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# **BUSINESS PLAN**

for the

# **Valuation Tribunal Service**

# **2006-07**

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## Foreword by the Chief Executive

I have pleasure in introducing this Valuation Tribunal Service (VTS) Business Plan for the financial year 2006-07. The first two years of the VTS' existence have seen substantial progress: establishing the administration and governance of the new organisation in 2004-05, and then determining the strategic development plans for the organisation in 2005-06. This next year sees the start of the implementation process itself, which will stretch over a few years.

The VTS has formulated a strategy development plan that aims to address all aspects of development to deliver benefits. This will provide a focus and structure to the improvement of consistent practices and procedures, a streamlined and responsive management structure and greater utilisation of people and resources.

2006-07 will be a transitional year. We are replacing the 14 administrative units with four new regions, and we have appointed four regional managers to provide the focus on work in these areas. Over the development plan timeframe the number of VTS offices in the regions will reduce from 20 down to 12.

We have conducted an extensive customer survey to find out the views and experience of those who have appeared before valuation tribunals. In analysing recommendations we will be implementing many of the suggestions made in working towards our continued commitment to customer focus.

Without doubt the major news that has affected our thinking in the last eight months has been the announcement by the Government of the postponement of the 2007 council tax revaluation. The revaluation had previously dominated our thinking and our business planning, and this news has permitted a less pressured approach in our planning for the next 18 months and allowed us to take an earlier look at our staffing and member requirements for stability over the medium term.

We have welcomed the Minister's reaffirmation that Appeals Direct for council tax should remain on course for an April 2007 introduction, and we have continued to work alongside the VOA and our sponsoring department to develop the business processes for this. We will also be looking at ways of extending the application of Appeals Direct to non-domestic rating at the next expected revaluation in April 2010.

There is clearly much to do as we commence the strategic development, particularly the streamlining of our tribunal processes with the universal introduction of listing after target date from April 2006. This, alongside the introduction of new business tracking processes, a new management information system, new IT hardware and software, a new appraisal process for staff, and providing a responsive approach in our training to the 2005 customer survey, means that 2006-07 will be a busy and challenging year.

We must continue to cement the partnership working between staff and members, which will be affected by the introduction of new regions and the slimming-down of

our senior staff and estate. In the past year we saw the establishment of the Members' Judicial Committee and the Judicial Interface Committee. Both of these committees dealt with full and demanding agendas, and there are other significant judicial interface issues that will require discussion this year to take the agenda forward.

I hope we can continue to embrace change as a force for good that assists the public to be more conscious of our role, and more aware of the independence and fairness of the tribunals. Change will also help us to modernise and be an effective voice in the world of tribunal development.

**Laurence J F Barnes MSc FRAeS**  
**Chief Executive**

## **1.0 Executive Summary**

1.1 This Business Plan sets out the main activities that the Valuation Tribunal Service (VTS) will be carrying out during 2006-07. **Appendix A** details the key targets we will be aiming for during the period of this plan, together with the targets to be achieved and how we will measure them.

1.2 The VTS currently (July 2006) employs 131 staff, in 20 offices.

1.3 The VTS is sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and will contribute to the Department's Strategic Priority of:

- 'Promoting high quality, customer-focussed local services and ensuring that adequate, stable resources are available to local government'.

1.4 The key objectives for the 2006-07 Business Plan are linked with the VTS Corporate Plan 2006-09 under the headings:

- Operational (see 3.2.1).
- Organisational (see 3.2.2).
- Tribunal Partnership Working (see 3.2.3).
- Financial (see 3.2.4).

1.5 A grant in aid budget of £10 million has been allocated for the financial year ending 31 March 2007 (see section 5). This budget represents a 13% reduction over the preceding year.

1.6 The VTS will continue to identify and rank all significant risks, and raise awareness of the principles and benefits involved in the risk management process, and to maintain stable principles of control.

## **2. The aim of the Valuation Tribunal Service**

2.1 To provide staff, accommodation and other support (including general advice about procedure in relation to proceedings before tribunals) to valuation tribunals in England.

2.2 In achieving the aim, the VTS will work to:

- improve and develop the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of the national structure for the VTS;
- improve customer and stakeholder understanding of, and satisfaction with, the work of valuation tribunals leading up to a hearing and the associated administrative processes post-hearing;

- work in partnership with the lay membership in developing the national structure of valuation tribunals, and the consistency of the service, within the valuation tribunal regulatory and legislative framework;
- work with internal and external stakeholders to continue in the improvement of the process of the appeal system from lodgement to settlement;
- be effective and efficient in the disposal of appeals and seek regulatory change to facilitate this;
- develop a framework for the effective overall financial management of the VTS.

