



SUMMARY MINUTES of the VALUATION TRIBUNAL SERVICE BOARD

89th Meeting, held on 25 November 2015 at 10:30am

Present: Anne Galbraith CBE (Chairman), John O'Shea (Deputy Chairman), Martin Allingham, Robin Evans, Ian Tighe, Martin Young (VTE Vice-President) **In attendance:** Tony Masella (Chief Executive & Chief Operating Officer), Ann Battom (Director of Finance & Information Systems), Lee Anderson (Director of Operations & Development), Diane Russell (Board Secretary)

ITEMS 1 and 2: APOLOGIES, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

There were apologies from Ronald Barham. There were no declarations of interest. The Minutes of the meeting of 23 September 2015 were accepted as an accurate record. The actions had been completed as necessary. On matters arising, it was confirmed that a report on venues would come to the Board in January.

ITEM 3: FINANCE

There had been detailed discussion and scrutiny of the issues and numbers in the Finance Overview and in the management accounts at the Finance Committee's meeting. The draft minutes of that meeting had been circulated. The forecast shows a surplus arising from vacant staff posts or project spend which will not take place before year end. DCLG had confirmed the VTS budget proposal at QBR2 based on £8.199m for 2015-16, with 92 headcount. Having received an explanation for the current under spend, the Board endorsed the recommendation to hand back surplus funds to DCLG, keeping a small contingency.

DCLG had asked the VTS to suspend work on an independent finance system for a short time as there was an ongoing review regarding introducing a financial package that would cover all arms-length bodies.

A tender process had been run for the provision of hardware maintenance in which ComputaCentre's bid was successful.

The employer's pension contribution would be moving to 16.8% from 1 December 2015; the impact of this was currently being modelled and would also impact on next year's budget. This interim rate might be subject to further alteration.

ITEM 4: REVIEW OF VTS STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

On the Board's risk appetite, it was recognised that it was variable on different issues. The Board reviewed the terminology used in the register and agreed some format changes. The Risk Management Policy had been revised to reflect some points arising from the presentation on risk management at the Strategy Day and the internal audit on risk management. Subject to the changes in terminology, the Board approved the revised Policy.

The Risk Register had last been updated on 11 November 2015, with two risks being closed and one reduced, and the narrative throughout having been tightened up. The Board approved the changes. The risk on appeal volumes led to a discussion on the volumes of appeals (140,000) that the VTS had agreed with DCLG to list (and which figure was published in the Business Plan) and the considerably lower number the VOA was resourced by DCLG to clear. Tony Masella would be writing to DCLG about the mismatch in expectations.

ITEM 5: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

VTE member recruitment was on track with formal notification expected at the end of the year. An online training programme and induction documentation were being developed. A new

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business case was being submitted to HMCTS and the MoJ in consultation with the VTE Vice-Presidents to recruit next in the north-west and south-west of England

The Board would be making a response to the Department's consultation paper Check, Challenge, Appeal, which had been circulated. The Board was particularly concerned at the lack of sharing of information in the early stages by the VOA and had many concerns on the issue of fees. The proposals in relation to the Upper Tribunal were also of questionable benefit.

Triennial Review was on-going and its members had now attended hearings. Completion of the review was still expected by the end of December.

ITEM 6: VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It had been agreed that there would be a pilot to improve processes on disclosure and exchange. There was a blockage for over-payment of council tax CTR cases and a date was needed for a test case. The Board noted the VTE risk register.

ITEM 7: CEO'S REPORT

This included: A breakdown of the VTS's budget at QBR2; spending review - the Chancellor was delivering his speech as the Board met; VTE member training - there was a fall off in attendance/take up, which was being monitored. There was a minimum number of participants below which the training could not be considered value for money.

ITEM 8: BUSINESS PROGRESS REPORTS

Internal targets and volumetrics for Quarter 2. Customer satisfaction had seen a slight upturn coinciding with the end of the 'Chancellor's Target' work and more case management of CT cases. Rail travel costs showed good reductions on spend and individual transaction numbers. There was a constant battle to compile full-day lists of NDR appeals because of last minute activity on the listed cases, over which the VTS had no control. Appeal receipts had returned to a more normal level. Complaints had been fewer than the recorded number of compliments.

KPI achievement.

Five of the eight KPIs were well on track for achievement by the end of the year. Sickness absence had increased because of a few long term sickness cases, which when excluded, showed the VTS had little problem with absence.

ITEM 9: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT GROUP REPORT

There were no areas of concern with the projects' activity. There was good progress to report in the website improvement work with re-launch on target for March; WAN implementation which would allow internet on desktops; President recruitment had commenced but it would be a slow process; a draft business case was about to be submitted to DCLG for an appeals management system.

ITEM 10: COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee draft minutes had been circulated and referred to in item 3 above. The Committee had conducted its annual review of its Terms of Reference and some minor changes were approved by the Board. The Committee's Annual Assurance Statement to the Board was received.

ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Wednesday 27 January 2016 at 10.30am.