

SUMMARY MINUTES of the VALUATION TRIBUNAL SERVICE BOARD

104th Meeting, held on 29 November 2017 at 10:30am

Present: John O'Shea (Acting Chairman), Gary Garland (VTE President and ex-officio member), Martin Allingham, Lola Moses. **In attendance:** Tony Masella (Chief Executive & Chief Operating Officer), Lee Anderson (Director of Operations & Development), Mark Duly (Interim Finance Director), Diane Russell (Board Sec)

WELCOME, APOLOGIES, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

There were apologies from Robin Evans and no declarations of interest. The Minutes of the meeting of 27 September 2017 were accepted as an accurate record. The actions had been completed as necessary. Actions from the Board's Strategy Day were noted as progressing as planned. There were no matters arising.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT UPDATE

A summary of the current IT projects was presented, showing that all were moving forward satisfactorily. There was a focus on Sharepoint development work. The appeals management system was now live and ready to deal with CCA appeals; its portals for external users and its integration with Sharepoint were next to be tackled. Meetings were being held with DCLG to discuss the move away from Connect to the Cloud.

FINANCE

Mark Duly was formally welcomed to the Board meeting, as Interim Finance Director. A detailed budget review with each budget holder was undertaken at the end of September. There was some confidence that the VTS would end the year within budget. The in-year capital forecast and outturn had been carefully monitored; the budget would be fully utilised.

MATTERS FOR DECISION

Pension Deficit Payment 2017-18 business case. Finance Committee had reviewed the draft and recommended its approval by the Board. This sought the Department's approval to use up to £550k of savings to pay down the pension deficit. The revised business case was approved by the Board as a prudent move for the long term.

Doncaster office move capital: business case for capital. Finance Committee had reviewed the draft and recommended its approval by the Board. The Board had previously given its approval to a business case for capital to provide a hearing room in the new office. Now a further £50k was being sought for telecoms costs omitted from the original business case. The Board approved the revised business case.

REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The register currently showed 11 risks and was noted by the Board.

ACTING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Three candidates for the Board member position had met the Minister and a decision was awaited. An unknown number of candidates for the post of VTS Chairman had also been seen.

BOARD EFFECTIVENESS APPRAISAL

The NAO's Board Evaluation Questionnaire had been completed by VTS Board members. From the scoring there was overall satisfaction with how the Board was functioning and serviced. It was agreed that a performance appraisal would in future be carried out annually, to be followed by a Board-only discussion of the conclusions and development of an action plan arising from it.

VTE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The President was gratified to see how the new Directions were working in respect of clearing appeals (see CEO's report below). The President's Advisory Council would shortly cease to exist. There would then be North, Midlands and South, for the purposes of training and communication.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Winter supplementary estimates had been submitted to DCLG for the current year, along with estimates for the following years.

Clearance rates were much higher than ever before because of the new disclosure and exchange process. Postponements were now down to around 7% of cases listed compared to around 50% last year; settled cases now averaged 65% resulting in a clearance rate of 93% of cases listed (about 30,000 a quarter). It remained the case that only about 2% of cases required a Tribunal decision.

No appeal had been registered yet under CCA. It remained unclear how appeal fees were to be treated for accounting purposes. Discussions were ongoing with DCLG and HMT.

QUARTER 2 UPDATES

Achievements towards Business Plan objectives. Of 16 objectives, seven had been scheduled for achievement by the end of Quarter 2. Six of these had been, with the seventh on reducing costs and achieving VFM being underway.

KPIs and internal performance measures. Of the internal performance measures, those causing concern in Quarter 2 related to issuing decisions within two months of the hearing and issuing short-form decisions inside a month. This had been raised with managers and performance was being monitored more closely. Paper usage had halved in Quarter 2 compared to the previous quarter. Appeals received had dropped from 65,000 to below 5,000.

Of the 10 published KPIs, seven targets were being met in Quarter 2 and two were on track. Venues used for hearings were again being reviewed, as requirements (for instance for connectivity) were changing.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee. Draft minutes of its meeting on 16 November 2017 were noted. The Committee had reviewed its terms of reference and the changes proposed were approved by the Board.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 31 January 2018.