### **3. Key Objectives for the Valuation Tribunal Service for 2006-07**

3.1 One of the sponsoring department's Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets is to, "by 2008, improve the effectiveness and efficiency of local government in leading and delivering services to all communities" (PSA 4). The Department has a Strategic Priority of "promoting high quality, customer-focussed local services".

3.2 As an NDPB, the VTS will contribute to sponsoring department's Strategic Priority and PSA targets, by focusing on the following areas as key objectives for this financial year (see Appendix A):

#### 3.2.1 Operational

- Continue to promote a better understanding of the organisation with stakeholders and to build relationships.
- Improve delivery through business tools.
- Keep under review the VTS estate to ensure it remains appropriate to operational needs.

#### 3.2.2 Organisational

- Continue to work with government agencies, and professional and voluntary bodies to raise awareness of the VTS and involve key stakeholders in helping to improve our delivery.
- Promote equal opportunities and diversity in valuation tribunals and VTS offices.
- Improve the service to the public, stakeholders and the sponsoring department, and respond appropriately to feedback from surveys, comments and complaints.

- Implement four new regions of North, Central, East and South, with a new management structure.
- Liaise with other organisations providing tribunal services and learn from them to develop the role of the VTS and valuation tribunals.

### 3.2.3 Tribunal Partnership Working

- Work in partnership with a lay membership in enhancing the national structure of valuation tribunals.
- Work towards enhancing the level of service to our stakeholders by providing user-friendly, quality decisions that stakeholders understand.
- Promote effective ways of working through the tribunal Presidents.
- Review procedures and processes to improve case management.
- Provide staff support and general guidance to the tribunal Presidents.
- Introduce Listing after Target Date as a transitional measure for the better handling of non-domestic rating appeals.

### 3.2.4 Financial

- Seek improvements on the current framework for the effective overall financial management of the VTS that supports regional engagement, with continuing pursuit of improvements in service delivery, value for money, sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness.

## **4. Risk Management**

4.1 The VTS maintains a risk register that identifies the risks associated with achieving its objectives. The process of reviewing this register ensures that corrective action to eliminate or reduce potential risks is taken. Major risks (called high and medium risks) are evaluated regularly by the Executive Management Team (EMT) and the Board to ensure effective action is being taken.

## **5. Performance Management**

5.1 The delivery of this Plan will be monitored at three levels. The delivery of targets will be monitored by the EMT on a quarterly basis. The Board will monitor the achievements of the Plan on a quarterly basis through appropriate Board meetings. In addition, the VTS will share its achievements with the sponsoring department on a quarterly basis through its liaison meetings.

## **6. Financial Resources**

6.1 The VTS has been allocated a reduced budget of £10 million for 2006-07 to recognise the DCLG's contribution to funding the December 2005 VTS Voluntary Redundancy Programme (VRP). This was agreed with DCLG during the business case for the VRP.

6.2 The budget is allocated for the effective provision of services required for the operation of valuation tribunals.

6.3 As the Accounting Officer for the VTS, the Chief Executive is personally responsible for safeguarding public funds, for ensuring propriety and regularity, and submitting the VTS accounts for public scrutiny.

## **7. Efficiency Targets**

7.1 In accordance with the expectations placed on all government bodies, the VTS is charged with seeking efficiency gains of at least 3% in the financial year 2006-07. Applying the target efficiency percentage to our 2005-06 baseline grant in aid (£11.5m) equates to a £345,000 reduction in our funding. The VTS will actually incur a 12.7% reduction in our budget.

7.2 If uplifted from our 2005-06 baseline to take into account the cumulative 'consumer price index' (3.7%), the VTS grant in aid for 2006-07 would ordinarily have risen to £11.9 million. This lack of uplift therefore increases to 15.9% the reduction in our grant in aid from the 2005-06 baseline.

## **8. Funding our Strategy Development Plan**

8.1 The implementation of the VTS' Strategy Development Plan will be funded largely from savings made by the VTS year-on-year.

8.2 Future savings will be ring-fenced for the following areas:

### **8.2.1 Estates**

- Acquisitions and disposals.

### **8.2.2 Information Technology**

- Appeals Direct.

### **8.2.3 Strategy Development Plan**

- Implementation of the plan.

