

Summary Minutes of the Valuation Tribunal Service Board 138th Meeting held on 27 July 2022 at 10:30 am via MS Teams

Present: Harry Rich (Chair); Suzanne McCarthy (Deputy Chair); Neil Buckley (Member); Paul Cammidge (Member); Stephen Chappell (Member); Alison Griffiths (Member) and Lola Moses (Member).

In attendance: Tony Masella (Chief Executive & Chief Operating Officer); Lee Anderson (Director of Operations & Development) and Nicola Hunt (Board Secretary).

Welcome, Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Confirmation of Minutes

Apologies for absence had been received from Gary Garland (VTE President, *ex-officio* member); Kevin Everett (Member), Keung Wong (Finance Director) and Peter Bates (ALB Business Partner, DLUHC) as an observer.

There were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022 were confirmed as accurate. Actions had been completed as required.

Chief Executive's Report

Tony Masella referred to his previously circulated report and drew the Board's attention to the salient points. He advised that 32 new senior members had been appointed, with five current members promoted to senior member (chairman) status.

Since the increase to three-day office working on 1 May 2022, 21 sickness day absences had been recorded from office-based staff due to COVID or COVID like symptoms as at 20 July. These 21 incidents related to four office-based staff. The financial impact of this sickness absence was circa £11,500. Hybrid working will be retained until 31 March 2023, although Tony Masella is keen to return to some normality.

Concern was expressed with the low level of response to the VTE Members' Conference on 15 September 2022, with only 36 confirmed attendances. The Training Team will contact all members who had not responded to encourage attendance.

The VTS had been named as finalist in two categories at the IRRV Awards 2022 (Excellence in Innovation (service delivery) and Excellence in Rating/or Valuation).

Business Plan achievements on objectives to Q1. The Board reviewed the achievements to Q1. It was noted there were 13 objectives, two were met and two categorised as amber. Input was now required from the sponsoring Department.

Draft Governance Statement 2021-22

The draft Governance Statement was circulated; this will form part of the Annual Report & Accounts. It had been reviewed by the ARAC in June whose suggested amendments had been incorporated. Tony Masella invited the Board to comment.

Matters for Information

Management Meeting Structure. Tony Masella presented this document for information to show the interaction between various VTS groups.

VTE Member Recruitment/Engagement. Tony Masella had submitted proposals to the sponsoring Department. The Chair reported that he recently attended a meeting with Nico Heslop and his team where these matters were discussed. Response from the Department on how this will progress is awaited.

Finance

Management Accounts to 30 June 2022. The Q1 management accounts showed a total resource funding forecast of £6,913k against a full year budget of £7,174k, indicating a forecast underspend of £216k. An overspend of £8k on non-pay related to training; heavy investment had taken place in relation to qualification sponsorship for staff this year. The Board noted £728k had been received in appeal fees.

The £270k underspend on pay reflected the current 13 vacant posts. Recruitment had already resulted in three additional staff.

Risk Management

Strategic Risk Register. There are currently nine risks on the Strategic Risk Register, categorised as follows: four red, three amber and two green. No further risks were identified. The Board noted the risks.

Operations and Programme Update

Performance/KPI data for 2021-22. The paper circulated showed a different view to what the Board usually review, it presented unrefined activity for the last year which contained more detail than the high level of detail the Board usually see. It was not possible to report on the number of calls to the national telephone number following the move to softphones in Q4 until the Department provide the statistics.

Matters for Approval

Business Continuity & Incident Response Plan. The plan had been reviewed by EMT on 12 July 2022. Lee Anderson explained that the document is reviewed and updated periodically to clearly demonstrate how business continuity is managed. It is key to ensure contact details and aspects such as recovery if the Leman Street office went down are correct. No fundamental changes had been made to the plan.

Reference was made to note 6 (recovery times), how this had changed and whether it was correct for remote hearings. Lee Anderson clarified that now the Doncaster office had closed there was an increased capacity for working remotely which provides a more robust approach to continuity. It was noted this meant the reliance on IT had increased, therefore from a hearing perspective the issues previously experienced around travel are less of a problem but having a dependable IT system is vitally important. Working post COVID is very different, everything is cloud hosted which is a benefit. The Chair requested that the next iteration of the plan addresses the new ways of working more fundamentally.

Chair's Report

The Chair informed the Board that he had met with Nico Heslop and his team recently. He was pleased to report the team continue to work with the VTS positively despite the many changes currently taking place within the Government.

Internal Board evaluations are carried out annually, but the Chair suggested carrying out an external evaluation of effectiveness every three years.

VTE President's Report

The President was absent from the meeting due to participating in JAC interviews as part of the recruitment exercise for new VTE Members.

Committee Updates

ARAC draft minutes. The ARAC met on 27 June; the draft minutes had been previously circulated. It was noted a deep dive of the Assurance Map will be carried out at the September meeting.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 28 September at 11:00 am.