



**f40 Executive Committee Meeting**  
**Saturday, 8 June 2013 at Amerton Farm, Staffordshire**

**1. Attendance and apologies**

Present: Ivan Ould, Leics (Chair); Robin Walker MP, Worcester ; Doug Allan, (Secretary); Joe Jefferies, NASUWT, Notts; Tony Norton, N Lincs; Chris Chapman, Cheshire; Bernadette Hunter, Staffs/NAHT; Christine Atkinson, ERYC; Gillian Allcroft, NGA; David Harty, Cambs; Pauline & David Hibbert, Stockport

Apologies: Margaret Judd, Dorset; Gillian Hayward, Gloucs ; Eunice Finney, Staffs; Ian Wilkie, Staffs; Sam Ellis (Financial Consultant); Geoff Venn, Bedford ; Helen Donovan, Worcs; Edwina Grant, Central Beds; Francis Loftus, North Yorks; Jon Pearsall, Worcs; John Lewis, Devon; Hannah Woodhouse, Cambs

DA reported that Executive Member, Jane Potter, Worcestershire, had failed to be re-elected to the county council and would no longer be attending meetings. The Committee expressed its appreciation of her contribution to the group's campaign over the years.

**2. Minutes of the meeting held 2 March 2013**

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

**3. Political Balance**

At the previous meeting, DA reminded members of the traditional practice of maintaining political balance on the Executive Committee. It had been agreed TN should approach his local MP, Nic Dakin, who represents Scunthorpe in North Lincs. ND has now responded to say he would be happy to support f40. **AGREED** - DA will contact him to invite him to join the Executive Committee.

**4. Review of School Funding Arrangements**

DA reminded all members that f40 had submitted a response to the review, which closed on 26 March 2013. On 4 June 2013, the DfE published the findings from that review and confirmed the changes that will be made for 2014-15. In summary the outcomes are:

- A new optional sparsity factor for 2014, a move that has strong support from rural authorities as it will enable authorities to target additional funding to small rural schools. Local areas will get a number of flexibilities in how they can use the sparsity factor so that it can best meet local circumstances.
- There will be greater flexibility for LAs to target the right level of lump sum funding to primary, secondary, middle and all-through schools, to recognise that fixed costs often differ between these schools.
- There is continuing commitment to ensuring additional funding so that schools are able to provide additional support for those pupils who are less likely to attain well at the end of the primary or secondary phase. Slight changes are being made to ensure the right pupils are identified for this additional support.
- LAs will be able to provide a small amount of funding to support good and outstanding schools and academies experiencing falling rolls. This will only be allowed where the places at these schools need to be retained for an increase in pupil numbers in the future.
- The above changes will not guarantee that schools will not lose funding in the move towards a national funding formula, but it is suggested they will go a long way to address the valid concerns raised since last year. The government says it will continue to have a minimum funding

guarantee which will mean that, in most cases, schools will not lose more than 1.5% per pupil of their previous year's budget. A minimum funding guarantee will continue in 2015-16 and beyond, although the value will be subject to spending review settlements.

- Finally, the government emphasises that it is committed to addressing the inequalities of the current funding system by implementing a national funding formula in the next spending review period. This is in keeping with the objective of raising the aspirations and attainment of all pupils, and providing extra support to those with the greatest need.

IO indicated that Jane Cunliffe (DfE Funding Policy Unit) had contacted him as the Review findings were being published. She thanked f40 for its support and contribution to the Review...and invited the group to keep in touch. Having looked at the findings report, IO suggested that there is evidence that points raised by f40 at various meetings, including those with Schools Minister, David Laws, appear to have registered, meaning we have had some success. Sparsity is a particular example.

CA suggested that the ERYC was more cautious as the changes are really quite small. There is no extra money on the table. Changes around the size of the lump sum between primary and secondary phases and the introduction of a new sparsity factor will have to be considered very carefully as unless there is any new money her LA will only be redistributing existing resources. That could create a different list of winners and losers.

DH suggested that a close review was required of position re high needs pupils and he also referred to the fact that there was no mention of growth and need funding for new schools - both primary and secondary, which are significant issues for Cambridgeshire.

IO reiterated his own LA's concerns that the Review only dealt with school funding issues and not associated LA funding issues.

