet could be made available.

**AGREED** that DA will consult with NGA representatives to determine whether this idea would be feasible.

6.8 MJ said that she had written an article about fair funding for the Governor’s newsletter published in Dorset. She suggested that similar articles should be prepared in all f40 areas.

**AGREED** that MJ should provide a copy of her article to DA who will circulate it to all members and encourage them to do something similar. DA to also seek support for similar initiatives from the NGA.

6.9 There was some discussion about the need to encourage education/financial journalists to write more articles about the issues surrounding fair funding. The Education Guardian and TES were seen as particularly important outlets.

**AGREED** that DA should consider issues that might interest reporters.

6.10 There was some discussion about f40 organising a National Conference on fair funding, but it was **AGREED** that the idea should be put on hold until the situation with a new national funding formula is clearer.

## **7. Membership and Finances**

DA reported that 32 local authorities were in membership of f40 throughout 2012-13. Attempts had been made to encourage the take up of membership by other poorly funded authorities, but approaches so far had not been successful.

The campaigns balances at present are adequate to sustain the campaign.

DA asked for a decision on the level of membership fee for 2013-14. After some discussion about the on-going financial difficulty being faced by local authorities, it was **AGREED** that once again a reduced annual subscription of £1,000 will be charged. When invoicing members, DA will advise all member authorities that the group has maintained a reduced level of fees for the third year in a row to reflect the financial position of its members, but to warn that a return to the normal level of fees may be required in 2014-15.

## **8. Any Other Business**

JJ said that Notts CC had put £2m into its schools budget to prevent any school losing out in 2013-14 other than through a drop in pupil numbers but this would be a one-off payment.

IO indicated that in Leicestershire he had been successful in arguing for an increase in the budget for Social Care – an amazing outcome in these very difficult times!

## **9. Date of Next Meeting(s)**

**AGREED** that DA should endeavour to set the dates for a whole year so that members of the Executive Committee can schedule dates in their diaries, giving them a better chance to plan ahead and avoid agreeing other appointments that clash.

Suggested dates are:

Saturday, 1 June 2013

Saturday, 28 September

Saturday 14 December

Saturday 1 March 2014.