8.3 Resource allocation:

8.3.1 The allocation of financial resources to meet Operational objectives includes:

- Staff, administration and estates costs.
- Publications, publicity and marketing costs.

8.3.2. The allocation of financial resources to meet Organisational objectives includes:

- Board and Chief Executive costs.

8.3.3. The allocation of financial resources to meet Tribunal Partnership Working objectives includes:

- Members' training and development, and associated costs.

8.3.4. The allocation of financial resources to meet Finance objectives includes:

- Accounting system, accounting services, auditing and associated staff costs.

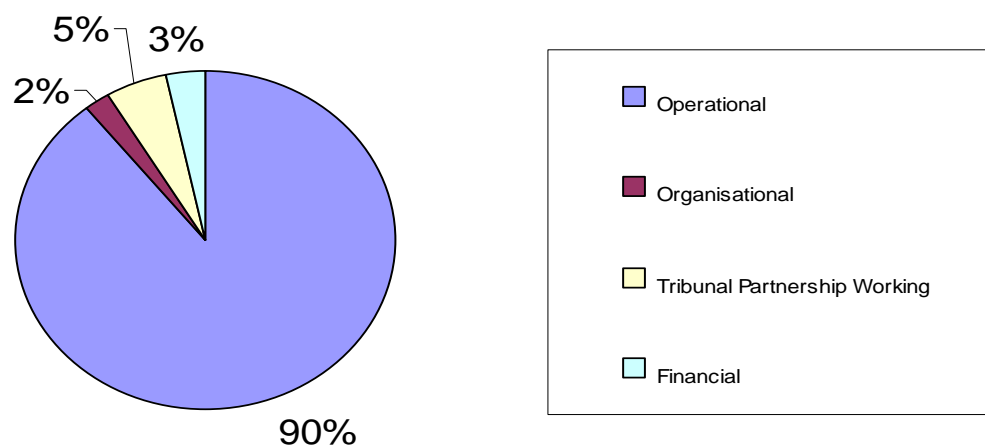
#### 8.4 Staff resources

8.4.1 Following the Voluntary Redundancy Programme, there are no further planned changes to our staff numbers.

**Table 1 Break down of costs by 'VTS function'**

Operational	£ 8,973k
Organisational	£ 214k
Tribunal Partnership Working	£ 512k
Financial	£ 344k
<b>Total</b>	<b>£10,043k</b>

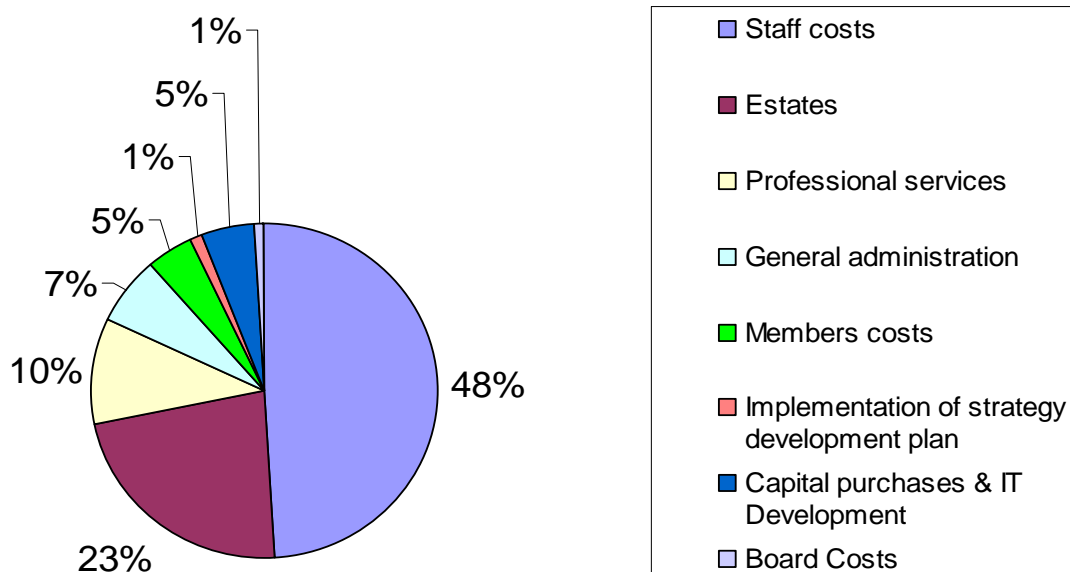
**VTS 2006-07 Budget by function %**



**Table 2 Break down of costs by the main areas of spend**

Staff costs	£4,979k
Estates	£1,975k
Professional services <sup>1</sup>	£1,181k
General administration	£ 858k
Members' costs	£ 446k
Capital purchases and IT Development <sup>2</sup>	£ 500k
Board costs	£ 104k
<b>Total</b>	<b>£10,043k</b>

**VTS Budget 2006-07 by main areas of spend**



<sup>1</sup> Professional services include all outsourced contracts e.g. IT, SAP Accounting system, Payroll, internal and external audit, and legal fees etc.

