



## **f40 Executive Committee Meeting**

**Saturday, 3 March 2012 at Amerton Farm, Staffordshire**

### **1. Attendance and apologies**

**Present:** Ivan Ould, Leics (Chair); Gillian Hayward, Gloucs (Vice Chair); Doug Allan, (Secretary); Robin Walker MP, Worcester; Margaret Judd, Dorset; Joe Jefferies, NASUWT, Notts; Tony Norton, N Lincs; Chris Chapman, Cheshire; David Harty, Cambs; Jon Pearsall, Worcs; Gillian Allcroft, NGA; Christine Atkinson, ERYC; Tony Brown, Central Beds; Helen Donovan, Worcs Jane Potter, Worcs; Bernadette Hunter, Staffs/NAHT

**Apologies:** Sam Ellis (Financial Consultant); Francis Loftus, North Yorks; Chris Harrison NAHT; Eunice Finney, Staffs; Pauline and David Hibbert, Stockport; Clive Chorley, PGR, Worcs; Chris Levy; Geoff Venn, Bedford; Edwina Grant, Central Beds.

### **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting on 26 November 2011 were **Approved** as an accurate record of the proceedings.

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

The Secretary invited nominations from the meeting for the posts of Chair and Vice Chair. Both Cllr Ivan Ould and Gillian Hayward indicated their willingness to stand again. Tony Brown proposed and Chris Chapman seconded Cllr Ivan Ould as Chair. Tony Norton proposed and Chris Chapman seconded Gillian Hayward as Vice Chair. Both re-appointments were **APPROVED** by the Executive Committee.

### **4. Consultation on School Funding Reform: Proposals for a Fairer System**

- a) **Briefing paper:** DA confirmed that as agreed at the last meeting, the Briefing Paper was updated by the sub-group and circulated widely to MPs, Lead Members, Directors, Trade Unions, NGA and f40's general membership. A copy was also sent to Lord Hill and various DfE officials. It was **AGREED** that the Briefing Paper should again be updated to coincide with campaign activities relating to the forthcoming funding announcement and subsequent consultation.
- b) **Joint Leaders' Letter to Sec. of State:** DA confirmed that a letter had been sent to Michael Gove on 30 November 2011, signed by 24 f40 Lead Members. The letter highlighted the problems inherent in the existing funding allocation system and called for a fair arrangement following completion of the School Funding Reform consultation.

DA offered his apologies to Cllr Mark Stocks, Lead Member at Cheshire West & Chester who had indicated he was happy to sign the letter, but whose signature was missing from the final version.

The SoS responded (letter dated 23 December 2011) and a copy was circulated by DA to all participants and also copied to the general membership. The SoS reiterated the importance of school funding and the review to the government – “we want the schools to be funded on a much fairer and more transparent basis, one that reflects current needs”. Mr Gove noted our concerns about FSM being the only indicator used to target Pupil Premium, but defended its use as “a good measure of identifying and targeting under-achievement”. He indicated that he was in the process of extending eligibility to those pupils who have been eligible for FSM at any time in the last six years and suggested that all children eligible for FSM should be registered as

soon as possible so that schools receive the full funding to which they are entitled, Finally, he referred to timing of change and said he understood that we would wish to see reform happen soon, but that he had other considerations to take into account in reaching a final decision.

**c) Local campaign initiatives:** A range of local initiatives has been launched and others are currently underway, including:

- Cambridgeshire – on 7 December the county council unanimously approved a Motion relating to school funding and subsequently wrote to the SoS to ask him to take action to reduce the unfair distribution of funding. Recently the Schools Forum has launched a petition which is attracting considerable support and will be presented to government.
- Central Bedfordshire – On 19 January the council passed a similar resolution, which was communicated to the SoS and Permanent Secretary at the DfE on 25 January.
- Cheshire East - On 23 February the council passed a similar resolution, which was communicated to the SoS on 29 February.
- Dorset – wrote to all their Conservative MPs attaching GA’s NGA article (see Item 4d) and encouraging them to engage with f40’s campaign, but has decided not to follow the idea of adopting a Motion to council as the timing of meetings would not sensibly allow it.
- ERYC – the council is actively considering backing a resolution as above.
- Gloucestershire – the council and the county’s 6 MPs had meeting with Lord Hill on 28 February (the SoS was supposed to host the meeting but withdrew a few days before hand).
- North Yorkshire – the county council has briefed the county’s MPs.
- Worcestershire – Executive Member and MP for Worcester, Robin Walker, together with all other county MPs have written to the SoS to highlight concerns about funding. RW is leading a delegation of 12 (so far) Conservative MPs from f40 constituencies to meet Nick Gibb on 12 March. The county council is considering “grassroots” activity in the community.

IO congratulated those LAs that are actively campaigning and expressed the view that all member LAs would have to work together in a more determined fashion if we hope to be successful.

**d) NGA Article “Changes to School Funding:** The committee thanked their colleague GA for an excellent and informative article she had authored in the NGA magazine, Governing matters.

**e) School Teachers’ Review Board:** IO informed the committee about the work this body undertakes and how it may potentially have a positive impact of f40’s work, namely that with regards to the consultation on the Pay Framework for teachers it has stated that it “should be more market facing”. This supports f40’s position in terms of pay and conditions best supporting retention in all schools. CC suggested that in his experience, teachers are generally very committed and stay in the job for life – but inevitably those that are financially motivated will seek out the best pay and move accordingly to better funded areas, potentially leaving the poorly funded areas with “less able teachers”. This impacts on local standards and attainment.

MJ added that many expensive to employ teachers look for posts in Dorset as they have one eye on retirement. JP said he knew of newly qualified teachers who received advice on where the best jobs/salaries are on offer, further depriving the less well funded LAs of the staff they need. BH added that NAHT is discussing regional pay and there are concerns about inequalities across and within LAs. Some will offer higher pay but others won’t be able to. Academies introduce a new dimension to the problem – they can often offer much more! TN said that regional pay will lead to regional funding and ultimately in lower funded LAs to the employment of less qualified staff. There will be many unintended consequences from this sort of policy change. RW suggested that distortions will inevitably multiply. HD referred to another ‘unintended consequence - it was never intended that Teaching Assistants should lead in the classroom, but they are now known to be taking classes. BH said that this is a standards issue, not just a financial one.

CC wondered whether London Weightings would continue in their current guise. GA suggested the future would see a “free for all” in pay, with the poorest funded again losing out. IO said that

he hoped that the anticipated reform would mean f40 LAs would be better funded and therefore able to compete.

IO referred to issues where a Local Trust is working across borders – part well-funded and part poorly funded. This will create tremendous difficulties. BH suggested such situations should be included in Case Studies so that f40 could highlight such issues when presenting to Ministers. RW agreed this would be a sensible approach. He will ask the MPs attending the meeting with Nick Gibb on 12 March to come up with examples...and would welcome any that f40 members could offer.

**f) General Discussion about the current state of play relating to funding review:**

DA indicated that he had tried to establish a timetable for an announcement on the Review, but the DfE were unwilling to discuss it. Thoughts among members point to the next stage of consultation being announced by end of March.

GH said that the pace of change is rapidly becoming the key issue relating to reform of the funding system. At the meeting on 28 February with Lord Hill the impression was given that the government could be planning a long period of transition – perhaps as much as ten years. MJ suggested that there is apprehension at the DfE as Ministers realise the implications of the necessary changes. RW said that the argument for change is won, but there is definitely nervousness in government about how to handle change. There will be considerable agonising once other LAs – the well-funded – realise what might be on the cards. There'll need to be compromises.

MJ pointed out that f40's argument for change has been underway for many years – the acceptance by the Coalition Government of our argument is not the start date for change. Even if we say that our position clarified 5 years ago, that means secondary children are already out of the school system. If we wait another 10 years it's almost a generation! We cannot afford to wait that long. RW suggested that it might be useful to prepare a mini calendar of events showing how our campaign has progressed and what has changed over the years.

