



f40 Executive Committee Meeting **Saturday, 20 October 2012 at Amerton Farm, Staffordshire**

1. Attendance and apologies

Present: Ivan Ould, Leics (Chair); Doug Allan, (Secretary); Gillian Hayward, Gloucs (Vice Chair); Eunice Finney, Staffs; Ian Wilkie, Staffs; Margaret Judd, Dorset; Joe Jefferies, NASUWT, Notts; Tony Norton, N Lincs; Chris Chapman, Cheshire; David Harty, Cambs; Bernadette Hunter, Staffs/NAHT; Jane Potter, Worcs; Francis Loftus, North Yorks; Edwina Grant, Central Beds

Apologies: Robin Walker MP, Worcester; Sam Ellis (Financial Consultant); Geoff Venn, Bedford; Christine Atkinson, ERYC; Helen Donovan, Worcs; Pauline Hibbert, Stockport; Clive Chorley, PGR, Worcs; Chris Levy; Gillian Allcroft, NGA; Jon Pearsall, Worcs.

The Chair welcomed Ian Wilkie (Staffs) to his first meeting with the Group.

DA indicated that John Lewis (Devon), had been in correspondence and had asked to join the Executive. The committee stated that he would be welcome at the next meeting.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 28 July 2012 were **Approved** as an accurate record of the proceedings.

3. National Funding Formula

- Westminster Education Forum – Conference – 12 September

DA reported that several members of f40 had attended this conference and that RW had chaired a session. TN said he had attended and that it had been very informative, with plenty of views and opinions - though in conclusion he had found it inconclusive.

- LACSEG Consultation – f40 response

DA reported that f40's response to the consultation had been submitted on 24 September 2012. Initially, he added, it had not been the Group's intention to make a submission, but several members had requested that we should. The response was drafted by Sarah Heywood, Cambs. It was **AGREED** that the Chairman should send a letter of thanks to Sarah for her excellent work on the Group's behalf.

IO also suggested that a copy of the submission should be forwarded to each of the political parties at the LGA. The committee **AGREED**.

EG suggested that the MJ (Municipal Journal) had recently expressed an interest in LACSEG issues and may be persuaded to prepare a feature based on f40's submission. **AGREED** that EG and DA should pursue the matter.

- Unintended Consequences

DA reported that as a consequence of a discussion at the last Executive Meeting, he had asked all member LAs to contribute 'unidentified consequences' stemming from the current changes to education funding being pushed through by the government. The subsequent list had been submitted to Sarah Healey (DfE) and Dugald Sandeman (EFA), as well as to the LGA, which is also involved in researching similar impacts on LAs.

GH said it was an interesting paper, but thought that it would have more value if it was condensed to reflect the key issues, rather than contain, often repeated reports from individual members.

FL suggested that the re-write might best be done after the budget period so that the real impacts and unintended consequences will be evident.

There was a general discussion about the tremendous difficulties being experienced by LAs and schools as a result of the 'simplified' arrangements for 2013-14. There are massive variations in the size of lump sum agreed by different LAs. Around the table, the range was from £45k to £150k. This huge variation makes it difficult to reach conclusions and make comparisons. The arrangement is, without a doubt, creating massive turbulence, which is something the government had said it wanted to avoid. CC suggested that LAs may be so focused on minimising turbulence that they lose sight of the key goal – a delivering the best education possible for our children!

IW said Staffordshire is looking at a 'needs-led' model, trying to determine where the DfE is heading, then trying to get close to where the averages might be. He suggested there's a long way to go to get this calculation right.

JP referred to the recent Sarah Healey (DfE) letter re mfg, and also flagged up the fact that London boroughs are looking at ways to support academies. IW stated that at a recent meeting with the Schools Minister, David Laws MP, it had been stated that "it may be necessary to make refinements to the system for future years in the lead up to the introduction of a national funding formula".

IW reported that his LA had applied to the DfE to have their time limited 'parachute funding' excepted from the minimum funding guarantee, but the application had been rejected by the government. IW said that this would lock money into schools budgets that would not be expected and that many schools would have made redundancies driving additional costs into the system. This was a clear example of inefficiency within the system. TN said that, in his opinion, many schools would find it difficult to operate without the continuing support of their LA, whose services and advice are invaluable.

IO referred to the Secretary of State's statement earlier this year that he would not introduce a national funding formula until 2015+ as to do so would create turbulence – but that is exactly what we have now, only on a scale that nobody could have envisaged. It would have been simpler to have moved straight to a new national arrangement.

