



f40 Executive Committee Meeting **Saturday, 21 April 2012 at Amerton Farm, Staffordshire**

1. Attendance and apologies

Present: Ivan Ould, Leics (Chair); Doug Allan, (Secretary); Sam Ellis (Financial Consultant); Francis Loftus, North Yorks; Margaret Judd, Dorset; Geoff Venn, Bedford; Joe Jefferies, NASUWT, Notts; Tony Norton, N Lincs; Chris Chapman, Cheshire; David Harty, Cambs; Gillian Allcroft, NGA; Christine Atkinson, ERYC; Helen Donovan, Worcs; Bernadette Hunter, Staffs/NAHT

Apologies: Gillian Hayward, Gloucs (Vice Chair); Robin Walker MP, Worcester; Chris Harrison NAHT; Eunice Finney, Staffs; Pauline Hibbert, Stockport; Clive Chorley, PGR, Worcs; Chris Levy; Edwina Grant, Central Beds; Jon Pearsall, Worcs; Tony Brown, Central Beds; Jane Potter, Worcs.

DA reported that Cllr Tony Brown, Central Beds has taken a different Cabinet post within the council and will therefore no longer attend f40 meetings. The group thanked him for his contribution and support.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 3 March 2012 were **Approved** as an accurate record of the proceedings.

3. School Funding Review

3.1 Government announcement 26 March 2012 – DA reminded members about the content of the government's announcement relating to the three month consultation that ended last October. Essentially, the government has acknowledged the unfairness and inequity of the existing allocation arrangement and f40's case for change, but has indicated that there will be no solution until post the 2015 election. A news release expressing f40's extreme disappointment was issued on the 26 March and had been used extensively by the media.

3.2 Meeting with the Secretary of State – At the last meeting (3 March) DA had been instructed to try and set up a meeting with the SoS or a Minister. On the same day that our request was posted the SoS's office emailed DA to invite a delegation to meet him on 28 March at the DfE. The meeting was attended by the SoS and Dugald Sandeman for the government and by IO, GH, TN, MJ and DA for f40. The SoS acknowledged f40's bitter disappointment that there will be delay in implementing change. The opportunity was taken to discuss a wide range of issues. IO raised the idea of an immediate financial 'gesture' from the government to help the worst funded LAs and SoS, whilst making no promises, agreed to consider any proposal submitted. Notes of the meeting have been circulated and are available on the website – www.f40.org.uk. DA mentioned that he had issued a news release after the meeting. Again this had been taken up by regional and national media.

3.3 Financial package proposed to SoS – The 'gesture' financial proposal was urgently pulled together by several members of the Executive Committee (the assistance of Stewart King at Gloucestershire CC was acknowledged). The modelling was sent to the SoS on 10 April 2012. Four options were shown:

- Option 1 - a flat rate increase of £35.68 per pupil in the lowest forty local authority areas, which equates to an overall cost of £91.3m or 0.25% of the current national DSG.
- Option 2 suggests raising all the lowest funded LAs to equal Lincolnshire's GUF level at a total cost of £298m: Lincolnshire being the 41st ranked local authority.
- Option 3 - based on option 2 but with the increase scaled down to one third, giving an overall cost of £99m.

- Option 4 - an increase of 0.25% per GUF for the lowest 47 local authorities, which has a cost of £37m. (The number 47 is chosen here to ensure that no local authority changes rank order as a result of the uplift.)

Though f40 would like to see the worst-funded local authorities receive increases in funding that takes them nearer to the national average, we recognise that such a major re-balancing will have to await the introduction of a new system, post-2015. With this in mind, we accept that option 2 would be too costly in the current climate. Our preference, therefore, is for Option 3 to be implemented in 2012-13, with a similar increase in 2013-14 and 2014-15. We believe that increases at these levels will help bridge the indefensible gap between the best and poorest funded local authority areas and will be a gesture that clearly demonstrates that the government truly recognises the unfairness inherent in the existing allocation arrangement.

At the time of this meeting (21 April) there had been no response from the SoS to our proposal. DA indicated that the calculations have been shared with all members of f40 and sent to all Members of Parliament representing f40 constituencies. They are also available on f40's website.

He reported that so far the figures had been given to several journalists who had sought details of the proposal, but not distributed widely with a news release. There was some debate about whether a news release should be sent out and it was **Approved** that DA should urgently prepare a news release for issue on Monday 23 April – the day before a fair funding debate takes place in Westminster Hall at the Houses of Parliament. The news release will also be sent to f40 MPs as information they may use in the debate.