IO reminded members that the London Mayoral Election is planned for May. We must watch that event with interest, and hope that school funding does not become an issue in that campaign. That would be a public platform we could not match and could potentially damage our position.

GH raised the question of SEN and its funding. She reminded members that SEN is not the same as deprivation, though those in government appear not to recognise the difference. IO referred to his experiences in Leicestershire where there is a unit with 110 pupils and 170 staff. The costs are enormous. A member suggested that Academies are turning SEN pupils away and telling them to find an alternative school. CC thought that low level SEN spend would be likely, in the new funding scheme, to be in the general per pupil allocation, whereas only the high level needs would be in the SEN block.

TN suggested that as well as fairness of funding, we should also be emphasising what we can achieve – how fair funding can give educational improvement. He said that very well-funded LAs are seeing standards rising, at last, but at what cost to those who remain poorly funded? He said we ought to involve Ofsted and ensure they understand how funding can impact standards. GH particularly liked this idea. BH emphasised the importance of being absolutely clear when arguing about standards – best not to related lack of resources to a shortage of staff – it's the totality of education experience that counts.

GH pointed out that the funding of Academies and Free Schools was skewing funding and increasing the cost of education provision, creating a real dilemma for us all.

IO asked if RW would include the points raised here (particularly pace of change and impact of funding on standards) in his discussions with Nick Gibb on 12 March. He agreed he would.

## 5. Future Strategy the next steps for f40

Although we are in a hiatus awaiting the announcement and forthcoming consultation on the government's proposals for change, the Executive agreed this remains a crucial time for f40 to keep 'banging the drum', influencing discussions and ensuring its demands are widely received and understood within government circles. The government has acknowledged that the argument for change is won. What is essential now is that this acknowledgement results in an allocation system that is fair to f40 members, and introduced a timeframe acceptable to the poorest funded LAs.

Executive members discussed a range of actions that they will launch, but they appealed to all member authorities to take a lead in their areas to ensure we are all taking action together to achieve the desired results. IO particularly liked the idea of galvanising Schools Forums.

Campaign issues discussed at the November meeting were reiterated, namely that the main thrust of all f40 arguments must centre on children and schools - we mustn't lose sight of the fact that this whole campaign is about fair treatment for pupils and the best way of getting them through the education system. In addition, it is important that the language used is appropriate – e.g. transition rather than turbulence. Finally, it is important to emphasise what f40 children are missing out on, what equipment they don't/can't have, what experiences they don't get and to question why children in some areas appear to be 'worth' more than in others.

JP said that raising awareness of funding issues is a very difficult task – a hard sell – so it needs to be undertaken with imagination, skill and good management. GH added that it is also vitally important to get the timing of any campaign actions right.

The following specific actions were **AGREED**:

Action	Timing/Responsibility
<p><b>F40 Briefing Paper</b></p> <p>The Briefing Paper will be updated to reflect the forthcoming announcement from government.</p> <p>Once re-drafted, the Briefing Paper will again be circulated widely as an aid to members' campaign activities.</p> <p>Lead Members to be encouraged to use the Briefing Paper to gain support from head teachers and governors in schools within their LA area.</p>	<p>Following the announcement by Govt. DA and Sub-Group</p> <p>As above</p>
<p><b>F40 Meeting with Ministers</b></p> <p>A request for a meeting with the Secretary of State at the earliest possible date will be made.</p>	<p>DA to urgently draft letter for Chair to approve.</p> <p>If a meeting is offered, IO, GH, TN, MJ and DA to attend.</p>
<p><b>MPs meeting with Ministers</b></p> <p>Meeting with Nick Gibb on 12 March.</p>	<p>RW has organised with 12 other Conservative MPs.</p>
<p><b>Case Studies</b></p> <p>All member authorities to be asked to consider short and pertinent Case Studies highlighting key issues, such as the difference in funding</p>	<p>Immediately.</p> <p>All f40 Lead Members in conjunction with their</p>

