

Wiltshire Council

Schools Forum

12th November 2015

Membership of the f40 Group

Purpose of report

1. To provide an overview of the work of the f40 group and form a view as to Wiltshire would like to join the f40 group.

What is f40?

2. f40 represents a group of the lowest funded education authorities in England where government-set cash allocations for primary and secondary pupils are the lowest in the country.
3. The group has the support of MPs, councillors, education directors, governors, head teachers, parents and teaching union representatives. f40 currently has 38 member authorities representing 2,472,620 pupils (31.5% of the total in England) in 7,944 schools (36.2%)
4. As the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' remains and in some cases continues to widen, f40 is campaigning to change the way the government allocates funding to local authorities and schools.

Aims & Objectives of f40

5. Over the years f40's aim has been to influence a significant change in the way the government allocates funding to local authorities and schools. The allocations for primary and secondary pupils in the authorities in the f40 group are the lowest in the country.
6. Whilst f40 has welcomed the extra money allocated to education in recent years, it believes that adjustments to the formula have failed to address the fundamental problems inherent in the current system.
7. f40 has always maintained that it wants to see a system which recognises the special needs of all LAs whether they are in urban, rural or inner London locations. Fundamentally their aim is to enable a system which allows the lowest funded councils to catch up.
8. In recent years it has become clear that the government has recognised that a new, fairer and more transparent school funding system is needed. In July 2014, an additional allocation of £390million for 2015-16, shared between many of those authorities identified as being among the poorest

funded, was announced. Of this amount, around £210million was allocated to f40 member authorities and Wiltshire's share was £5.7million.

9. Whilst the f40 Group warmly welcomed the extra funding it expressed concern that the methodology for allocating the extra cash was flawed, in particular because it is solely based on the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. This has resulted in significant allocations to authorities, including some that are already comparatively well-funded, whilst some very low funded authorities received little or no increase.

The Wiltshire Position

10. Wiltshire has traditionally ranked amongst the bottom 10 funded authorities across the country, which has led to the authority making representations both locally and nationally with regard to the County's funded position.
11. The recently awarded 'fairer funding' monies of £5.7m for Wiltshire has done little to lift Wiltshire out of the bottom 10 funded authorities. Attached at Annex A is a table showing where Wiltshire currently ranks.
12. Prior to receiving the 'fairer funding' monies, Wiltshire was ranked the 6th lowest funded authority in the country, however following the receipt of the additional funding, Wiltshire is now ranked the 7th lowest funded authority in the country, see Appendix 1 to this report.
13. Wiltshire is currently not a member of the f40 group, however as the group has recently seen a shift in momentum, thoughts of joining the group have prompted discussion. Indeed, on a number of occasions, both elected members and head teachers in Wiltshire have made reference to the work and research of the f40 group.

The Financial Implications

14. Membership has been confirmed as costing £1,000 per annum. The secretary of the f40 group has written to confirm the cost of the annual membership. Recent members to the f40 group this year include Hampshire, Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire.

The Benefits

15. The LA would be entitled to have a representative on f40's Executive Committee. This would typically be the Cabinet Member, Director or a senior member of staff in education finance, though equally it could be a local head teacher, school governor or member of Schools Forum.
16. F40 maintain several databases of information and specifically include the following;
 - The Lead Member for Children's Services
 - The Director of Children's Services and/or Director responsible for Education/Schools
 - The Chairs of all Schools Forum
 - Finance Managers that deal with school funding
17. The f40 group operate a Finance Managers Research Team made up of experts from member authorities which works closely with the DfE to develop models towards a new funding formula.
18. The f40 group maintains a database of f40 MPs, those who represent f40 areas. (You may not be at all surprised to hear that Wiltshire's MPs are already on that list as they have been recently been working with f40.)

Proposals

19. Schools Forum is asked to note the content of the report.
20. Schools Forum is asked to give consideration to and decide whether to join the f40 group.
21. Should Schools Forum opt to join the f40 group, then the LA's Lead Member should be requested to advise local MP's of the decision and an appropriate press release issued to confirm the LA's membership decision.

Report author: Grant Davis, Schools Strategic Financial Support Manager
01225 718587 / grant.davis@wiltshire.gov.uk