

Summary Minutes of the Valuation Tribunal Service Board 139th Meeting held on 28 September 2022 at 11:00 am in Leman Street

Present: Harry Rich (Chair); Suzanne McCarthy (Deputy Chair); Neil Buckley (Member); Paul Cammidge (Member); Stephen Chappell (Member); Kevin Everett (Member) (by telephone); Gary Garland (VTE President, *ex-officio* member); Alison Griffiths (Member) and Lola Moses (Member).

In attendance: Tony Masella (Chief Executive & Chief Operating Officer); Lee Anderson (Director of Operations & Development); Keung Wong (Finance Director); Steve Watts (Head of HR & Training – item 7 only) and Nicola Hunt (Board Secretary).

Welcome, Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Confirmation of Minutes

Apologies for absence had been received from Peter Bates (ALB Business Partner, DLUHC) as an observer.

There were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2022 were confirmed as accurate. Actions had been completed as required.

Chief Executive's Report

Tony Masella drew the Board's attention to the salient points of his previously circulated report. The engagement of VTE Members remains a concern in resourcing hearings. The two proposals currently with the sponsoring Department regarding Member Engagement and VTE Recruitment are part of ongoing discussions.

The cancellation of the VTE Conference due to the death of HM The Queen did not incur any financial penalties in venue costs. There were a small number of train tickets to be refunded. In planning forward, Tony Masella referred to a map showing the geographical location of the Membership; 40 are based in the North, 26 in the Midlands and 80 in London/South East. He therefore proposed holding three separate regional face-to-face events in February/March 2023.

Tony Masella was pleased to report the following recruitment:

- David Slater had been appointed Registrar & Chief Clerk
- An internal recruitment exercise will now be launched for the vacated role of Deputy Registrar
- 18 Applications had been received for clerk vacancies
- An Acting Financial Controller had been appointed
- Interviews will be taking place for a Finance Officer
- An HR Officer had been interviewed and a decision is being made

The Board was reminded that the VTS is finalist in two categories at the IRRV Awards 2022 (Excellence in Innovation (service delivery) and Excellence in Rating/or Valuation). The results will be announced on Wednesday 5 October 2022.

Finance

Management Accounts to 31 August 2022. The management accounts to 31 August 2022 had been reviewed in detail by the Finance Committee on 21 September. They

reflected a total resource funding forecast of £6,867k against a full year budget of £7,174k, indicating an underspend of £307k.

The position in August regarding the underspend on the pay budget reflected the recruitment position as at 31 August, which was now mitigated by the appointments referred to.

Finance Risk Register. The four risks on the risk register were reviewed; they are categorised as one amber, one red and two green.

Risk Management

Strategic Risk Register. There are currently ten risks on the Strategic Risk Register, categorised as follows: two amber, five red, two green and one yellow. No further risks were identified. The Board noted the risks.

Operations and Programme Update

Performance/KPI data for Q1 & revision of KPIs update. The KPI Performance Report had been the subject of discussion at the recent Accounting Officer meeting during which DLUHC had shown particular interest in the turnaround time of appeals. Cases resolved at the first time of listing remained low due to the impact of COVID and the number of cases postponed at that time. It had been hoped an improvement would have been seen by now but this had not happened due to member shortages which was causing further postponements.

Update on VTS HR Objectives for 2022-23

Steve Watts presented a progress update on the HR Objectives for 2022-23. He was pleased to report that an Eden Red cost savings platform will be launched to staff in October. It was hoped that in the current cost of living crisis staff will welcome the opportunity to make savings.

The recruitment market appeared to be improving and a high standard of candidates was now being seen. Greater focus will be directed on EDI to ensure women returning to work, ethnic minorities and people with caring responsibilities are able to apply. However, it was noted that while the organisation will be flexible with working arrangements, business needs must also be fulfilled.

The NJC pay award had been agreed by UNISON but cannot be implemented until all unions reach agreement.

Chair's Report

The Chair thanked the Board for providing details of their skills and experience. A proposal on the Board recruitment strategy had been concluded and if accepted by the Minister a coherent recruitment exercise can take place next year.

VTE President's Report

The President reported that VTE Member interviews took place in July; he hoped the candidates would be signed off by the Lord Chancellor soon.

Committee Updates

Finance Committee draft minutes. The draft minutes from the meeting on 21 September 2022 were previously circulated. The Board had no comments to make.

ARAC draft minutes. The Chair of ARAC, Suzanne McCarthy, provided a synopsis of the main points discussed at the meeting on 26 September 2022. She advised good progress had been made regarding the year end audit. The recent Corporate Governance audit received substantial assurance. The risk to the organisation of outstanding vacancies was fully discussed and it was noted that many of the vacancies had now been addressed.

The laying of the Annual Report & Accounts 2021-22 was dependant on receiving the pension valuation due at the end of September.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 30 November at 11:00 am.