AGREED that DA and SE should extract the key funding issues identifiable today and re-present the paper to the Group. In the New Year it will be circulated to member LAs for them to add new impacts and unintended consequences that have become evident. The resulting paper will be much more useful as a tool in our campaign armoury.

- Developing a definition of fairness

DA reminded Executive Committee members that at the last meeting there had been a discussion about f40's view of what "fair funding" is exactly, and it had been agreed that SE and DA should attempt to define it. The initial paper produced was subsequently shared with Executive members and a single-sided paper explaining our fairness objectives was agreed. GH said that the resulting paper is clear and helpful. TN suggested it had been very helpful having our definition at a recent meeting with DfE officials.

TN added that the next step ought to be applying the 'fairness definition' to individual schools and for children with differing needs, but EG said that f40 needs to be careful about what it claims and be aware of the expansion of the debate from just education to the whole gambit of children's services. She also suggested that we need to look at the future of education, not always be making comparisons with historical values and measuring against what we had in the past. She suggested that the political position has quite definitely changed.

- Meeting with Funding Policy Unit (DfE) – 2 October 2012

DA reported that a delegation of f40 members had attended a meeting with Jane Cunliffe (Deputy Director of the FPU) in London to discuss the proposed national funding formula. F40's notes of the meeting were submitted to JC for approval and cannot be circulated until they are approved. However, a copy was supplied to Executive Committee members to enable a discussion on the meeting to take place.

GH reported that the meeting had been extremely positive and constructive. The key points from the discussion were:

- 2013-14 changes – DfE is aware of concerns about high needs funding, the impact on small rural schools and the effect for some of the single lump sum. Degree of turbulence is worrying for many LAs.
- Without mfg the local swings in funding would be 10% plus, and, due to uncertainty after 2015, it is currently impossible to set three year school budgets. No decision on what happens after 2015 until next CSR.
- The Treasury is interested in the economics of small schools: but there's neither the scope or political will for LA managed closures at the present time.
- Acknowledged that more and more funding is linked FSM.
- F40 concerned that extra funding for poorly funded LAs isn't forthcoming yet government continues to find new money for pupil premium and years 7s.
- There's a lack of transparency with pupil premium, with many schools failing to invest there extra money as intended.
- LACSEG consultation now completed and submissions being analysed. DfE will operate a grant fund to minimise worst differences. LAs without academies will not lose cash to those with academies. Funding will be taken from LAs at the same rate as it is paid out.
- Consideration is being given to whether ACA should apply to LACSEG.
- The Government is very keen on moving towards a national funding formula. The definition of fairness is crucial to any new arrangement.
- Options available are viewed as 'soft' and 'hard', Soft would mean LAs have some discretion on local distribution, whilst hard would see the distribution of funds direct to schools with little or no LA involvement.
- High needs continues to be a major concern for all involved in education funding.
- There is an apparent lack of correlation between funding and results.
- Everyone agrees that the aim must be to develop a system that funds similar pupils with similar needs in a similar way.

IO said that at the meeting with the FPU, it was suggested that all LA might receive less funding in the future, although the differentials might narrow.

f40 was asked to provide a list of contacts willing to provide examples of local situations and test hypotheses, and schools willing to welcome a visit from officials of the FPU. It was also suggested that a further meeting should be planned early in the New Year. Committee members suggested that in advance of a further meeting it would be important to have more information from the FPU about its developing plans and the 'hard' and 'soft' options on the table. **AGREED** that DA will circulate an email seeking contacts/schools willing to work with the FPU, and DA will seek a further meeting for early February 2013.

- Proposed meeting with Shadow Education Secretary

DA reported that contact has been made with the Shadow Education Secretary's office and he has agreed to meet f40. Unfortunately the date initially suggested by Stephen Twigg MP was unsuitable to f40 and alternative dates are now being sought. IO extended a thank you to former f40 chair, David Kidney for his help in establishing links with the Shadow Secretary's office.

- Forthcoming meeting with the Schools Minister

DA reported that the Rt Hon David Laws has agreed to meet a delegation from f40's Executive Committee. The initially agreed date was 12 November, but this has now been moved to Monday 19 November at 1.45pm. The delegation will consist of IO, GH, RW, DA, MJ and DH.

