

SUMMARY MINUTES of the VALUATION TRIBUNAL SERVICE BOARD

96th Meeting, held on 28 September 2016 at 10:30am

Present: Anne Galbraith CBE (Chairman), Gary Garland (VTE President, ex-officio Board member), John O'Shea (Deputy Chairman), Martin Allingham, Robin Evans. **In attendance:** Tony Masella (Chief Executive & Chief Operating Officer), Lee Anderson (Director of Operations & Development), Tracey Cheetham (Interim Financial Controller), Diane Russell (Board Sec)

ITEMS 1, 2 and 3: WELCOME, APOLOGIES, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Gary Garland was welcomed to his first Board meeting. There were apologies from Ian Tighe. 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. Following a meeting with the trade union to discuss the staff survey recommendations these were being considered by Unison. It was agreed that Item 10, Chief Executive's Report, would be taken next.

ITEM 10: CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Finance team. Recent resource issues in the finance team had identified the need to take on a second Financial Assistant; such an appointment would be within complement; that and the interim financial controller appointments could be met from the pay budget.

SAGE 50. At the VTS ARAC the previous day, the Committee had received the internal audit report on the project. The Committee had agreed that this was probably not the best solution for the VTS and that there were some concerns about the procurement. For now, the CEO sought the Board's approval to abort the project and remain on SAP. The recent interim engagement of a financial controller with SAP experience meant that it could be used better. The Board agreed that the VTS should stay on SAP until the end of this financial year.

Contract award to HMRC. It was hoped that the contract would be signed on 3 October; it would run until September 2019, though the aim was to exit before then. The Board wished to be notified when the contract had been signed.

Connect hosting environment. It was now clear that DCLG's Fujitsu Connect service could provide a hosting environment without the need for VTS to take all the various additional elements; the VTS's business applications could sit outside Connect.

NDR pilot. The first hearing would be on 18 October and early signs were positive; of 207 appeals listed almost 50% had already been settled. The pilot process would remain in place in Kent and Leicestershire until 31 March 2017. Then, after an evaluation exercise, it would either cease or be rolled out to all or some of the country. VTE members in these areas had received bespoke training.

Tribunal user survey. An action plan to address concerns and confusions arising in the appeals process was endorsed and it was noted that Check, Challenge and Appeal (CCA) and the pilot would also assist in improving the user experience.

ITEM 4: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Appeals Management System. Documents for the tender process had been prepared and checked with Crown Commercial Services. An update on costs would be provided after the bids were received. DCLG had agreed a business case for capital funding for this year. For this phase of the work, only the internal functions would be developed but eventually the system would be external facing. The procurement would be for an off the shelf product that could be configured to meet the requirements identified. Development would be through the iterative Agile approach - a prudent approach given that regulations had yet to be confirmed; throughout the development stakeholders' views would be sought. The Board gave its approval to engage a partner.

ITEM 5: MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO 31 AUGUST 2016

The management accounts included a reforecast budget for the year, drawn up after discussions with budget holders. Though the Finance Committee had considered the management accounts available at that time, it had concluded that there was insufficient clarity around any underspend that might be offered back to the Department, if any. A decision on that was needed by DCLG by

mid-October. The CEO would circulate the Board with any proposed figure, how it had been arrived at and the reasons for any underspend, seeking confirmation.

ITEM 6: SIRO UPDATE

A data security update had been circulated in advance of the meeting. In addition to news of the PSN accreditation, the ISS and BCP, it contained a proposal that Board members should sign a declaration, as staff and VTE members do, that they will handle data securely. This was agreed and paperwork would be sent to members for signature.

ITEM 7: REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The risk register had last been updated at EMT on 14 September; it showed 11 risks, none of which was new nor changed in its residual assessment, but four were in the category requiring continuous monitoring/immediate action.

ITEM 8: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Recruitment of a VTS Chairman. Interviews had been held; the names would go to the Minister after the party conference (after 10 October). There was provision for the Deputy Chairman to act in the event of a vacancy, and the Chairman would meet John O'Shea shortly to discuss current issues. This meant that John O'Shea could not chair the ARAC and so Robin Evans would step in as ARAC Chairman if necessary.

Board service member. Interviews were to take place on 29 September. The process for anyone recommended would then follow that for the Chairman.

Triennial Review. There was still no published outcome.

The Chairman noted that this would be her last report as Chairman and wished the VTS well for the future. John O'Shea recorded the Board's thanks to Anne for her service over 13 years, during which there had been many challenges and changes; she had undoubtedly made the VTS a leaner, more focussed organisation.

ITEM 9: PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The President updated this with news that the complaints referred to in the report had now been resolved.

ITEM 11: COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee draft minutes of its last meeting had been circulated.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The Chairman gave an oral report of the business conducted the day before the Board meeting.

ITEM 12: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 30 November 2016 at 10.30