



f40 Executive Committee Meeting

Saturday, 26 March 2018 at LGC Conference Centre, Westminster

1. Attendance and apologies

Present: Ivan Ould, Leicestershire CC (Chair); Doug Allan, (Secretary); Margaret Judd, (Dorset CC); Gillian Hayward, (Gloucester Schools Forum); Caroline Brand (Worcs CC); Gillian Allcroft, (NGA); Jon Pearsall, (independent rep); Edwina Grant (LGA).

IO welcomed the following delegates to their first f40 Executive Committee meeting:

- Cllr Gordon Jones, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, Suffolk CC
- Cllr Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education. Kent CC
- Cllr James McInnes, Cabinet Member, Children's Services, Devon CC
- Cllr Nicola Meardon, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Chester & Cheshire West
- Cllr Bob Standley, Lead Member for Education, East Sussex County Council
- Cllr Hilary Hibbert-Biles, Cabinet Member for Education & Learning, Oxfordshire CC
- Cllr Peter Downes, Member of Schools Forum, Cambridgeshire CC
- Carole Thompson, Chair, Oxfordshire Schools Forum
- Sara Harding, Headteacher, Regency High School, Worcestershire

Apologies: Alex Chalk MP, (former Vice Chair); Vernon Coaker MP, (former Vice Chair); Bernadette Hunter, (Staffs Headteacher); Michael Appleyard (Buckinghamshire CC); Joe Jefferies (Nottinghamshire); Chris Chapman (Cheshire governor rep); Sue Alexander (Worcs CC); Stewart King (Glous CC); Christine Atkinson (ERYC); Eunice Finney (Staffs parent); Richard Soper (Worcester Community Trust); and Grant Davis, (Wiltshire CC).

2. Resignation of Vice Chairs

DA reported that both the Labour and Conservative Vice Chairs had submitted their resignations. He indicated that he had emailed to thank both MP's for their valuable past support of f40 and the fair funding campaign. The Executive Committee wished to put on record their grateful thanks to both MPs. **AGREED**

DA indicated that he had asked Vernon Coaker MP for possible recommendations for a replacement Labour VC, though he had not yet heard back. DA also stated that Neil O'Brien, MP for Harborough, had been approached by IO to see if he might be interested in taking up the Conservative VC role. Neil attended part of today's conference and has agreed to give the offer serious consideration.

NOTED

3. Minutes of the meeting held 18 November 2017

The minutes of were **APPROVED** as a correct record of the meeting.

4. items to be noted

- Meeting held with Department for Education on 27 November 2017. Notes of the meeting had previously been circulated and are on the website. **NOTED**
- Letter to Damien Hinds MP, the newly appointed Secretary of State for Education – sent 10 January 2018, and response dated 7 February 2018. IO reminded committee members that the Secretary of State had promised to meet with f40 at an early date. DA to follow up with SoS. When a meeting is organised, the delegation to include some of the committee's new members. **AGREED**

- IO reported that he had been a speaker at the 'Westminster Education Forum – Fair Funding Conference' in London on 16 January 2018 and that he has accepted a further invitation to speak at the Westminster Briefing Conference on school funding in June. **NOTED**

5. Outcomes of 2018 Conference, Members' Survey and Discussion on Future

It was agreed that the conference had been extremely successful, highlighting a wide range of school funding issues being experienced by f40 member authorities and providing much insight into where f40 goes from here. Among the views expressed were:

- That fair funding and quantum are so inter-linked that it is impossible to consider one without the other. F40 must begin to integrate quantum in its arguments for fairer funding.
- The argument for collaboration between the various campaign groups is extremely strong and we must embrace it.
- There are worries that the Brexit situation will take all of the government's energy and that promises to better fund the NHS could swamp fair funding for schools demands. But it was also argued that Brexit is one key reason why good quality and well-funded education is essential if we are to be successful nationally and inter-nationally.
- The government is keen to work with f40 and our respect level in government circles is very high. We must establish our new post-NFF position, set our strategy and maintain our principled and professional approach.
- F40 argued for an activity-led approach to school funding. We were ignored, but we were right and should maintain that argument.
- We should campaign against the opening of schools where they are not required. It's an extremely expensive policy and unnecessary, especially during a period of austerity.
- There is a need to consider how academies/MATs fit with the f40 campaign. The perception in many quarters is that MATs are exploiting the system and action must be taken to persuade the government to change the system. MATs do not need to treat the schools in their group equally and are not held to account. They can, if they wish, make a school "wither on the vine" if they want rid of it. IO suggested this could be one of the topics for discussion at the planned meeting with the Secretary of State. (It was pointed out that academisation is a core government policy and we must be careful how we tackle the issue).
- It was suggested that MATs have rising concerns about cross LA boundary funding issues and they may welcome the opportunity to share them with f40 member LAs, so it was agreed that an approach should be made to MATs operating in f40 member areas to see if they will collaborate with f40.
- Whilst School Block has been the subject of the main thrust of f40's campaign so far, it is clear that High Needs funding is becoming a huge issue and it was agreed that f40 should place it high on its campaign agenda. Equally, Early Years is rapidly becoming a concern and it will need attention.