<sup>2</sup> The VTS will be seeking permission from HM Treasury to alter the split of resources between Capital and Revenue.

## **Appendix A**

VTS Objectives, Targets, Time-bound Tasks and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2006-07				
VTS Objective	Operational			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<p><b>To continue to promote better stakeholder understanding of the organisation and to build relationships.</b></p>	<p>Review all published information, and develop a plan for the improvement of the content and accessibility of material published by the VTS.</p>	<p>Maintain all current national guidance leaflets to reflect any new legislation or best practice. Put any changes through Plain English Campaign for crystal marking, to ensure clarity and customer understanding.</p>	<p>Up to date national guidance leaflets available in tribunal offices.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Maintain and distribute a national, general advice leaflet, for Citizens' Advice Bureaux, libraries, billing authorities, etc.</p>	<p>Provide the VTS Board with a detailed list of organisations holding the national leaflet by Quarter 4.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Ensure distribution of DVD/video to appellants through local valuation tribunals and through Citizens' Advice Bureaux.</p>	<p>Monitor requests and provide quarterly statistical information to the Board.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Review the content of the VTS website to improve the quality and accessibility of published material.</p>	<p>Conduct a website user survey by Quarter 3. Use counters on different pages of the website, and monitor. Report to the Board with recommendations in Quarter 4.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>
		<p>Improve the clarity and user-friendliness of statutory tribunal notices.</p>	<p>Review the format and content of notices and implement through the IT system.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Ensure documentation sent at the time of receipt of appeals highlights the VT's independence from the VOA and billing authorities</p>	<p>Include questions on the notices and other documentation in the customer survey.</p>	

VTS Objective	Operational			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<b>To continue to promote a better stakeholder understanding of the organisation and to build relationships</b>	Review all published information, and continually improve the content and accessibility of material published by the VTS.	VTS Legal Publications and Advisory Committee to meet quarterly to provide support and guidance on the interpretation of legislation, and assist in the production of VTS publications to enhance stakeholder perceptions.	Respond to enquiries connected with staff roles in valuation tribunals.  Issue a quarterly newsletter on aspects of the work of valuation tribunals.	Corporate Director  Corporate Director
	Listen to customers, provide feedback, and develop flexible systems to enhance customer-orientation.	Identify key stakeholder participants, undertake regular national customer awareness and satisfaction surveys and address issues raised.	Compare 2005 survey outcomes with 2006 surveys. Produce a Board report by Quarter 2.  Devise and implement an action plan, outlining the best ways forward, addressing all issues raised in the survey by end of Quarter 4.	Chief Executive  Chief Executive
		Provide opportunities for customers to make enquiries and comments at suitable exhibitions around the country.	Identify appropriate events/locations. Analyse the queries and comments received and address the issues raised.	Corporate Director
		Keep under review the VTS Customer Charter and monitor national and local complaints.	Monitor complaint-handling times from receipt of complaint until resolution. Present the national complaints register to the Board on a quarterly basis. Report complaints in the VTS' Annual Report.	Corporate Director
	Review the role of Board Members	Involve Board Members in meetings with staff and members of valuation tribunals.	Attendance at meetings, AGMs.	VTS Chairman

VTS Objective	Operational			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<p><b>Improve delivery through business tools.</b></p>	<p>Develop and prepare an e-business strategy to improve access to the VTS and improve customer service.</p>	<p>Provide notices of hearing electronically to main agents.</p> <p>Plan for an electronic document management system.</p> <p>Work towards GSI accreditation. Improve information security management by identifying and refining security risks and needs.</p>	<p>Implementation by 31 July 2006.</p> <p>Outline plans and timetable by the end of Quarter 4.</p> <p>Outline plans and timetable by the end of Quarter 4.</p> <p>Apply for BS 7799 by the end of Quarter 4</p>	<p>Resource Director</p> <p>Resource Director</p> <p>Resource Director</p> <p>Resource Director</p>
	<p>Continue to review methods of improving IT working practices between stakeholders.</p>	<p>Work with the professional bodies (Rating Surveyors' Association, Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation) and the Valuation Office Agency on the transfer of electronic data transfer initiative.</p>	<p>Stakeholder advice to inform the initiative in order to propose effective working methods by December 2006.</p>	<p>Resource Director/ Corporate Director</p>

