



f40 Executive Committee Meeting

Monday, 27 January 2020 at LGA Offices, Smith Square, Westminster

1. Attendances, apologies and changes to committee membership

Present: Cllr James McInnes (Chair); Karen Westcott (Secretary); Margaret Judd, (Dorset Council); Cllr Ivan Ould (Leics CC); Carole Thomson, (Oxfordshire Schools Forum); Emily Proffitt (Staffs Headteacher); Jackie Smith (CEO Brunel SEN MAT & Uplands Educational Trust); Phil Haslett (Glos CC); Andrew Minall (Hampshire CC); Cllr Mary Evans (Suffolk CC); Jon Pearsall (Regency High School Gov, Worcs); Cllr Nicole Meardon (Chester & Cheshire West); Cllr Peter Downes (Cambs Schools Forum); Julia Harnden (ASCL); Cllr Richard Long (Kent CC) Rebecca Dew (DTW).

Apologies: Cllr Michael Appleyard (Bucks CC); Steve Edmonds (NGA); Cllr Alex Dale (Derbyshire CC); Cllr Christine Atkinson (East Riding Council); Howard Emmett (North Yorks CC).

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2019

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

3. Confirmation of f40 Chair and Deputy Chair

Members agreed that JMcl should continue as Chair of f40. KW said MA would be standing down in the spring as Deputy Chair and anyone who was interested in taking over the role should contact her before the next executive meeting on March 10. EP said she would put her name forward as Deputy.

4. Matters to be noted:

- Election results – Labour Vice Chair Laura Smith lost her seat - Noted
- Minutes of f40's FMRT meeting – 26 November 2019* - Noted
- Minutes of f40's meeting with the DfE – 16 October 2019* - Noted

Members voiced their disappointment that former Labour MP Laura Smith could no longer remain a Vice Chair of f40 after losing her seat in the General Election. NM said she would approach some suitable candidates to ask if they were interested in taking up the Labour Vice Chair position in order to support the group. KW to also ask Laura if any of her former colleagues may be interested.

KW to also contact Conservative Vice Chair Gary Streeter MP and Liberal Democrat Vice Chair Layla Moran MP to confirm they were happy to continue in their roles with f40.

5. Welcome to new members

JMcl welcomed new executive members Cllr Mary Evans (Suffolk CC) and Cllr Richard Long (Kent CC) to the group. They have joined the group as their colleagues Cllr Gordon Jones and Cllr Roger Gough have taken on new roles within their respective local authorities.

JMcl thanked Cllrs Jones and Gough for their efforts on the f40 executive. He also thanked JP and NM for the support they had given the f40 group over the years as it was their last meeting before stepping down.

6. Summary of meeting with Tony McArdle, re Gov review on SEND

JMcl informed that some members of f40 had that morning met with Tony McArdle, Chair of the SEND Leadership Board and an independent adviser to the Government review on SEND, to give their input on the current situation with regards educational special needs.

He said it was a very good meeting and Mr McArdle had been interested in f40's opinion, understood many of the issues and was sympathetic about the situation.

JMcl said f40 had submitted a four-page document to the Government review for consideration, which outlined many of the issues members had put forward about SEND.

KW is also to send an electronic copy of f40's submission to Tony McArdle, Prime Minister Boris Johnson, DfE Funding Director Tony Foot, f40 MPs, all f40 members, and members of the Collaboration Group.

The covering letter to the Prime Minister to highlight that the SEND system requires structural change, not just additional money, and should also reiterate that extra funding made available to SEND in the autumn of 2019, while welcome, was not sufficient. Members believe the extra £700m for SEND will likely be swallowed up by local authority SEND budgets and will not be enough to distribute to schools. The letter to make the point that deficits will continue to grow without changes to the system and additional funding.

PH said Government needed to put in place a recovery plan to enable local authorities to deal with the deficits in SEND budgets. He also said it would be interesting to know when the pinch points in EHCP applications were – in terms of how old children were when EHCP applications were made and what Year Group they were in. For some children with complex needs, he said applications should be submitted before they were actually born.

Members agreed that f40 should ask local authorities to provide data on their EHCP applications, indicating the number of EHCP application made for each Year Group during 2018/19.

KW to contact each local authority, asking them to provide the data breakdown on a spreadsheet before the end of February.

PH said the issue of mainstream schools being inclusive of children with SEND was a difficult conversation to have with schools as he said all headteachers would feel they have an inclusive school. He said he believed everyone should talk about schools being more inclusive, rather than less exclusive.

JH said schools should have 'built in' SEND provision, rather than 'bolt on' and said training teachers and headteachers in SEND provision and the needs of children was crucial.

NM said it was important to think about mental health when considering SEND. She said schools needed to develop their mental health practices and as they needed to be parallel to other SEND and mainstream services.

ME said the current SEND situation put undue stress on parents and families with SEND children.

IO said there were also issues around a lack of capital funding for SEND, and a lack of available revenue for the costs associated with setting up new schools.

IO also said transport for SEND children was also a huge issue, which the Government review should take account of. He said often children with SEND needed to be transported out of the county to specialist schools, and sometimes they needed to be accompanied by adults or nurses. This added to the expense faced by local authorities.

KW to circulate a summary of the meeting with Tony McArdle to members.

7. Summary of meeting with Collaboration Group*

MJ and KW summarised the discussions that were held at the January meeting of the Collaboration Group. KW said it was a very good meeting and members of the Collaboration had voiced their hope that f40 would continue to work with them.