## **5. Case Studies demonstrating the struggle schools are having**

DA indicated that a wide range of Case Studies describing the impact funding changes are having on schools had been submitted to the Schools Minister in two batches in March 2013. He indicated that there had been no acknowledgement of the Case Studies, though it is clear that this sort of information from the "coal face" of education is welcomed. TN said that the government should be talking to more schools if they are serious about funding and education improvement. CC suggested some schools could change the way they do things to assist improvement. IO said that the evidence available suggested that standards are not improving under the academies system and that he will be writing to the Secretary of State suggesting that current government policies, side lining LAs, are failing to raise standards. CA referred to an academy in the east Riding which has had outstanding results, but it has had major capital investment, is able to pay higher salaries to teachers and is white middle class. **AGREED** - DA to seek feedback on the Case Studies from the Schools Minister.

## **6. Financial Efficiency in Schools – A DfE Review**

DA indicated that he had lodged an f40 Submission with the DfE by the deadline date, 8 May 2013. The initial submission had been prepared by Sam Ellis. The Executive Committee expressed their thanks to SE for his work on this submission. GA suggested that there will be a government response to the Review week commencing 10 June. IO said that he understands that it is possible that Teaching Assistants may be dropped as a cash saving device. He has always thought having TAs means that teachers can teach, whilst TAs do non-teaching tasks. He believes that dropping TAs would be a false economy as they can save schools money, provide very good value for money and help raise standards in education. Both BH and TN agreed that dropping TAs would be a bad mistake.

## **7. LA Finance Managers Research Team**

DA reminded members of the Executive that 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. Notes of the first meeting of the team, held in London on 24 April, had been circulated, as had the current version of the team's research paper "Towards a national Funding Formula for Schools – the f40 Perspective".

DA presented the above paper section by section and there was considerable debate about how the Research team might develop it. As there were many additions and ideas being suggested for consideration, it was AGREED that all comments should be submitted by email to DA as quickly as possible. He will then ensure that these views are considered at the next Research Managers meeting on 18 June.

Da outlines a possible timeframe for the on-going development and presentation of the Paper. He suggested that:

- The Research Team would meet on 18 June and on one more, yet to be scheduled occasion
- DA will write to the Schools Minister David Laws to flag up the work that f40 is undertaking and to seek a meeting to coincide with the finalisation of the Paper
- DA is already seeking a meeting with Shadow Secretary of State Stephen Twigg to update him on f40's campaign. The developing Paper will form the main agenda item and the aim will be to get the Labour party to adopt the f40 approach in the run up to the next election
- At IO's suggestion, Jane Cunliffe will be invited to the second of the above meetings to see and hear what is being proposed...and to gain an early 'heads up' on f40's proposals
- The final draft Paper will be presented to f40's Executive Committee on Saturday 28 September 2013
- The approved Paper will be presented to MPs (and LA members) at a special briefing in London, probably in early November
- Once the Key Principles in Section 3 are agreed, DA will send them to the Green Party and UKIP to ask them to adopt them in their own policy programmes. DA will offer them a meeting to discuss fair funding.

DA reported on the delegates' travel and accommodation/refreshment costs that f40 has picked up to facilitate the first meeting of the Finance Managers Research Team – this totalled £1,749. It was **AGREED** that this represented good value for money and also that a similar arrangement to cover costs should be in place for future meetings.

## **8. Proposed meetings with Ministers/Opposition/DfE**

8.1 Rt. Hon. David Laws MP, Minister of State for Schools – RW indicated that he had spoken with Schools Minister recently and he had said that f40 was a key player and the group must continue to "make noise" about fair funding and a more acceptable formula arrangement. **AGREED** that DA should write to DL to inform him about f40's current work in relation to a future formula and seek a further meeting – probably in mid-October.

8.2 Stephen Twigg MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education – The proposal to seek a further meeting with the Shadow Secretary was taken at the last Executive meeting and attempts to get a date have not so far been fruitful. F40's relationship with the Labour Party is important at this stage and it is therefore crucial that we commence a real dialogue. As mentioned above, we need to get Labour to sign up to f40's fair funding principles. **AGREED** that DA should continue his efforts to achieve a further meeting at which we can show him the embryonic funding formula Paper. Delegation to be determined, but GA of NGA to be included.

BH said that the NAHT is to meet the Shadow Minister on 25 June. She will refer to f40 in that meeting and it was **AGREED** that f40 should make a point of emailing Stephen Twigg the same day.

8.3 Meeting with the DfE's Funding Policy Unit – f40 has had two meetings with Jane Cunliffe and her team. There was some discussion about when to involve the Unit in discussion about our new funding formula proposals and **AGREED** that an invitation should be issued to JC to attend a meeting of the Finance Managers Research Team – the one after 18 June – but hopefully pre-summer recess. The idea would be to gain feedback on current changes being implemented and discuss f40's approach to new funding formula arrangements. The delegation to be determined, but RW to be included, if available. If not, DA to seek another MP – perhaps a Cambridgeshire representative – to attend.

