

**Summary Minutes of the 161st Valuation Tribunal Service Board Meeting
held on Wednesday 26 November 2025 at 11:30 am
at the Hilton London Euston, 17-18 Upper Woburn Place, WC1H 0HT**

Present: Suzanne McCarthy (Board Chair); Stephen Chappell (Member); Gary Garland (VTE President, *ex-officio* Member); Sarah Guerra (Member) (via MS Teams); Joanne Hadley (Member); Chiew Yin Jones (Member); Clive Quantrill (Member) and Kevin Sadler (Member).

In attendance: Tony Masella (Chief Executive & Chief Operating Officer); Lee Anderson (Director of Operations & Development); Keung Wong (Finance Director); Felipe Espinosa-Camacho (Head of VTS/VTE Review, MHCLG as an observer) and Nicola Hunt (Board Secretary).

Welcome, Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Confirmation of Minutes

Apologies for absence had been received from Nick Pellegrini (MHCLG sponsoring Team as an observer).

Stephen Chappell reported that he had been appointed a legal advisor to the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

Minutes of the meetings held on 24 September and 6 November 2025 were confirmed as accurate records.

Actions had been completed as required.

Chief Executive's Report

Tony Masella reported that the VTS Annual Report & Accounts 2024-25 had been certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General, and more importantly with an unqualified opinion, on 11 November, and were laid in Parliament on 13 November.

Tony Masella explained that the current complement of VTE Members was 197. There were around 27 members who were not sitting, but the trend appeared to show a marginal increase in current sitting days. However, further work was required in addressing the 12 and 15 sitting days expectation.

Tony Masella advised that a VTE recruitment campaign for 2025 would be launched on 12 December for 12 Senior Members and 22 Members. He had arranged, in partnership with the Judicial Office, an online outreach seminar on 18 November which had 87 participants. This was successful and provided prospective members with an understanding of the expectations of the role before they applied.

Tony Masella was pleased to note that there was momentum in addressing the concerns he raised that the current JAC recruitment mechanism was not the ideal model for appointing non-paid, lay members to the VTE. Following a request by MHCLG, he had drafted a recruitment process which was presented, with the aim of providing assurance that an in-house process would be robust. The potential process would be a rolling programme providing more recruitment diversity and flexibility. The final decision was naturally for the Minister to agree, but he hoped the paper provided a starting point. It was noted that there would be cost implications and an impact on

VTs resources, but it was hoped that the process would be less legalistic and more inclusive.

VTs/VTE Protocol

Tony Masella referred to the circulated VTs/VTE Protocol. He explained that this set out the relevant legislation and responsibilities of both the VTs and VTE. It served to bring together the governance, statutory and management strands, which together ensured an effective, efficient partnership working between the two organisations to deliver a unified Valuation Tribunal to the user. Gary Garland, as VTE President, said that the document was welcomed as it expressed the relationship clearly. The Board agreed that the VTs/VTE Protocol document should form part of the revised Framework Agreement and become part of the VTs/VTE governance documentation.

Business Plan Achievements in Q2

Tony Masella referred to the 11 priorities in the Business Plan 2025-26, of which one was due in Q2. Six were categorised as amber and five were green.

Clive Quantrill referred to the RAG status which showed the current position, he thought it would be useful to also see a projected end of year RAG status to make it clearer and to provide a view of whether each priority would be achieved by year end. He recommended using blue shading for completed priorities to differentiate from green and suggested adding a key to show what each colour meant, particularly if blue is also used. The Board agreed this would be useful.

Progress on VTs/VTE Review

Felipe Espinosa-Camacho reported that MHCLG's internal review of the VTs/VTE was now complete and he presented the key findings and recommendations. He confirmed that Michelle Warbis would now become the senior sponsor for the VTs and VTE, and that the status quo would continue for both, with a review ongoing to address VTE recruitment and some changes to CCA. He advised that the full report would be available to the Board in due course. The Chair thanked Felipe for the work he had done on the review.

Finance

Update of the Finance Committee (including draft Minutes of 23 October 2025).

The draft minutes of the last meeting had not yet been approved but were circulated to the Board for information. Suzanne McCarthy, Chair of the Committee, advised that the format of the financial report had been revised as a result of discussions, and she invited the Board to comment. The Board confirmed they found the summary at the front of the report very helpful.

Management Accounts to 31 October 2025. The management accounts to 31 October 2025 reflected a current total resource funding forecast year to date of £6,088k, against a budget of £6,612k, and a forecast underspend of £524k.

Finance Risk Register. Keung Wong presented the Finance Risk Register which reflected two live risks, categorised as one yellow and one amber.

Operations and Programme Update

Update of the Performance Committee. The draft minutes had not yet been approved by the Committee but were circulated to the Board for information. Kevin

Sadler, Committee Chair, had nothing further to add. The Board noted the draft minutes.

Review of Appeal Workload & KPI Report (Q2). Lee Anderson was pleased to report a positive position and expected all targets would be met by the end of the financial year, despite the reduced headcount.

The KPIs for the period to Q2 remained positive, the following was noted:

- An increase in the percentage of NDR decisions issued within one month
- The number of NDR appeals resolved at the first time of listing had reduced because previously postponed appeals were now being listed for hearing
- The number of undisputed invoices paid within five days of receipt still sat below the target of 92%, primarily due to year end accounting pressures and FSSD staff striking
- The number of training days was below 2.5 days at the half-year point but this was expected to increase in Q3 and Q4, and it was anticipated that the annual target of five days per staff member would be met

The Chair thanked Lee Anderson for the update and was pleased to note that all operational targets should be met by the end of the financial year.

Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

Update of the ARAC (including draft Minutes of 27 October and 6 November).

Stephen Chappell, Chair of the ARAC, advised the main business for both meetings was the Annual Report & Accounts, and he was pleased to confirm they were certified with unqualified assurance given. He had received a survey from NAO regarding lessons learned which he would complete as Chair of the Committee. During the meeting on 27 October the final Succession Planning and GDPR audit reports were discussed, as were the risk registers. The draft minutes had not yet been approved but were circulated to the Board for information. Clive Quantrill advised that the managing public money course the VTS arranged for him to attend was extremely useful.

Matters for Approval

VMS Business Case. The Business Case to create a downloadable App for the VMS, and to implement further enhancements, was submitted for Board approval. Lee Anderson explained that VTE Members had requested an App and following discussions with Ceox (the IT partner) costs were lower than anticipated. Therefore, some other additions to improve the member experience would also be implemented. This request was separate to previous requests because he wanted the opportunity to do other things with the existing capital enhancement funds.

Chair's Report

The Chair was pleased to report the process to recruit four VTE Senior Members to the Board had begun. She had not received the timetable but anticipated that it would happen early next year. Confirmation of Stephen Chappell's term of office extension had not yet been received.

All Board Members had been invited to attend upcoming staff and member events. A staff forum would be taking place in London on 11 December, which some Board

Members would be attending. The Chair advised that she planned to speak with Board Members at the January meeting about appraisals.

VTE President's Report

The President informed the Board that the process to appoint an individual to cover Presidential duties was nearing conclusion. The new President would be appointed by the Lord Chancellor, so in the intervening period one of the Vice-Presidents had volunteered to cover the role and would be remunerated accordingly for a minimum of a year. It was hoped the individual would assume the role in early January, prior to him leaving in February.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 27 January 2026.