

SUMMARY MINUTES of the VALUATION TRIBUNAL SERVICE BOARD

95th Meeting, held on 27 July 2016 at 10:30am

Present: Anne Galbraith CBE (Chairman), John O'Shea (Deputy Chairman), Martin Allingham, Robin Evans, Ian Tighe. **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)

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

1. There were apologies from Martin Young. There were no declarations of interest. The Minutes of the meeting of 8 June 2016 were accepted as an accurate record. The actions had been completed as necessary. There were no matters arising.

ITEM 3: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT UPDATE

2. Appeals Management System. Attempts were being made to recruit an IT Business Solutions Architect to work as additional IT resource. The VTS was gathering information for the documentation and would start putting this together if needs be in the absence of external resource. The timeline was that the new system needed to be ready for 1 April 2017, though in reality receipt of CCA appeals was likely to be significantly after that date.

3. Back office servers/ Connect issue. Though this had begun as an issue about back office servers, DCLG was suggesting that the VTS move onto its Connect system for a whole array of services. On current understanding, particularly in relation to technical and security issues, this was not the preferred option. However, in order to secure the necessary capital funding, the Board recognised the need to go along with the Department's shared service agenda and the wider coverage that was being proposed. The business case presented to DCLG would be different, with costs and a timetable required from DCLG's Fujitsu partners.

4. Sharepoint. Work towards developing the existing application to handle other appeal types had progressed with the sign off of design documents, but this was now caught up in Connect issue - see 3 above.

5. Aspire exit. The VTS was moving forward on a Direct Award of contract to HMRC who had confirmed that the arrangement would have to take the form of a contract. Lawyers were in the process of setting out the VTS's expectations of the service, and they would be engaging with HMRC lawyers. The costs were not yet known but Tony Masella had been given reason to believe they would be within the estimates, recognising the non-profit element of the new set up HMRC company.

ITEM 4: FINANCE

6. The Annual Report & Accounts 2015-16 had been signed on 22 June, signed by the Comptroller & Auditor General on 27 June and laid in Parliament on 7 July.

7. Training and testing of the Sage replacement finance system was underway. Ann Batom wanted the new system to be in place by 1 September 2016 at the latest. The project was generally on target and feedback from Finance staff positive; efficiencies in processes were achievable. An internal audit was planned on this to reassure ARAC that all the necessary government controls were in place; the aim would be to have this ready for the September meeting of ARAC.

8. Management accounts to 30 June 2016: Total expenditure for the first quarter was £1,480k, excluding depreciation of £55k. GIA income was £1,621k. The capital requirement for the year was currently forecast at £1,100k.

ITEM 5: REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

9. The risk register had last been updated at EMT on 13 July. It showed 11 risks, including a new risk around customer expectations once fees came in for lodging non-domestic rating appeals.

ITEM 6: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

10. The new Secretary of State was Sajid Javed; Marcus Jones remained Minister with responsibilities including the VTS/VTE. Comments had been submitted to the Triennial Review team on the draft report, but publication was still awaited. Parliament was now in recess. Up to 30 VTE chairs and 30 VTE members were sought for the whole of the west of the country. The VTE Vice-Presidents had been told that there would be an announcement about the appointment of a new President shortly: The closing date for applications for VTS Chairman and Board service member was 10 July; interviews might be delayed. It had originally been planned that there would be a month's overlap for a handover with Anne Galbraith. Martin Allingham had attended his first President's Advisory Council meeting as an observer on 7 July 2016.

ITEM 7: VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT

11. A paper had been circulated in advance of the meeting

ITEM 8: CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

12. **NDR Pilot.** Training had been carried out for relevant VTE members and staff. Hearings would start around September and, if this addressed the problems in exchange and disclosure, would be rolled out across the country. Internal audit would be looking at this and there were clear evaluation/success criteria.

13. Of the 17 objectives set out in the Business Plan, four were listed for Quarter 1 and these had been completed. Of the other 13, one had been completed and actions had begun on all but one of the remaining 11.

14. Telephone interviews were conducted with 90 appellants who had attended a hearing in the last 4-5 months. Overall satisfaction was largely unchanged from Q4 2015-16, though 37% of unsuccessful appellants were satisfied with the service compared to 29% last quarter. There remained some inconsistencies in standards of customer service and some process failings that must be addressed to see improvement. An action plan had been drafted and this would be included in the next CEO's report.

15. The Board approved the recommendation to take up the offer of alternative government office space in Doncaster. Around £50k capital would be needed to create tribunal/training space and £10k for cabling.

ITEM 9: PERFORMANCE SUMMARY 2016-17, Quarter 1

16. The proposed list of KPIs for 2016-17 was presented. Many of these were the same or similar to last year, as were the targets. This was in recognition of the fact that listings were increasing this year and there was pressure on staff to deliver the IT change programme. There were new KPIs on cost of external venues and cost per appeal. There were two KPIs that related to VP work and these needed to be agreed with the VPs/new President.

Appeal receipts were currently about 9,000 a month; there was a higher settlement rate now that VOA staff had moved back to appeals work from revaluation work. The proposed list of internal performance measures was presented. The Board was generally happy with the range of these, which included some new measures on paper usage, electronic communication and the time taken to issue short form decisions. Staff travel information was being collated to aim for a target to reduce by 15% the number of days where staff travel over 5 hours.

ITEM 10: COMMITTEE REPORTS

17. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee draft minutes for the meeting on 8 June had been circulated.

ITEM 11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

24. There was no other business.

A Part 2 meeting followed

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - The next Board meeting is on Wednesday 28 September 2016 at 10.30