

VECTOR LEARNING TRUST

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Minutes of the Axe Valley Local Governance Committee extraordinary meeting Held at Axe Valley Academy On Tuesday 18th July 2017 at 5:30pm

PRESENT: Jeremy Walden, Juliet Henham, Julie Paddick, Louise Wain, Liz Heron, Mandy McDonagh, Martin Huscroft, Paul Evans (arrived 5:35), Sean Little, Steve Green, Bec Davey (Clerk)

APOLOGIES: Mary Cleare, Mike Huskins

ABSENT: None

IN ATTENDANCE: Laura Jenkins (LJ) – Deputy Headteacher, Ann Adams (AA) - Trustee, Tina Coles (TC) – Chief Operations Officer

WELCOME

JW welcomed all to the meeting

1. APOLOGIES AND CONFIRMATION OF QUORUM

Apologies were received and accepted from Mary Cleare, Mike Huskins, Martin Brook and Jacky Lomax

It was noted that a quorum was present.

2. UPDATE FOLLOWING MEETING OF VLT

AA explained that the VLT Trust Board met last week following the meeting of AVA LGC. They have also met with the Department of Education (DfE) and are due to meet with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on Monday.

When the VLT met, the whole board was present bar one member. The trust has made the decision to close the sixth form at AVA. The trust discussed the option of a VLT sixth form in the future, which is something they should like to see develop. May be able to teach some subjects at AVA but this could not be confirmed but plans are to go forward with a VLT, not Holyrood Academy (HA) sixth form.

AA confirmed the AVA sixth form would close in 2018 and those starting in September 2017 would be the last year 12 students. They would be guaranteed a provision to complete their studies with VLT, although AA could not say where the second year would be. It would depend where the teachers were and how many students. Do not know number of students planning to start in September yet, although it is thought to be between 50 & 60. SG was unaware of this proposal and thought that would be able to guarantee students could complete their studies at

AVA, not just guaranteeing 2 years without knowing where the second year would be. AA will go back to the VLT and ask for both years to be at AVA, but cannot guarantee outcome. VLT do not feel it would be financially viable. Happy to guarantee commitment, but cannot say where.

VLT have approached DfE to ask that AVA become an 11-16 provision. Will have to go through Due Process. VLT need to create a business case and need support from the ESFA. They are to go in front of the Headteachers Board and Regional Commissioner during early autumn. There will also be a consultation process with Devon County Council, the local community, parents and pupils.

AA accepts it was not ideal to come to the meeting today without the full details, but it was not possible to meet with the ESFA prior to today. DfE have made it clear that it is not possible for AVA to continue subsidising the sixth form with funds allocated for 11-16 provision. AA really could not say any more until VLT have spoken with ESFA on Monday (after end of term).

SL wondered if the AVA LGC was an advisory board and if AA had come to this meeting to discuss or announce the VLT decision. AA explained the meeting on 4th July was to discuss it and from that the VLT were told of AVAs thoughts and ideas. That was the advisory meeting. This meeting is to let AVA LGC know the decision the VLT had reached.

PE confirmed that LGC no longer has the gift of making such decisions. The decision cannot be a total surprise and the role of LGC now is to help the cohort. He recognises that the deficit is unsustainable but hopes there is wiggle room. Will have pupils joining in September who think they will be here for 2 years. He asked the trust to give as much thought as possible for them to do both years at AVA otherwise may as well end the provision now.

TC explained that the trust is working out a recovery plan. Will be asking ESFA for a loan which could include costings for the two years to be at AVA. The timing of the conversion was not ideal. TC confirmed that the September year 12 & 13 costings have been included but not year 13 from September 2018.

JW felt rail-roaded into having to make a decision when to inform pupils when the full facts are not known. The meeting between the VLT and ESFA is before the GCSE results are known so JW proposed that the LGC convene during the summer break when more is known. Really cannot make an announcement before all the details are known. Need to be careful as may end up doing more harm than good.

