



SUMMARY MINUTES of the VALUATION TRIBUNAL SERVICE BOARD

88th Meeting, held on 23 September 2015 at 10:30am

Present: Anne Galbraith CBE (Chairman), John O'Shea (Deputy Chairman), Martin Allingham, Ronald Barham, Robin Evans, Martin Young (VTE Vice-President).

In attendance: Tony Masella (Chief Executive & Chief Operating Officer), Ann Batom (Director of Finance & Information Systems), Lee Anderson (Director of Operations & Development), Diane Russell (Board Secretary)

ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were apologies from Ian Tighe. Martin Young, standing in during the vacancy for the VTE Presidency, was welcomed to his first meeting. There were no declarations of interest.

ITEM 2: CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES. MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting of 22 July 2015 were accepted as an accurate record. All of the actions had been completed before the meeting as required.

ITEM 3: MATTER FOR DECISION: PAY PROGRESSION

This item was taken as a confidential Part 2 meeting.

ITEM 4: FINANCE

There had been detailed discussion of the matters dealt with in the Finance Overview and in the management accounts. The draft minutes of that meeting had been tabled. The DEL resource pay budget would not be fully used because of the difficulty in recruitment to a number of vacant posts. There might be further non-pay efficiency savings. However, there were a number of uncertainties and DCLG agreed that it would be prudent to review at QBR3. .

A budget of £220k had been approved for pension consolidation and £120k capital for the WAN contract. The VTS might need a further £360k in AME to cover forecast pension costs. However, the actual figure would not be known until the actuaries' report in February 2016.

The forecast at QBR2 to the end of the year was £7.2m against an original budget of £7.45m.

ITEM 5: REVIEW OF VTS STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

This had last been updated on 7 September and discussed at the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on 22 September. The Board's comments will be taken note of at the next review.

ITEM 6: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Triennial Review - a member of the team had met with Board members who had been available the previous day. The team wish to meet some service members and attend a hearing. They had seen a number of agents and the VOA. Vice-Presidents. Data was sought on appeal volumes. It was understood that the review was still on target for completion by the end of year.

VTE member recruitment – the panels at JAC had started interviewing earlier in the week. The JAC was already looking at reviewing the competencies and job description for the President role and the recruitment could be fitted into this current year's programme.

ITEM 7: VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Martin Young presented a report from all three Vice-Presidents and invited suggestions for changes to the format. The Board asked that any concerns or decisions that might eventually impact on the VTS administration, for example backlogs, underpayments, member and staff

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issues, be flagged up. This would give an element of forewarning for strategic planning. The reports would also be shared with DCLG for their assurance.

Martin Young stressed that the Vice-Presidents did not want to fetter the hands of an incoming new President by taking major decisions or making changes, however a meeting had been arranged on operational matters, including IT. Tony Masella had asked them to look again at disclosure and exchange, as the process was not working as intended.

ITEM 8:CEO'S REPORT

Pensions consolidation – this was progressing as planned with consolidation into LPFA taking place by 31 December and transfer payments made before year end.

NDR reform – the consultation document would shortly be issued. The Enterprise Bill had started its legislative journey, incorporating proposals for a new penalty in NDR cases for knowingly submitting false information.

Cap on public sector exit payments – there had been a short consultation over the summer holidays, to which the Board had responded.

The 'Chancellor's target' had been all but met at 94.3% and the VTS hit its aim of listing every appeal it could at least once. Listing such volumes had put a high strain on the system. The risk of a possible mismatch between VTE expectations for hearing numbers and VOA's view should be incorporated in the risk register, as should a risk around delivery of the 2017 revaluation, due to a legislative change to effective date of alterations causing a massive influx of appeals in Q1 this year.

ITEM 9: BUSINESS PROGRESS REPORTS

Incident response and business continuity. The strategic and location-based plans had gone live in July and been discussed in team meetings with all staff. Revised incident response cards had been issued; an exercise to test the arrangements was planned for February.

Data security. No issues had needed to be escalated by the SIRO to the Accounting Officer. A full review of the Information Security System had been undertaken and PSN accreditation had been achieved for another 12 months.

ITEM 10: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT GROUP REPORT

A Project Summary Sheet was presented and there were no areas of concern.

ITEM 11: COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee draft minutes had been circulated and referred to in item 4 above.

Audit & Risk Assurance Committee members had received a training session from the NAO the previous day. In addition to standing items, the Committee had also reviewed the Finance Risk Register and a draft assurance map, and had approved revisions to the Fraud Policy, Fraud Response Plan, Whistle-blowing Policy and Data Handling Guidance. Two internal audit reports had been received on time and both concluded "substantial assurance"

ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING -The next Board meeting - Strategy Day on 27 October; next regular meeting - 25 November 2015.