

SUMMARY MINUTES of the VALUATION TRIBUNAL SERVICE BOARD

106th Meeting, held on 28 March 2018 at 10:30am

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

WELCOME, APOLOGIES, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Keung Wong was welcomed to his first Board meeting. There were no apologies and no declarations of interest. The Minutes of the meeting of 31 January 2018 were accepted as an accurate record. The actions had been completed as necessary. There were no matters arising.

MATTERS FOR DECISION

VTS Budget 2018-19. Since the last meeting MHCLG had accepted the CEO's proposal to realign the VTS indicative DEL budget of £7,037k, moving sufficient from 'non-Pay' to 'Pay' resulting in a pay budget of £2,900k. The draft budget presented reflected that realignment. This had been discussed at the Finance Committee, which was recommending the budget to the Board for approval. The Board approved the DEL budget of £7,037k for 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019 and noted that the total funding submitted by the Finance Director of £8,048k reflected £100k capital and £911k AME, which was subject to change and confirmation by MHCLG.

The budget proposed in the Business Plan to meet all VTS requirements for 2018-19, including capital, was for a total of £8,685k and this proposed budget had been submitted to MHCLG under the winter supplementary estimate process. This included: £500k capital and an additional £340k for Pay. The outcome of the bid would not be known until June. The Board noted the bid.

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

On a total resource DEL of £7.241k the forecast spend to year end was currently £7.127k. On a capital budget of £500k the expected spend at year-end was £482k. A review of assets might result in an increase in the depreciation figure which was currently forecast to be £374k on a budget of £400k. The AME forecast at £256k was lower than the budget because of the pension deficit payments made during the year. The Board noted the accounts as at 28 February 2018.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT UPDATE

A timeline for all activity was presented, which was welcomed by the Board. The dates of Board approvals of business cases would be added. The Sharepoint project was almost complete; further development work would follow to integrate it with the Dynamics CRM system for appeals management. An improved VTE member module booking system to work with members' electronic diaries was being investigated for the future. An estimate from RCDTS to move data to the new CRM system after cleansing was still in negotiation and discussions with the VOA so the aspiration to move off the CDB in October was unlikely to be realised, with savings and data cleansing benefits would be delayed. The Board was supportive of the executive's attempts to resist this delay and also of a possible compromise, whereby the council tax records were moved from the CDB sooner (as these contain more personal data). The MHCLG Connect contract was ending in March 2019. There was a meeting arranged to learn about progress and implications for the VTS. The HR Advance system would be enhanced with a PDR module and a learning management system would be incorporated early in 2018-19.

CORPORATE PLAN AND BUSINESS PLAN

MHCLG had made comments on the draft, which the Board considered. The CEO would make the agreed amendments and re-circulate the document.

REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The register, reviewed by EMT on 13 March 2018, currently showed 14 live risks, with five in the 'red' category requiring immediate corrective action and active management. Following a review by the Board a number of risks were reviewed.

The Doncaster office move remained a high and increasing risk. DWP evidently had concerns about the co-location from an operational point of view. The situation was getting critical in terms of timing; the original aim had been to have a new lease in place from 1 April 2018. The CEO had the Board's support to go back to the Cabinet Office to explain the current impasse.

ACTING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Acting Chairman reported having approved payment of a further £550k for pension deficit and £2 million from MHCLG for the pension liability, which were above the CEO's delegation. The deficit had been around £5 million at the point of consolidation; it was though the deficit was now about £750k, assuming the model for calculating it stayed the same.

VTE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The President had determined the first CCA appeal and, though the appeal was dismissed, the VOA had not complied with the regulations, in that a proper determination at challenge stage had not been made and they had also tried to introduce new evidence. A meeting was to be held with the VOA on 19 April to understand their processes. The President had met with the Upper Tribunal and explained the difference *Simpsons Malt* had made to the VTE in terms of lengthier hearings. However, as a result of the judgment, to date there had been only five applications to reinstate and all had been resolved. From the last round of VTE member recruitment, there were some who were slow to engage; the President would be writing to them to discover the reasons for this. The Board again discussed the question of how a wider pool of applicants could be reached. The Board noted the report.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

In the recent adverse weather conditions, nine hearings had been cancelled, involving very few appeals; appellants had been contacted and consulted. There was more clarity about the treatment of CCA fees, but the matter of a budget to cover the administration charges was still to be resolved.

KPIs AND INTERNAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Those KPIs and internal performance measures at risk of being missed were discussed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee. Draft minutes of its meeting on 23 March 2018 had been tabled. Most of the issues had been referred to in discussion of the management accounts and budget. The Board noted the minutes.

Audit & Risk Assurance Committee. The Committee's annual report had been tabled and was received by the Board. The Committee had met the previous day and, apart from normal business had agreed to conduct its own effectiveness review in alternate years.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

This was John O'Shea's last meeting after 10 years as a Board member, with four years as Deputy Chairman and 17 months as Acting Chairman. He thanked the staff and the Board for their support and said that they and former Board members had made the role enjoyable. Robin Evans voiced the Board's regrets at John's departure at short notice and noted that 10 years' service was a remarkable achievement.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 28 March 2018.