

**Summary Minutes of the 165th Valuation Tribunal Service Board Meeting
held on Wednesday 29 July 2026 at 10:30 am
at The Tower Hotel, St Katherine's Way, London E1 1LD**

Present: Suzanne McCarthy (Board Chair); Andrew Crawford (Member); Sarah Guerra (Member); Chiew Yin Jones (Member); Clive Quantrill (Member) (via MS Teams); Kevin Sadler (Member) and Martin Young (VTE Vice President) representing Frazer Stuart (VTE Vice President, *ex-officio* Member).

In attendance: Amelia Wright (Chief Executive); Lee Anderson (Director of Operations & Development); Keung Wong (Finance Director); Membership Engagement Lead (item 3.4 only); MHCLG Sponsoring Team (observer) and the Board Secretary.

Welcome, Apologies, Declarations of Interest, Confirmation of Minutes

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Andrew Crayford and Amelia Wright who were attending their first Board meeting. The Chair updated the Board on the new Board appointments.

Apologies for absence were recorded from Stephen Chappell (Member) and Frazer Stuart (VTE Vice President, *ex-officio* Member).

Chiew Yin Jones reported that she had been appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Greater London.

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2026 were confirmed as an accurate record.

Actions had been completed as required.

CEO's Report

Amelia Wright said she was pleased to be attending her first meeting and thanked Lee Anderson for acting as Interim Chief Executive until her appointment. She also expressed her appreciation to the Executive Team and wider management group for their support and assistance, and to Board Members for their generosity in giving so much time to her induction.

She advised that the political context had developed since she prepared her report. Following the appointment of a new Prime Minister, a new Secretary of State for MHCLG, Chancellor and Lord Chancellor had been appointed. She was pleased that Baroness Taylor remained in post and would continue to be our lead Minister.

Amelia emphasised the need to establish clearer assumptions with the Department in respect of the High Value Council Tax Surcharge (HVCTS) to support VTS/VTE planning. The consultation closed on 14 July and MHCLG was considering responses.

Progress on seeking Lord Chancellor agreement to moving VTE Member recruitment from the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC) to the VTS had been delayed as a result of the leadership context. The JAC had asked for a decision by mid-September as to whether the next planned campaign should go ahead.

Update on Business Plan and Internal Review Recommendations

Amelia Wright provided an update on Business Plan and Internal Review recommendations and proposed an approach to future reporting to remove duplication. The Board noted the update and agreed the future reporting proposal.

KPI Update

Negotiating new KPIs was an Internal Review recommendation and Business Plan objective. Amelia Wright explained that an emerging KPI update had been brought to the Board now to give early sight of the new KPIs and early reporting against them. The report captured where reporting against KPIs was not yet complete and why. She explained that because of the target to issue decisions within one month of a hearing, not all the data for Q1 could be captured at this stage.

She also wanted to give the Board early sight of the customer feedback data. This showed a less positive picture than the previous year and the organisation was investigating to understand why satisfaction was lower. The Board noted this and the ambitious target that MHCLG had set. The Board were pleased the report showed a positive position overall.

Scoping Paper – creating a positive environment for volunteering and VTE Member Data 2025-26

The Membership Engagement Lead introduced his papers. He explained that the member data provided a snapshot of the previous financial year, and the purpose of the scoping paper was to encourage a more holistic approach to member engagement, building on the recommendations of the Internal Review. Amelia Wright emphasised that the scoping paper captured the questions we considered we should be asking, and that the Board was being asked whether these were helpful in facilitating a different approach and to provide its support for the work needed to work the questions through.

Amelia confirmed the organisation was keen to begin this work over the summer, and an update would be provided at the September Board meeting. The Board agreed the approach.

Staff Survey

Amelia Wright understood that a full staff survey had not been undertaken since 2023. She was keen to introduce a new survey now and establish both a benchmark and a regular pattern of engagement. Two suppliers had been identified through the Government framework, and it was planned to progress this in October.

Appeal Workload Analysis

Lee Anderson introduced his paper, pointing out that it told a different story compared to the previous year. During 2025-26 the organisation had focused on reducing the number of outstanding Non-Domestic Rating (NDR) appeals, while Council Tax (CT) levels initially remained quite low. However, towards the end of the financial year a significant increase in CT appeals received was seen due to changes in workflow from the VO. This resulted in the unusual position where more than 50%

of the workload was CT. Consequently, approximately 90% of the cases listed were CT appeals.

From a Business Plan perspective, 900 hearings were planned over the year, with 232 scheduled in Q1. The KPIs looked positive, but because of the CT volumes there was an expectation that the turnaround times may come under pressure in Q2. Current analysis suggested that the KPI would still be met overall for 2026-27.

The Chair highlighted that customer satisfaction was the only KPI rated red and noted that the Minister had increased this KPI. Lee explained that staff were working closely with Beehive Research to understand the reasons behind the dip in satisfaction.

The Chair pointed out that the number of complaints remained small, and it was agreed that whilst the red KPI should be noted, it was also a good level of satisfaction, and it should be considered proportionately and over a longer period. An update would be provided to the Board at the September meeting.

Infrastructure improvements

The organisation is looking forward to the next level of modernisation of its digital systems to improve user experience and streamline existing processes where possible. Lee Anderson gave the Board an overview of this work and learning from other organisations in anticipation of bringing more detailed business cases to the Board later in the year.

Draft Minutes of the Performance Committee Meeting on 12 May 2026

The draft minutes of the Committee's meeting on 12 May had not yet been approved by the Committee but were circulated to the Board for information. The Committee Chair congratulated the staff on their hard work last year and said they set a high bar for a public sector organisation. The Board agreed that the Performance Committee should meet three times a year. The Board noted the draft minutes.

Finance, Audit & Risk

Draft Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting on 24 July 2026. The draft minutes of the Committee's meeting on 24 July had not yet been approved by the Committee but were circulated to the Board for information. The Board noted the draft minutes.

Management Accounts to 30 June 2026. In presenting the management accounts to 30 June, Keung Wong reported that the total resource funding forecast for the year to date was £6,014k, against the budget of £6,040k, with a forecast underspend of £26k.

Draft Minutes of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Meeting on 29 June 2026. The draft minutes of the Committee's meeting on 29 June had not yet been approved by the Committee but were circulated to the Board for information. The Board noted the draft minutes.

Timetable for the VTS Annual Report & Accounts 2025-26. The Chair confirmed that following completion of the NAO audit, the Board would be asked to approve the Annual Report & Accounts 2025-26 at its meeting in November.

Strategic Risk Register. Amelia Wright had updated the register to ensure mitigations and assessments were up to date and proposed more substantive changes to the register. She recorded her thanks to Stephen Chappell and Kevin Sadler for their input in preparing this update. The Board considered and agreed the suggested changes.

Chair's Report

Appointment of new Board VTE Chair Members Update. The Chair was pleased to report the appointments of the new Board VTE Chair Members had been finalised.

Appointment of VTE President Update. The Chair advised that a recommendation had been made in relation to the appointment of the VTE President, and that recommendation was being considered by JAC Commissioners. An announcement was anticipated in the autumn.

VTE Vice President's Report

Frazer Stuart had submitted a written report to be considered in his absence which was noted. Martin Young, attending on his behalf, advised that the recent member recruitment exercises had been intensive, and thanked the interview panel for their excellent contribution.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 23 September 2026.