- Article: "The real scandal in education is the inequality in schools' funding
DA referred to an article prepared by Robin Thorpe of Dorset, which had been sent to f40 and was subsequently circulated to Executive Committee members. IO said it was a useful contribution to the fair funding debate and he had thanked RT for preparing the article and having it published.
- Approach from Cllr Nick Bennett, Lead Member, East Sussex County Council
DA reported that the Cllr Bennett had circulated a request for comments on the School Funding Formula and current changes being introduced by the government, which could be used at a meeting with the DfE on 2 October. The request was dealt with directly by IO.
- Debate in the House of Commons
DA reported that Worcestershire MP, Harriett Baldwin, has secured a debate on school funding in Worcestershire on Tuesday 23 October 2012. Executive Committee member and MP for Worcester, Robin Walker, will also speak.
- The Politics Show
DA reported that BBC1 South had undertaken fair funding interviews in Dorset which would be broadcast on Sunday 21 October (and can be viewed on IPlayer thereafter). Executive Committee member Margaret Judd has contributed to the programme.
- Capita Conference: School Funding Reform 28 January 2013
DA reported that several prominent members of f40 would have key roles in the above conference.

4. National Conference

DA reminded committee members that the conference planned for November 2012 had been postponed for a range of reasons. It was AGREED that no plans should be made for a conference at this time and the situation would be reviewed at a meeting in early 2013.

5. Campaign issues

- General issues

There was a wide ranging debate about how the campaign is going and what we should be doing in the future. IO suggested that whilst the campaign is well-understood within government and local government, it is less clear to schools and parents. He suggested we need to encourage contacts with schools and school business managers, and this must include academies. IO also made the point that f40 must develop better links with the LGA. He offered to contact David Simmonds about how the two organisations can work more closely together.

It was also suggested that now that we have agreed not to organise a conference in the foreseeable future, that it might be worth considering a more business style gathering of Directors and finance officers, with speakers from DfE, EFA, LGA, IAA and others. More thought will be given to this idea.

CC wondered if a meeting/event giving all member LAs the opportunity to consider how we can be better and more efficient might be useful. Demonstrating how we can all get better value from deprivation funding. If we can be more efficient, there'll be more in the pot for education!

- F40 Briefing Paper

The revised Briefing Paper issued in September 2012 was welcomed. It is succinct and has proven to be an extremely useful tool in the campaign. The paper has been distributed to all f40 members and contacts.

- Historical Timeline

The timeline showing the key events in f40's campaign history has again been updated and is available for use in association with the Briefing Paper.

- **Timeline for Change**

The suggested second timeline, which flags up what needs to be done and by when during the period of review leading to the new national funding formula, has not progressed. **AGREED** that DA should consider how this might be developed.

- **Ministerial Statements**

DA reported that, as offered at the last meeting, RW's office has produced a list of all Ministerial fair funding references listed in Hansard in the last few years. IO offered his thanks to RW for this work.

- **Independent Academies Association**

DA reported that he had made contact with the IAA and commenced discussions about how they can work alongside f40 to secure better funding. **AGREED** that DA should invite the association to send a representative to Executive Committee meetings.

- **Total Politics magazine**

DA reported that, as agreed, he had taken a full page advertorial feature in the special conference issue of the political magazine, Total Politics. The advertisement, 20,000 of which were printed, featured f40's latest Briefing Paper.

6. f40 Website

There was nothing to report.

7. Membership and Financial Update

DA confirmed that this year's subscription had been received from 31 LAs and that one further subscription was on its way. This means that all 32 of last year's members have continued in membership. DA also reported that despite several approaches none of the other poorly funded LAs which should be in f40 had taken up the invitation to join the campaign. IO said he understood Lincolnshire CC had been interested in joining and that he would follow up with its Lead Member, and he will also raise the idea of membership with Lead Members of other poorly funded LAs he meets. DA reported on the Group's finances.

8. AOB

TN again requested a specific discussion about SEN at some point in the future.

JJ asked if others agreed that there is a lack of clarity about the transfer of cash from councils to academies. EG suggested this matter could be included in any planned article with the MJ.

On behalf of Helen Donovan, who couldn't be present, DA indicated that the head teacher at Helen's school had asked if he might have the opportunity to address the Executive Committee in order to voice his concerns about school funding and associated issues. It was **AGREED** that he can attend and speak at the next Executive Committee meeting, if the date suits.

FL suggested that all members should bring their LA school budget to the next meeting.

BH wondered if de-delegation issues around maternity and trade union facilities funding had been resolved, as both issues have huge implications for schools. Several members spoke of what was happening in their LAs.

IW asked if School Funding Agency representatives had started attending Schools Forum in other LA areas. Some members said they had, but others suggested they hadn't on their patch.

EG asked if there was any evidence in member LAs of Schools Forums employing their own staff or contracting with others to do key work tasks, particularly financial work. Various committee members gave positive responses and indicated that, of course, funding had to be found for such services.

9. Next Meeting

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held at 11am on Saturday, 26 January 2013.