ACTIONS

- 1. DA to call a meeting of the Finance Managers Research Team (FMRT) to prepare a set of key principles and develop an Action Plan for the future of the campaign.**
- 2. The draft Principles and Action Plan to be shared, initially with the Executive Committee for consideration, then with the whole of the f40 membership.**
- 3. The question of closer collaboration with other campaigns – WorthLess?, Fair Funding for All Schools, ASCL and NAHT - to be addressed within the Action Plan.**
- 4. Even in advance of that, DA to approach Julia Harnden to see if she might consider joining f40's Executive Committee.**
- 5. DA to initially identify the MATs that operate within f40 member areas, then to liaise with the Chairman on the best way to approach them about involvement with f40 and fair funding.**

6. **DA to check progress on a meeting with the Secretary of State. New committee members to be encouraged to join the Chairman in attending the meeting.**
7. **DA to write and thank all speakers at the conference and tell the media that all the presentations are on the website.**

6. Succession Planning

Committee members were reminded that the Chairman, Cllr Ivan Ould, will be stepping down as Chair of the group in the Autumn of 2018, effective from his last committee meeting on 18 October. IO again stated that it is imperative that early consideration be given to identifying a replacement chairman who ideally can shadow IO until the Autumn changeover.

IO suggested to the Lead Members attending the committee for the first time that it was hoped that a new chair could be found from their ranks. Understandably, the Lead Members were reluctant to put themselves forward at their first meeting with the group, though they understand the urgent need to find a replacement so that there can be a smooth transition and continued strong leadership. It was **AGREED** that a decision would be delayed until the July meeting, though Lead Members will give serious thought to taking on the Chair's role. IO invited any member that wished to talk about the role to get in touch with him for a discussion.

The question of DA's forthcoming retirement as Secretary was also discussed. DA indicated that he had initially thought he would leave at the same time as IO, but he is flexible and would consider December 2018 or, if necessary to maintain some continuity, March 2019. DTW (the agency that currently has the contract to provide secretarial services and for whom DA works) will need to be involved in discussions about the future of the contract. **AGREED**

7. Membership Report & Financial Update

DA reported that the number of members in 2016-17 had been 43 and that in 2017-18 the number dropped by one to 42 when Bedford Borough decided not to renew its membership.

DA reported that the group has a healthy bank balance.

DA indicated that he normally issues invoices for the annual subscription in April and that a decision is now required on the level of fees to be charged. Members accepted that it would be best to maintain some level of subscription. After some discussion it was **AGREED** that members will be charged £500 (half the current annual fee) in part because the group has funds available and in recognition of the fact that all members face continuing financial difficulties.

8. Any Other Business

1. HH-B asked why Executive Committee meetings are normally held at Amerton Farm, Stafford and if other venues might be considered. DA explained the background but suggested that it is a matter for the committee to decide where it meets. PD said he had recently attended a meeting at Jury's Inn, near Hinckley Island, Leicestershire and he thought it was an ideal, central and very accessible venue. It was **AGREED** that DA should make enquiries to check on accommodation and costs.
2. CT suggested that f40 ought to identify those LAs that post-NFF might wish to join the f40 campaign. **AGREED** that this matter should be researched and form part of the proposed Action Plan.

9. Dates of future Executive Committees

Saturday, 21 July 2018, Saturday, 20 October 2018 and Saturday, 19 January 2019. Members are asked to ensure that these dates are in their diary.