between neighbouring LAs and the impact this has on schools and pupils.	Directors/Schools Forum Chair  All f40 Executive Committee members to seek existing examples and encourage LAs to develop more.
<b>Calendar for Change</b>  Chronological listing of funding campaign - history, successes and promises.	Urgently.  DA to undertake initial draft – Executive Committee members to add and amend.
<b>National Conference</b>  A conference will be held in London, probably at LG House, to coincide with the next government consultation	DA to make enquiries with LG House as and when it is clear when the consultation is to take place.
<b>Local Authority activities</b>  All member LAs to be encouraged to undertake activities, such as passing a Motion of Full Council which could be communicated to the SoS.	DA to write to all Lead Members.
<b>Petitions</b>  Individual LAs (possibly through Schools Forums) to be encouraged to start a petition re the need for a fair funding solution that helps the poorest LAs/schools/pupils.  MPs to be involved in launch/first signings	Immediately.  DA to write to Lead Members and Chairs of Schools Forums.  Petitions to be on LA websites.  Petitions to continue through forthcoming consultation and be ready to be handed in at conclusion.
<b>Grassroots involvement</b>  Signing of petitions  Letters to MPs and Secretary of State	LAs to launch/publicise petitions  LAs websites/news releases to encourage parents/teachers/governors to write letters.
<b>NGA newsletters</b>  Articles and comment about problems in the poorest LAs.	GA to lead on ensuring governors are aware of inequities.
<b>Parent Campaign</b>  At a later stage, the Group will consider a major campaign involving parents across all f40 areas.	Depending on the government's announcement on School Funding Reform and the results of the above actions.

## **6. County Council Network (CCN)**

IO referred to a letter he had received from Kent CC Leader, Cllr Paul Carter, writing as Chair of the CCN's Children & Young People Policy Network. The letter was addressed to Lead Members in 19 county councils. As a new initiative, the Policy Networks launched by CCN have no 'existing way of doing things' but they aim to develop policy positions and work at member level and via LGG Boards. PC listed a number of issues for immediate consideration and asked for additional ideas. In response, IO suggested the following issues – LACSEG; fair funding and securing the right arrangements following the Schools Funding Review; transport costs in connection with the growth of Academies; SEN and impact of rising costs on DSG; social & emotional wellbeing; 14-19 provision and advent of Studio Schools; school responsibility for careers.

## **7. Membership and Financial Update**

DA confirmed that the group's 2011-12 membership has been 32 LAs. Discussions are still underway with two more LAs – Lincolnshire and Buckinghamshire. DA advised the Executive Committee that Suffolk had failed to pay its membership subscription for the past year, which made it uncertain whether it would pay in the forthcoming year. If payment is not received it was **AGREED** that the LA will be removed from the Group's databases. DA reported that the Group's funds were in a healthy state. After some discussion it was **AGREED** that the annual subscription for 2012-13 should again be held at £1,000. When invoicing in April DA pointed out that this reduction for a second year is in recognition of member LAs continuing financial difficulties.

## **8. Website**

There was nothing new to report.

## **9. AOB**

IO referred to a suggestion made by Ken Livingstone that would see a review of the Education Maintenance Allowance. This could have major new implications for all LAs, particularly the poorest funded.

With reference to the ongoing debate over Academies and their impact on LA provision, IO mentioned the difficulty in getting construction companies building Free Schools to contribute S106 funding. JJ referred to the fact that new Free Schools are having an adverse impact on the number of school places available, creating over-provision.

TN referred to funding changes that are coming forward in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form/ Early Years areas, which are adding to the general funding difficulties facing LAs.

HD raised the question of how School Uniform Grants are being phased out in some LA areas, with responsibility being passed to schools. After some discussion, it was agreed that this is a matter for individual LAs and schools and that the actions are considered reasonable and acceptable.

DA referred to a request from the LGA for the Group to submit its annual report as a "Special Interest Group". IO indicated that he would like to check out the status offered by the LGA.

## **9. Next Meeting**

The date for the next Executive Committee meeting will be determined in the light of a government announcement on the School Funding Review and any planned further consultation. If any urgent matters arise that need immediate attention, the Chair will consider the need for a special meeting.