VTS Objective	Organisational			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<b>Liaise with other organisations providing tribunal services and learn from them to develop the role of the VTS and valuation tribunals.</b>	Engage with other tribunal systems to learn to utilise more effectively the VTS' knowledge and experience in the appeals process.	Establish meaningful links with other tribunal-based organisations in sharing knowledge and working practices.	Identify similar organisations to establish a network and investigate how other systems manage administrative and judicial functions and prepare a presentation to the Board by the end of the third quarter.	Chief Executive
	Continue to work with government agencies and professional bodies in raising awareness of the VTS.	Liaise with the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the Council on Tribunals to gain a better knowledge and understanding of other appeal hearing organisations.  Participate in info4local current awareness service and counciltaxinfo.gov.uk websites. Improve and maintain links with other organisations' websites.	Check the links on a bi-monthly basis.	Chief Executive  Corporate Director
<b>Involve key stakeholders to help improve delivery.</b>	Promote and facilitate effective working relationships.	Continue to identify suitable stakeholder websites.	Identify likely links by Quarter 2	Corporate Director
		Continue to lead on the Rating Liaison Group (RLG) to discuss issues affecting the non-domestic rating system.	Continue to hold quarterly meetings and to work in accordance with Terms of Reference and report to the Board.	Corporate Director
		Agree with the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) a global clearance figure for workload.	Continue to hold quarterly VOA/VTS Liaison Meetings and agree a global clearance figure by 30 April 2006.	Corporate Director
		Keep under review the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the VOA and the VTS. Amend as necessary.	Review the current VOA/VTS MoA and publish it on the Intranet and Internet by the end of Quarter 1.	Corporate Director

VTS Objective	Organisational			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<p><b>To promote equal opportunities and diversity in valuation tribunals and VTS offices.</b></p>	<p>Improve equality and diversity performance monitoring across the organisation.</p>	<p>Review and maintain a comprehensive equality of opportunity and diversity policy in accordance with CRE guidance to focus on staff and service delivery by June 2006.</p>	<p>Review policy submitted by the end of Quarter 1.</p> <p>Board Members to attend diversity training by the end of Quarter 2.</p> <p>VTS Staff to receive diversity training by Quarter 4.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p> <p>VTS Chairman</p> <p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Carry out a diversity audit (age/gender/sexuality /ethnicity/disability/religion) of all HR policies and procedures</p>	<p>Report to Board in Quarter 1. Implementation of plan by Quarter 2.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>
		<p>Offer all guidance leaflets translated in other languages and formats to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Acts.</p>	<p>Monitor number of translation requests and languages requested. Provide a report to the VTS Board by Quarter 4</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Monitor current agreements set up for arranging Interpreters (including deaf signing). Monitor the use of interpreters and translators, and languages required.</p>	<p>Provide a report to the VTS Board by Quarter 4 to raise awareness of diversity of users.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>

