



f40 Executive Committee Meeting **Saturday, 8 May 2010 at Amerton Farm, Staffordshire**

1. Attendance and apologies

Present

Ivan Ould, Leics; Doug Allan, Secretariat; Lindsey Wharmby, f40 Consultant; Joe Jefferies, NASUWT; Gillian Hayward, Gloucs; Tony Norton, N Lincs; Helen Donovan, Worcs; Jon Pearsall, Worcs; David Smith, Wigan; Eunice Finney, Staffs; Chris Chapman, Cheshire East; Francis Loftus, N Yorks; Vanessa Eddey, Dorset; David Harty, Cambs and Paul Finlow, Cheshire East.

Apologies

Mick Brookes, NAHT; Geoff Venn, Beds; Peter Doyle, Devon; Mike Sladen, Cambs; Chris Levy, Cllr Pat Garbutt, Wakefield and David Kidney.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2010 were approved as an accurate record of the procedures.

3. All Party Parliamentary Inquiry - 23 February 2010

The conference staged at Church House was considered to have been extremely worthwhile from f40's point of view. There were some excellent inputs from a wide range of experts. Funding consultant, Lindsey Wharmby and Francis Loftus (N.Yorks) were thanked for representing f40 at the Inquiry. F40's notes of the conference, various speaker's contributions and the Commission for Rural Services' final report, are available on the f40 website (www.f40.org.uk).

4. DSG Distribution Consultation

a) LGA

IO (Chairman) referred to forthcoming meeting of LGA that he will be attending. The papers relating to funding refer extensively to f40 propositions.

b) Elections

It was noted that the elections on 6 May had produced a difficult political situation and considerable uncertainty for f40, at least in the short-term. A 'hung' Parliament could create a whole range of new problems for our members. It was noted that former f40 chairman, David Kidney, had lost his seat in Stafford. It was agreed that DA (Secretary) should write to him to thank him for all his support for f40 and to wish him well for the future.

DA reported that he has already started to prepare updated databases of MPs and he will adjust references to Ministers on the website once education responsibilities are determined.

c) Campaign Action Plan 2010

An Action Plan was initially prepared following the last Executive Meeting on 6 February and subsequently updated at various stages since. DA had circulated the latest version and indicated

that all but one of the actions listed had been implemented. It was agreed that it might be best not to try and plan further actions at this point, but rather to concentrate our efforts in submitting the f40 response to the consultation, and encouraging member authorities to submit their own submissions, and where appropriate support f40's approach.

IO referred to meetings he had had with national politicians involved in education policy development during the election campaign. He had been able to promote f40's key objectives and he thought that most politicians were listening. It was also noted that civil servants are also thought to be very receptive to comments and views about possible change. They are prepared to listen to anything sensible put forward.

d) f40's Draft Submission

LW's draft submission had previously been circulated to Executive Members for consideration. This meeting was an opportunity for a detailed discussion.

LW indicated that since preparing the first draft, she had reconsidered certain aspects and wished to strengthen some areas. There was a wide ranging discussion and certain concerns were expressed about the adopted stance on rural sparsity, which might not, as presented, be acceptable to urban member authorities. There were contributions from representatives (VE (Dorset), PF (East Cheshire), Tony Norton (N.Lincs), David Smith (Wigan) and IO (Chair) about the matter and eventually agreed that the text could quite easily be adjusted to reflect a more generic position that would be appropriate for all f40 members – urban and rural. The key for f40 is to seek a fair funding system that allows schools to maintain and raise standards.

It was agreed that 'fair need' must be the cornerstone of f40's approach, in line with our objectives and stated principles for many years. That may require a degree of compromise. It was also recognised that there may be some issues – including sparsity – on which individual member authorities would take a stronger line in their own consultation submission.

GH (Gloucs) mentioned that her authority has completed its submission and that it does contain variations to the content that f40 is using – but that is not unexpected. She was adamant that individual authorities must make points in their own submission that are specific to that authority, and that f40 must endeavour to reach a generic position for all members.

Following the discussion, the Committee went through the draft submission point by point as follows:

Q1 – Add a general introduction and refer to fact that individual authorities will make their own submissions. Express view that authorities should have been able to see what the effect of suggested government changes might mean to them. Also that we need to have openness and transparency at all stages in process.