KW said all members, including f40, NEU, NAHT, ASCL, SoS, along with headteachers, had each spoken about what they felt their own campaign objectives should be during 2020.

Everyone agreed that while they were very pleased with the £7.1bn extra funding pledged by the Government in the autumn of 2019, it was not the £12.6bn that the Collaboration had asked for and was not sufficient to meet the demands on the education sector.

The Collaboration Group agreed to focus its objectives this year on three things:

- Sufficiently funded National Funding Formulae that leaves no child disadvantaged
- A sufficiently funded, centralised, High Needs Funding Formula
- A sufficiently funded wrap-around service for all children: social care and health, including mental health and emotional wellbeing

KW said there were many more issues raised, but members of the Collaboration agreed that they must concentrate their efforts on three so that messages did not get watered down or lost.

A short draft statement about the Collaboration Group's 2020 objectives had been written and circulated to members, which each organisation was commenting on.

Members of the f40 executive made slight amendments to the statement, which KW would then pass back to the Collaboration.

It is hoped the final statement can be agreed in February and then released to the media and on social media before the budget on March 11.

8. f40 aims for 2020

KW said she felt the f40 synopsis document, outlining the focus of the f40 group and its objectives, was a little out of date since Government pledged an additional £7.1bn on education in the autumn of 2019.

KW had drafted an updated version, which she circulated to members for discussion.

Some minor amendments were suggested. KW to circulate the final document and upload to the f40 website.

It was agreed that during 2020 f40 should be campaigning for:

- Urgent changes to the National Funding Formula to make it fair and transparent
- An additional £5.5bn in education by 2022/23
- A commitment from Government to plan education budgets on a three-year rolling programme

9. f40 annual conference

KW updated members of the executive about the planned f40 conference that is taking place at the LGA in Westminster on Tuesday, March 10.

She said she was still waiting for confirmation of the main keynote speaker from Government, but was hopeful now the General Election and Christmas break were over that the details would follow.

She was also confirming with f40 Vice Chairs Gary Streeter and Layla Moran MPs that they were still available to speak on the day. A new Labour Vice Chair would also be invited to speak.

KW said about 70 people had so far signed up to attend the conference. She said the speakers included:

- Tony Foot, Director, Funding and Analysis Directorate at the Department for Education
- Tony McArdle, Chairman of the SEND Leadership Board and an independent adviser to the Government's SEND Review
- Luke Sibieta, Programme Director at the Institute for Fiscal Studies
- Emily Proffitt, Primary Headteacher
- Caroline Barlow, 11-18 Headteacher
- Jackie Smith, CEO of Brunel SEN MAT
- Linda Collins, Chair of Hertfordshire branch of National Association of Day Nurseries and nursery owner
- f40 Vice Chairs – views from the political field

KW said she had invited the Chair and Deputy Chairs of the LGA's Children and Young People's Board. Members of the Collaboration Group were also being invited, along with Emma Knights from the NGA, ASCL, NAHT and NASEN.

KW to arrange a conference call to enable those involved in the day to discuss in more detail, including JMcl, IO, EP, JS, MJ.

10. MPs' briefing

KW said following the General Election, there were a number of new MPs who may not be accustomed to f40 and what the group's objectives were. JMcl had suggested that another MPs' briefing be held on the Parliamentary Estate during 2020 to share our messages and rally support for fairness and increased funding. Members agreed it was a good idea.

It was agreed that members of the f40 Finance Managers Research Team (FMRT) update the briefing paper in preparation for a briefing to MPs.

AM and MJ suggested a more succinct version be prepared this year, making it easy for people to read and digest. KW to discuss with MJ to arrange an FMRT meeting and discuss a new briefing paper.

KW to ask Vice Chair Gary Streeter if he would like to sponsor the briefing and arrange for f40 to have access to a committee room on the Parliamentary Estate. A suggested date of Wednesday, July 8 was put forward, so the briefing would follow the summer Executive Committee meeting. KW will update members once confirmed.

11. LGA conference

KW informed members that the LGA conference would be held in Harrogate this year between June 30 and July 2.

KW to inform the Executive if f40 is invited to speak at any of the fringe events.

12. Membership and Financial Update

KW informed members that f40 continued to have 42 members and had a healthy bank balance.

JMcl proposed that the membership fees for 2020/21 remain at £500, which was seconded by JH. The motion was agreed.

13. Dates of future Executive Committee meetings

- 10 Mar 2020 – Noted
- 8 July 2020 – Noted (TBC after MPs' briefing arranged)
- 14 Oct 2020 – Noted

14. Any other business

PD said he was concerned about claims that some schools had large surplus bank balances, when many were struggling to make ends meet. He said the issue seemed to be increasing, predominantly with small academies, which were carrying over as much as £1.4m to the next financial year.

PH said the issue, where it is believed to be happening, should be raised with the relevant Regional Schools Commissioner.

JH said it was very difficult and sometimes there may be specific reasons why schools were carrying over large budgets. She said academies were not permitted to go into deficit, so had to have a reserve in their bank accounts: what that reserve should amount to varied from school to school. She said there were many contributing factors, such as preparing or saving for a capital project, and while she was not defending any particular school, there were often reasons behind budgets being carried over.

15. Date of next meeting

Tuesday, March 10, 2020 at 4pm – 5pm