VTS Objective	Organisational			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<p><b>Provide a first class service to the public, stakeholders and the sponsoring department.</b></p>	<p>Implement Part 1 of the Strategy Development Plan.</p>	<p>Introduction of an effective four-region structure.</p>	<p>Regional Managers in post by end of Quarter 1, with new regional staff management structure in place by end of Quarter 2.</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p>
	<p>Ensure the VTS continues to provide an effective service of tribunal hearings across the country.</p>	<p>Work with the Presidents to reduce member numbers</p>	<p>Minister's implementation of new tribunal complements by Quarter 3.</p>	<p>VTS Chairman</p>
		<p>Work with the sponsoring department and Presidents towards implementation of single valuation tribunal</p>	<p>Regular meetings involving Department officials and the Minister.</p>	<p>VTS Chairman</p>
		<p>Keep under review current hearing venues and utilise more in-house tribunal accommodation wherever possible.</p>	<p>Review usage of in-house accommodation by Quarter 1.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Improve appellants' access to hearing venues and provide them with maps and information about the facilities.</p>	<p>Regional Managers to provide report to the Corporate Director on venues used in the regions and accessibility.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
	<p>Maintain under review the estates programme, to optimise the geographical spread of operational offices over the life of the Corporate Plan.</p>	<p>Continue with the acquisition and disposal of properties in accordance with the Estates Strategy.</p>	<p>Within the first quarter, produce and implement a programme of works for the financial year.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Review the management of current planned maintenance contracts.</p>	<p>Introduce chosen providers by the end of Quarter 2.</p>	<p>Corporate Director.</p>
		<p>Keep under review VTS Disability Discrimination Act access audit reports to ensure compliance.</p>	<p>Quarterly liaison with VTS estate advisors.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Monitor security call-out arrangements at stand alone properties.</p>	<p>Implementation of arrangements by the end of Quarter 1.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
	<p>Further enhance Health and Safety within the VTS environment.</p>	<p>Ensure compliance with Health and Safety requirements.</p>	<p>Maintain ongoing VTS Health and Safety Committee meetings on a quarterly basis. Monitor Accident Book entries.</p>	<p>Corporate Director Corporate Director</p>

VTS Objective	Organisational			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<p><b>Provide a first class service to the public, stakeholders and the sponsoring department.</b></p>	<p>Promote the VTS as a learning organisation.</p>	<p>Promote and instill a culture where everyone takes responsibility for Total Quality Management, reviewing all activities and recommending improvements.</p>	<p>Review training needs for Performance and Development Review (PDR) by Quarter 1 and implement appropriate action by the end of Quarter 3</p>	<p>Corporate Director/Resource Director</p>
		<p>Introduce an annual training programme based on needs identified from the PDR process and prioritise in line with business needs in a corporate training programme</p>	<p>Feedback from PDR, customer and staff surveys and staff suggestion scheme. Secure funding by Quarter 1.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Provide senior management training on objective setting, action planning and equality monitoring.</p>	<p>Devise training programme by the end of the second quarter and evaluate feedback received on a monthly basis.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Implement by end of first quarter and review by end of third quarter.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>	
	<p>Develop a robust and coherent performance management regime that reflects key VTS national priorities and standards.</p>	<p>Incorporating equality objectives into PDR scheme.</p>	<p>Implement by end of first quarter and review by end of third quarter</p>	<p>Resource Director/Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Monitor PDR learning and development activities to provide timely training when needs identified.</p>	<p>Implement by end of first quarter and review by end of third quarter</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Assess the impact of the introduction of Performance Related Pay by September 2006</p>	<p>Review performance appraisals by end of Quarter 1.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>
		<p>Review the financial implications by 30 July 2006.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>	
			<p>Compare benefits of staff in receipt of performance pay on subsequent performance by Quarter 4.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>

VTS Objective	Organisational			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<b>Provide a first class service to the public, stakeholders and the sponsoring department.</b>	Maintain human resource practices, training and development	Review contents of VTS Staff Handbook	Put in place amendments, policies, etc., by end of Quarter 4.	Resource Director
		Review and monitor employees' and members' information.	Provide accurate information to the Cabinet Office on diversity of VTS employees and VT members as required.	Corporate Director/Resource Director
	Promote communication within the VTS and provide all staff with regular briefings and updates, and the means for broad discussion.	Regular meetings with all staffs to provide briefings, receive feedback and ideas.	Continue to build on dissemination of information through the VTS Senior Management Team meetings.	Chief Executive
			Provide regular updates on corporate issues via newsletters and intranet.	Chief Executive
		Review VTS Communication Strategy. Develop an Internal Communications Policy	Conduct staff survey by end of Q1 and review/action plan by Q2.	Chief Executive
			Issue a minimum of 4 VTS Newsletters during the year.	Chief Executive
	Implement initiatives to maintain staff morale and reputation of VTS as a good employer.	Involve staff in national working groups, project teams and committees.	Corporate Director/Resource Director	VTS Chairman
			Recognise the output provided by such working groups, project teams and committees.	