MM wondered if the trust had made a decision when this would be announced. AA confirmed that the talks with the DfE and the consultation would be voiced in September and that the process had already begun.

SG was surprised at the change. He feels that the school has a moral duty for new year 12 students to see their whole two years through at AVA. He had originally said he would tell pupils and teachers at the end of this term but has now changed his mind as would not be here to answer questions. He feels isolated. SG was going to

propose that it be announced during the first couple of weeks of the new term, explaining that would not be recruiting year 11s but will carry on for year 12 & 13 whilst getting house in order – will try to do this without any redundancies (TC confirmed that either natural wastage or redundancies will be at HA and AVA). The fact that the trust cannot guarantee that both years will be at AVA is new information and he feels that if the announcement is not made now that students will be starting their courses under false pretences. Feels less clear now – it will appear that have left it this late to ‘throw the bomb and run’. SG feels that if the trust leaves the announcement until September they have a moral obligation to do both years at AVA. It also may not be possible for students to move to different locations to continue to year 13 due to examination board crossover and subjects being offered.

JP suggested it would be better for it to be announced in September when students have the opportunity to switch providers. If it is done now, there is no external help for parents or students.

Members of the LGC were not happy that this could fall to SG to announce. AA confirmed that it would be the trust who made the announcement but appreciate that it is SG who will receive the brunt as he is on site.

VLT want to ensure future sustainability of 11-16 provision. MM is concerned that there is no guarantee that 11-16 would be a success. Thought that were told that by becoming an Academy, the sixth form would be saved.

JP wondered if teachers could be moved for year 13 in September 2018 rather than the pupils moving but this would involve a bespoke plan and would not work with timetabling.

JH asked what the DfE had told the trust. AA confirmed that the DfE were not surprised about the current situation. Susan Phillips felt that VLT had been brave to have tried. AA assured AVA LGC that should the same situation happen at HA then tough decisions would also be made. However, HA numbers are growing and are able to quote actual figures as feeder schools have no other option, but with AVA there are at least four schools that the feeders move to so cannot ever say for certain what student numbers will be. AA wanted it noted that the work that SG and the SLT have done with feeder schools is amazing but AVA is where it is and the sixth form will not continue. Will stress to ESFA that want the 2 years that have been guaranteed to both be held at AVA.

Some LGC members do not feel settled in the partnership/academy. PE reminded them that if had not joined the partnership initially and then the academy, Axe Valley would not have been in the position to employ the head that it currently does and the sixth form would not have worked anyway. Numbers of students are simply not coming through and because of stricter guidelines in behaviour and attitude AVA is also losing some students during the year. Having said that, AVA is in a stronger position now than it was before. The FGB of TAVCC was doing a lot as there was no other choice but the AVA LGC has an advisory role and need to take a big step backwards.

AA admits that AVA was promised things that can no longer be delivered but this was based on May 2016 figures. If another Due Diligence had been done nearer conversion then it would have been put on hold.

SG thanked the governors as they are all volunteers and he recognises that they do not have to be here. He has real concern about how the announcement to everyone will be managed. Once the decision from the ESFA is known then the trust must make the announcement honourably. Don't delay it any more than necessary but also don't rush into anything as that could be catastrophic. Need to be prepared for September.

LJ agrees with SG. Cannot make rash decisions. Need to move forward. Financial planning is key. Have to be careful or it could be crippling if don't succeed as 11-16 provider.

JW confirmed need to delve deep into figures. Need to know where AVA stands. Aware that there will still be costs during lag period but no students. AVA is not unique; education funding is a nationwide problem, but have a responsibility for this academy to get it right. JW confirmed that will stand with SG and confirmed that the best thing to happen to the school over the past couple of years is SG & LJ.

AA to advise AVA LGC of outcome of meeting between VLT and ESFA and LGC to convene during summer break to discuss.

MEETING CLOSED AT 6:44

CHAIR:

Approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting;

..... Signed
..... Date