3.4 School Funding Reform: Next steps towards a fairer system – As part of the government announcement on 26 March, the SoS launched a further consultation aimed at simplifying the local government funding arrangements in advance of moving to a new national funding formula during the next spending period. This consultation ends on 21 May 2012. SE and MJ presented a first draft response to the consultation for the Committee to consider. There was a page by page discussion, leading to a range of suggestions for text adjustments and additional points to be added.

The Committee also went through the Frequently Asked Questions available on the DfE's consultation website.

It was **Agreed** that:

- SE and MJ will adjust the draft response to take account of today's discussion.
- SE and MJ will monitor the developing list of FAQs to ensure that f40's draft response is in keeping with any new information posted.
- DA will circulate a copy of the revised draft response to member authorities (Directors) for comment.
- DA will submit the final response to meet the deadline of 21 May 2012.

3.5 Fair Funding Campaign Activity

- **F40 Briefing Paper** – The Briefing paper has been an extremely useful tool in the campaign. The original version, prepared in December 2011, was updated in March 2012. DA suggested that a complete re-write may be necessary to reflect the current situation. It was **Agreed** that a further update (or re-write, if necessary) should be undertaken after 21 May by the sub-group.
- **Timeline** – At a previous meeting, Executive Committee members had suggested that a timeline showing the key events in f40's campaign history would be a useful tool to support campaign activities. DA produced the first edition, which was circulated in March 2012 and it has been used extensively. Following recent government announcements and f40's submission of calculations for an 'uplift' in funding for the worst funded LAs, DA has further extended the timeline.
- **Future Strategy: the next steps for f40** – DA said he thought it was useful to have a single document that embraces the main activities – recent past and future potential. He circulated an updated version of the paper. Key points:
 - ✓ Briefing Paper – to be updated in due course (see above)
 - ✓ Financial package – Awaiting response from SoS

- ✓ MPs meetings with Ministers – several groups of MPs from f40 areas have had meetings with SoS and Ministers. F40 will encourage more meetings in the future.
- ✓ Westminster Hall debate on fair funding – this takes place at 9.30am on Tuesday 24 April. The debate has been secured by Richard Graham, MP for Gloucester. Robin Walker MP is endeavouring to contribute to the debate. He is also rallying his MP colleagues to attend and participate.
- ✓ Case Studies – on hold
- ✓ Timeline – recently extended (see above)
- ✓ National Conference – consideration of dates and venue on hold due to recent developments (government announcement and f40's financial package). To be considered further at next meeting.
- ✓ Local Authority activity – there has been considerable campaign activity in many LAs and it is thought that at least 10 considered Motions to Full Council, and subsequently communicated the outcome to the SoS. Others have held meetings with their MPs and undertaken other supportive actions.
- ✓ Petitions – on hold and subject to wider campaign involving schools and parents.
- ✓ Grassroots campaigning – for discussion at the next meeting – subject to the outcome of our request to the SoS for financial uplift.
- ✓ NGA Newsletter – articles about fair funding will be included.

There are additional, regular activities that support our campaign, including media relations and f40 and LA member websites.

4. Academies and LACSEG

MJ gave a short presentation to explain the current issues relating to academy funding in relation to LACSEG. This stemmed from recent correspondence between f40 members and an attempt by DA to collect information from f40 member LAs to show how significant a problem there is. He reported that only a few LAs had provided any information, making it difficult to provide an overall picture.

IO suggested that the amount of funding going to academies was far too large and that it will create major funding problems for LAs in the future. At the moment, he said, academies are supportive of f40 as their funding is tied to LA arrangements. MJ said there is an issue but she didn't really think it was one for f40 to handle. Better that we stick to our core principles relating to fair funding arrangements. The Committee thanked MJ for her presentation and it was generally **Agreed** to keep monitoring the situation, but not to actively take any further action on academy/LACSEG funding matters at this stage.

6. f40 Website

There was nothing to report.

7. Membership and Financial Update

DA confirmed that invoices for £1,000 have been issued to the 32 LAs that were subscribing members in 2011-12. He also reported that he had contacted a dozen other poorly funded LAs which may consider joining the group. He said that he had not heard further from Lincolnshire, though he understood they may well join this year.

DA reported that the Group's funds were in a healthy state and that the position would be further enhanced as this year's membership fees are received.

9. AOB

No matters were raised.

10. Next Meeting

The date for the next Executive Committee meeting, probably to be held in June, will be determined in due course and in the light of current developments.