VTS Objective	Organisational			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<p><b>Provide a first class service to the public, stakeholders and the sponsoring department.</b></p>	<p>Set challenging targets to improve performance and consistency.</p>	<p>Clerks to liaise with the Presidents of valuation tribunals to ensure all appeals are listed within regulatory guidelines.</p>	<p>Quarterly monitoring of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Number of appeals listed</li> <li>-Clearance rates</li> <li>-Number of appeals settled before hearing</li> <li>-Number of appeals settled after hearing</li> <li>-Number of tribunals convened</li> <li>-Number of tribunals cancelled</li> <li>-Number of postponements and adjournments.</li> <li>-Number of appeals allowed.</li> <li>-Number of appeals dismissed.</li> </ul>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
	<p>Promote the effective monitoring of risk management.</p>	<p>Raise awareness of risk management. Review the VTS Risk Management Strategy and Policy by 30 June 2006.</p>	<p>Implementation of policy by Quarter 2.</p>	<p>Corporate Director/ Resource Director</p>
		<p>Maintain effective regional and central risk registers.</p>	<p>Consideration of regional risks to feed into the VTS central risk register, reviewed by the Board and the Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
			<p>The Senior Management Team and the Chief Executive's office to maintain regional and central risk registers continuously.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>
		<p>Work towards consistent and effective working practices.</p>	<p>Continuously identify best practice and implement through the Senior Management Team.</p>	<p>Corporate Director/Resource Director</p>
			<p>Provide a report to the Board by Quarter 4 on progress.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>

VTS Objective	Tribunal Partnership Working				
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive	
<b>Research and implement agreed better ways of working.</b>	Work towards an improved tribunal system.	Work in partnership with the sponsoring department and the Presidents, to review and develop current regulatory requirements.	Bi-monthly ODPM/VTS meetings. Regular feedback from tribunals' Annual General Meetings. Quarterly Presidents' Meetings Regular visits by Chief Executive and Board Members to tribunal offices.	VTS Chairman	
	Build networks within the wider tribunal world.	Maintain a watching brief on tribunal developments.	Quarterly reports to the Board.	Chief Executive	
		Work in partnership with members on the provision of advice about procedures in relation to proceedings before tribunals.	Regular consultative meetings between the Presidents of the tribunals and the Clerks of the tribunals (Local Judicial Committees) to consult on administrative procedures before tribunals.  Minutes of the meetings to be recorded and circulated to internal stakeholders. The Minutes are to be published on both the Intranet and the members' pages of the Internet.		Chief Executive
	Promote partnership working and the administrative/judicial interface.	Regular communication with Presidents and lay members on development and organisational issues.	Provide regular feedback to the Board through Chief Executive's reports.		Chief Executive

VTS Objective	Tribunal Partnership Working			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<p><b>To promote and facilitate effective working relationships.</b></p>	<p>Review procedures and processes to improve case management.</p>	<p>Introduce Listing after Target Date for non-domestic rating appeals in Quarter 1.</p> <p>Work towards implementing Appeals Direct system for council tax valuation and invalidity appeals in 2007</p> <p>Develop a flexible query tool, such as Business Objects, to retrieve statistics.</p> <p>Work towards reducing time delay between receipt of an appeal and its hearing.</p>	<p>Production of guidance issued to members, staff and stakeholders.</p> <p>Guidance and supporting documentation to be in place by Quarter 4. IT changes in place by Quarter 4.</p> <p>Measure effectiveness through quarterly monitoring.</p> <p>List 100% of outstanding 1990 appeals by 30 May 2006.</p> <p>List 95% of outstanding 1995 appeals by 31 July 2006.</p> <p>List 95% of Council Tax Liability appeals within three months of lodgement.</p> <p>List 100% of Civil Penalty appeals within six months of lodgement.</p> <p>Age analysis monitoring of council tax appeals.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p> <p>Corporate Director</p> <p>Corporate Director</p> <p>Corporate Director</p> <p>Corporate Director</p> <p>Corporate Director</p> <p>Corporate Director</p>
	<p>Design an effective training programme for VT staff and members.</p>	<p>Research and identify options for outsourcing training for staff and members to industry specialists such as the Judicial Studies Board and IRRV</p>	<p>Identify training requirements and devise training modules and publish. Outsourcing paper to be produced by end of Quarter 3.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p>