8.4 RW also suggested that f40 needs to begin a conversation with the Government's policy advisers who pull together the Conservative manifesto. **AGREED** that RW should make contact with Oliver Letwin MP to start this process.

8.5 RW also suggested that f40 should have some involvement in the Party Conference season. **AGREED** that further consideration should be given to this idea.

### **9. Costs Associated with School Transport**

IO had asked for this item to be on the agenda and he talked about problems that his own LA (Leicestershire) is experiencing, particularly relating to costs associated with cross-border transport for pupils attending academies and free schools. He suggested the system was putting great strain on LA finances, with some very difficult choices having to be made. There was some discussion about the issue and particularly the legal requirements, which may be being interpreted differently in other LAs.

### **10. Worcestershire Association of Governors**

DA reported on communications received from WAG, including their campaign strategy, which has the same aim of achieving a fairer funding system, but has very different tactics for achieving it. WAG is in touch with all local MPs, including RW who is Vice Chair of f40. RW said that like governors in all poorly funded LAs, WAG is very frustrated by the government's slow progress in developing a fairer allocation system. He suggested that f40, whose membership is LA based, has to adopt a moderating influence and an evidence-based approach. He has agreed to meet with WAG and it has been suggested that a joint MP/f40 meeting could be arranged. **AGREED** that IO should in the first instance, take soundings from Worcestershire CC Lead Member, Liz Eryes, and depending on the outcome of that contact, a joint meeting should be sought and that f40 should be represented by members (including RW) from the South west region.

Also **AGREED** that WAG should be invited to address the September meeting of f40's Executive Committee.

### **11. NAHT School Funding Survey**

NAHT has recently conducted some survey work into school funding issues and BH (current President) reported on the key headline results. **AGREED** that DA will circulate headline data to f40 members.

## **12. Independent Academies Association**

DA reported that he is in touch with representatives of the Association, which is interested in f40's campaign, but is unlikely at this stage to seek representation on the Executive Committee. TN, as the headteacher of an academy, agreed to act as a link with the IAA. **AGREED**

## **13. ERYC Meeting with Funding Policy Unit**

CA reported on a presentation she was invited to give to a DfE staff meeting. **AGREED** that DA should circulate CA's Powerpoint presentation to Executive Committee Members and to the LA Finance Managers Research Team. Also, if CA feels that she would like more time to discuss the details of her presentation, she can have more time at the next Executive Committee meeting in September.

## **14. Campaign Issues**

14.1 Cambridgeshire MPs meeting with David Laws. DA reported that all MPs representing constituencies in Cambridgeshire attended a meeting with the Schools Minister on 3 June 2013. By all accounts it had been a very successful meeting.

14.2 Pop Up Banners - The idea of producing 'pop up' banners presenting key f40 messages for display at NGA meetings was raised by JP at the last meeting. DA had investigated the idea and, after consultation with the NGA, had concluded that the suggestion was impractical. **AGREED** that no further action be taken.

14.3 Media Reporting of f40 – DA reported that, at this stage, he had not actioned the suggestion made at the previous meeting, that journalists should be encouraged to write more articles about the issues surrounding fair funding. He suggested that specific information and news is needed to attract attention and that there had been little of interest recently, though the new funding formula proposals would soon be a newsworthy topic of interest. **AGREED** that DA should consider the right time to issue news releases.

14.4 Conference/Briefing for MPs – **AGREED** that a Briefing Meeting should be held in early November at which MPs from f40 areas, together with f40 members, can be briefed about f40's proposals for a future fair funding formula. (Also see section 7).

## **15. Membership and Finances**

DA reported that 32 local authorities were in membership of f40 throughout 2012-13 and that these LAs had been invited to subscribe again this year (2013-14). So far, 16 LAs had paid the annual fees and reminders have been issued to the remainder. DA said that he was confident that the group's membership numbers would be retained. IO said he intended to talk to all Lead Members in f40 LAs to thank them for their continued support. DA reported that the group's finances are in a "healthy state".

## **8. Any Other Business**

BH raised issue of impact of Pay and Performance Progression on schools in f40 areas. The new arrangements could have a serious impact on recruitment.

RW asked if the Standards Fund continued to have any relevance to school funding and was told that it is no longer a relevant factor in the school funding debate.

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

Saturday, 28 September: Saturday 14 December: Saturday 1 March 2014.