Q2 – Add point that transitional arrangements should not be overly prescriptive.

Q3 – Beef up focus on basic entitlement. Argue more forcibly for a narrowing of the funding gap. Refer to recent Guardian arguments. Don't have too wide a range of elements.

Q4 – Include points raised during the general discussion – LW noted the points to be included.

Q5 – Start with a positive statement that f40 agrees with the proposal. Refer to research required into link between parent's education and child's position. Refer to fact that gifted and talented are a group that continue to merit support.

Q6 – LW to include points raised during general discussion and broaden conclusion.

Q7 – Clarifications to be introduced at certain points – noted by LW. State that f40 basically agrees with the indicators presented, but thinks that one obvious key group has been missed – ‘white working class boys’.

Q8 – Add that some issues are handled better ‘collectively’.

Q9 and Q10 – OK as presented.

Q11 – Lw to consider changes raised during general debate.

Q12 and Q13 – responses to be merged together.

Q14 – OK as presented.

Q15 – Members referred to a range of answers that individual authorities have suggested, ranging from two to three years. F40 will go for three years – but this will be changed if most member authorities prefer an alternative answer.

AGREED – that Executive members to pass information about the preferred answers from their own authority to LW asap.

Q16 and Q17 – OK as presented.

Q18 – The contingency arrangement needs to be a bit more sensitive – but this point is really one for authorities to highlight in their own submission.

Q19 – OK as presented.

AGREED – that LW should prepare a revised version, which initially should be considered by DS (Wigan) and then circulated by the Secretary to Executive Members for further comment or approval by 5pm Thursday 13 May.

Then the submission will be sent (by the Secretary) to Directors, Lead Members and Chairs of Schools Forum in all f40 member authorities, with a deadline for return of comments. That date was subsequently set as 12 noon on Tuesday 25 May 2010.

AGREED – that the Secretary should communicate with all member authorities to encourage individual responses from them (and/or their Schools Forum), plus messages of support from schools/forum members, governors etc, to f40’s and individual authority submissions.

5. Membership and Finances

The Secretary reported that at the end of the last financial year, the membership of the Group was 32 local authorities. As agreed at the last meeting, DA has issued invoices to these authorities in respect of the annual subscriptions for 2010-11. As of 11 May 2010, eleven authorities had paid their fees (though it is possible payments from others are in the system at Derbyshire CC, which acts as our Treasurer.

A letter has also been despatched to poorly-funded authorities not in membership of f40 to encourage them to consider joining. This has received little response so far.

ACTION - DA will update the Executive at its next meeting on the membership position.

6. f40 Consultancy Support

The Secretary indicated that the Executive needed to give consideration to the ongoing support services commissioned from DTW (secretarial and public relations) and from Lindsey Wharmby (Education Funding). LW indicated that it is her intention to cease working as a consultant in the Autumn of 2010, but that she would be happy to continue until then. She suggested that Sam Ellis, who had previously worked with f40 on the Funding Model, and who is now a consultant with ACSL, might be approached to take over her role in due course.

ACTION – the Committee approved the re-appointment of DTW (using the services of Doug Allan) for secretarial and public relations services for 2010-11, and of LW until her retirement in the Autumn. They also agreed that Francis Loftus be authorised to make an exploratory approach to Sam Ellis about taking on the role of f40's financial consultant from the Autumn.

7. AOB

TN (N.Lincs) asked if it was the Group's intention to hold a conference during 2010. It was pointed out that the political situation and ongoing consultation made it difficult to see too far ahead at present. A decision would be made later in the year.

The Secretary to raise at the next meeting the issue of paying travel expenses to those Executive Committee members unable to claim from their own council or organisation.

IO (Chair) pointed out that he and GH (Vice chair) had agreed to take on the positions on an interim basis following the retirement of David Kidney. He suggested that the ongoing position may need to be ratified by the Executive Committee. The Secretary will add this matter to the agenda of the next meeting.

8. Next Meeting

Unless there is an urgent reason for a meeting, the next Executive Committee meeting will be held at Amerton Farm, Staffs at 11am on Saturday, 4 September 2010.