

## **SUMMARY MINUTES of the VALUATION TRIBUNAL SERVICE BOARD**

**109th Meeting, held on 26 September 2018 at 10:30am**

**Present:** Robin Evans (Chairman), Gary Garland (VTE President and ex-officio member), Suzanne McCarthy (Deputy Chairman), Lola Moses, Martin Allingham and. **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

There were apologies from Neil Buckley. New Board member Kevin Everett was welcomed to his first Board meeting. There were no declarations of interest. The Minutes of the meeting of 25 July 2018 were accepted as an accurate record. The actions had been completed as necessary.

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

The VTS was now occupying Crossgate House, Doncaster under a tenancy at will, having moved in over a weekend and been up and running on the Monday. There was no hearing room there; it was purely a hub office for staff.

Tony Masella had arranged a forum with the VOA's Director of Operations and its Chief Valuer in response to MHCLG's concern about relations between the two organisations. The first meeting would be in October.

Neil Buckley had arranged a meeting with the JAC to seek some flexibility in the recruitment process for VTE members. It had become apparent that the JAC was constrained by its statutory remit and its workplan dictated by MoJ. Tony Masella had subsequently met with a team at MoJ, who thought a 'lighter touch' could be achieved. They recognised the difficulties in recruiting valuer members, as this was also their experience in recruiting to the Property Tribunal and the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber). It was hoped that the VTE would be put in the recruitment programme for 2019-20. Regarding the law change needed to remove VTE recruitment from JAC, MoJ recommended that the MHCLG Secretary of State write to MoJ's, so that the matter was at least raised to await a suitable legislative vehicle; MHCLG would need to drive this.

The Complaints Policy and process had been revised and staff informed.

Achievements against Business Plan objectives were reported for Quarter 1. Of 12 planned, nine had been completed. The Board wished to see more detail about the achievements and measures in the next report.

The Board was pleased to note the action plan to address concerns raised in the tribunal user survey.

### MATTERS FOR DECISION

**Framework document.** MHCLG had reviewed the 2013 version to bring it in line with other ALBs' and using Cabinet Office guidelines and the VTS had provided comments, most of which had been accepted.

**Business case.** A draft on the capital requirement for the 'business to business' open standards interface project was approved by the Board. Regulations required the VTS to have in place an electronic system for receiving appeals. Individual transactions would be managed under the first stage of the project, but this development was to allow large agents to make multiple appeals easily. The VTS had, from the outset, built a relationship with agents to develop what would work best for them and the VTS. The project would be completed within three months, by January 2019. A procurement process would be taking place through Crown Commercial Services.

### FINANCE REPORT

**Management accounts to 31 August 2018.** The Finance Committee had examined the report in detail. The forecast was currently for £8.1million of £8.4 million to be spent by 31 March 2019, amounting to a 3% underspend. This was due to vacant posts (Pay) and Non-pay savings on IT and a reduced number of hearings in the year. While ongoing attempts were being made to fill the vacant posts, in some cases the issue was non-competitive salaries, in other cases it was the inability to pay for advertising. However, in response to a free advert placed, some 10 people had responded for clerk roles and these applications were being considered.

Any underspend in recent years had been used to pay down the pension deficit, to the extent that the pension scheme was in surplus.. However, rather than make no payment this year, the Finance Committee was recommending that, because the valuation may be impacted by market conditions, the payment should be made as usual and also any surplus should be put into the pension fund. The Board agreed to this.

#### OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMME REPORT

**Programme Management update.** Referring to the risk of not spending the full capital allocation by or until the end of the financial year, Lee Anderson explained that considerable preparatory work had already been carried out on the projects.

A draft business case was being prepared for the migration of appeals data into a repository and the only delays in this would be getting RCDTS and VOA on board to release the data. It was hoped that work would be underway in January.

On the ending of Connect and MHCLG's IT modernisation programme, the VTS would now have a place on the project board and there was a commitment to share information. Indicative costs now totalled £100k. The changeover might now slip into January.

Preparations had been made for both the CRM portal and business to business solution for dealing with CCA appeals and both could be implemented quite quickly.

A prototype system for member allocation was now ready.

Revised timelines for the projects were presented, showing the dates that business cases would be coming to the Board for approval.

**KPIs and performance measures.** These were largely satisfactory. The deferral rate had increased slightly because of a particular judgment from the Upper Tribunal and a number of McDonalds' appeals stayed because of the Supreme Court Iceland decision. The payment of undisputed invoices within five days of receipt was below target but there had been a significant improvement on last year.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Finance Committee.** The Committee's draft minutes from its meeting on 17 September had been circulated and referred to. They were noted.

**Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.** The Committee had met the previous day and an oral report on its business was provided by the Chairman.

#### ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 27 November 2018 at 10.30.