

## **Summary Minutes of the Valuation Tribunal Service Board 142<sup>nd</sup> Meeting held on 25 January 2023 at 11:00 am in Leman Street**

**Present:** Harry Rich (Chair); Neil Buckley (Member); Stephen Chappell (Member); Kevin Everett (Member); 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) and Nicola Hunt (Board Secretary).

### **Welcome, Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Confirmation of Minutes**

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

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2022 were confirmed as accurate. Actions had been completed as required.

### **Chief Executive's Report**

Tony Masella was pleased to inform the Board the VTS Annual Report & Accounts 2021-22 were laid before Parliament on 12 January 2023.

It had been confirmed that the planned recruitment exercise for 30 Chairs of the Valuation Tribunal for England (VTE) will be launched in mid-April and that an exercise to recruit two Vice-Presidents will be launched in June.

The trial of half-day hearings had been extended to Quarter 4. At present there is no evidence to suggest half-day hearings had increased member engagement. However, those that were engaging preferred this way of working. VTE Members on the Board felt that this approach provided greater flexibility. Half-day hearings can be from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm or 1:30 pm to 5:00 pm. Staff had not reported any adverse issues working in this way.

***Review of Business Plan Achievements on Objectives (to Q3).*** It was noted that eight objectives had been fully met. The four outstanding objectives were categorised as amber. The following was noted:

- the biggest risk remained member engagement and proposals are being progressed with our sponsor
- the staff survey had been moved to Quarter 4
- a business case was awaiting DLUHC approval to build some video clips for the website to assist customers when using the service
- Discussions continue with FSSD in respect of the required improvements to SAP processes

### **VTS Business Plan Priorities for 2023-24**

Tony Masella presented draft priorities for 2023-24 which focussed on 13 intended aims, building on the Board's Strategy Day held in 2022. The Board noted the paper and the next steps of circulating the Business Plan to Board Members in February. Following Board and DLUHC comment, the draft Business Plan will be submitted to the Board for formal approval at the March meeting.

## Finance

**Management Accounts to 31 December 2022.** The management accounts to 31 December 2022 reflected a total resource funding forecast of £6,718k against a working budget of £6,814k, indicating a forecast underspend of £456k (which included £360k of surrendered savings).

**Draft VTS Budget 2023-24.** A projection of required budget for 2023-24 was circulated. The following was noted:

- Total resource funding £6,967k
- Pay £3,433k
- Non-pay £1,878k
- Capital £160k

## Risk Management

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

**Assurance Map.** The Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) had carried out a deep dive review of the Assurance Map at the meeting in December and found it appropriately reflected the lines of assurances within the VTS environment.

## Operations and Programme Update

**Performance/KPI data and revision of KPIs update.** The KPI Performance Report had been previously circulated which provided a detailed account of current activity against KPIs covering the period up to 31 December 2022. No significant changes had occurred since the last meeting and work continued to finalise how turnaround times will be reported in future, which will be included in the Business Plan from April.

An analysis of operational workflow from 1 January to 31 December 2022 had been circulated showing the volumes of receipts and clearance for all appeal types. It was noted:

- 5,821 appeals received
- 13,074 appeals cleared

## Standing Financial Instructions

The Standing Financial Instructions had been reviewed by ARAC. The Chair suggested a minor change to clarify the segregation of duties. The Board approved the Standing Financial Instructions subject to the agreed amendment.

## Chair's Report

The Chair had submitted proposals to the Minister to request Alison Griffiths and Stephen Chappell be reappointed; confirmation is awaited. Further recruitment is due to take place in the spring.

The Chair had recently reviewed membership of the Committees and following the retirement of Paul Cammidge it was agreed Stephen Chappell would be moved from the Finance Committee to ARAC.

### **VTE President's Report**

The President was pleased to report nearly all of the new cohort of members had completed their training and some were sitting. However, he expressed frustration that VTE Members were required to retire at 72 unlike other judicial areas where the retirement age had been increased to 75. Valuable expertise is being lost at a time when lack of member engagement is causing serious problems affecting the hearing programme.

The President will be participating in the interview panel for the 30 new Chair positions.

### **Committee Updates**

**ARAC draft minutes.** The draft minutes from the meeting on 19 December were previously circulated. The Board had no comments to make.

### **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

**Date of next meeting:** Tuesday 28 March 2023 at 11:00 am.