VTS Objective	Tribunal Partnership Working			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<p><b>To promote more effective ways of working through the Presidents of valuation tribunals</b></p>	<p>Support governmental and legislative initiatives within the VTS corporate framework.</p>	<p>Explore ways of working to support governmental initiatives such as collaborative working.</p>	<p>Chief Executive's and VTS Chairman's reports to the Board.</p>	<p>VTS Chairman/Chief Executive</p>
		<p>Support diversity by working towards an effective single recruitment process for appointing members to valuation tribunals.</p>	<p>Produce an agreed national lay membership recruitment process with the Presidents by Quarter 3.</p>	<p>VTS Chairman</p>
		<p>Align the MJC to reflect the new organisation structure.</p>	<p>A new liaison mechanism for tribunal membership by end of Quarter 2.</p>	<p>VTS Chairman</p>
	<p>Promote and facilitate effective internal equal opportunity and diversity monitoring.</p>	<p>Monitor diversity. Implement an equal opportunity monitoring system for the lay membership.</p>	<p>Provision of statistical information to the Cabinet Office on the make-up of the membership of valuation tribunals as required.</p>	<p>Corporate Director/Resource Director</p>
		<p>Implement an equal opportunity monitoring system for customers</p>	<p>Approval by Board by end of Quarter 1. Roll out to staff for implementation by Quarter 2. Provision of statistical information to Board, quarterly.</p>	<p>Corporate Director/Resource Director</p>
<p>Provide user-friendly, quality decisions that stakeholders understand.</p>	<p>Work with the Presidents to introduce a consistent framework for 'Reasons of Decisions' to ensure clarity and consistency of decisions issued and published on the website.</p>	<p>Produce paper by 30 August 2006 to ensure clarity and consistency of decisions published on the web site.  Implement an agreed framework within Quarter 3.</p>	<p>Corporate Director  Corporate Director</p>	

VTS Objective	Tribunal Partnership Working			
What This Means	Key Tasks	Targets	How Measured	Lead Executive
<p><b>To promote more effective ways of working through the Presidents of valuation tribunals</b></p>	<p>Improve the recruitment and training process of members.</p>	<p>Liaise with Presidents in working towards an effective single recruitment process for valuation tribunal members.</p>	<p>Minutes of national Presidents' meetings</p> <p>Prepare a training programme and publish dates.</p>	<p>VTS Chairman</p>
	<p>The handling of judicial complaints.</p>	<p>Work in partnership with Presidents and deliver effective solutions to meet their training needs.</p> <p>Devise a procedure for Presidents handling judicial complaints.</p>	<p>Analyse comments on evaluation forms and provide report to the Board by Quarter 3 identifying future improvement.</p> <p>Delivery of regional training of the national training programme by VTS Training Champions.</p> <p>Implementation of DVD/video as a training tool for lay members.</p> <p>Agreed document and subsequent publication.</p>	<p>Corporate Director</p> <p>Corporate Director</p> <p>Corporate Director</p> <p>Corporate Director</p> <p>VTS Chairman</p>

<b>VTS Objective</b>	<b>Financial</b>			
<b>What This Means</b>	<b>Key Tasks</b>	<b>Targets</b>	<b>How Measured</b>	<b>Lead Executive</b>
<p><b>Ensure the appropriate allocation of public funds in meeting the business needs and to consider the effective application of financial resources.</b></p>	<p>Ensure compliance of accounts direction issued by the sponsoring team and HM Treasury guidance.</p>	<p>Produce statutory accounts by May 2006 to include applicable elements of the Department's accounts direction and HM Treasury guidance.</p>	<p>Review by National Audit on compliance of accounts direction.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>
	<p>Secure economy, efficiency, effectiveness, regularity and propriety.</p>	<p>Implement Internal Audit recommendations by March 2007</p>	<p>Quarterly monitoring of the Recommendation Action Plan by the Internal Audit Committee.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>
		<p>Review all existing contracts for services employed locally to identify central providers by Quarter 2.</p>	<p>Creation and implementation of central service contracts</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>
			<p>Documentation of tendering processes to demonstrate competitive basis and tenders representing value for money.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>
	<p>To consider the allocation of funding in providing financial resources to deliver business objectives.</p>	<p>Ensure expenditure is contained within resources available.</p>	<p>Implementation of financial controls within Quarter 1.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>
		<p>Devise and publish year-end timetable by February 2007.</p>	<p>Quarterly monitoring of budgets by the Board.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>
		<p>Administrative Regions to prepare bids for 2006-07.</p>	<p>Internal Audit Inspections and recommendations.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>
	<p>Produce unqualified annual accounts.</p>	<p>Consider financial resources required to meet 2007-08 business objectives.</p>	<p>Analysis of Administrative Region year-end accounts.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>
<p>Prepare a budget for the incoming 2007-08 financial year.</p>		<p>Board to approve budget allocation. Submit a draft expenditure plan to the sponsoring department.</p>	<p>Resource Director</p>	

## Appendix B

### 1. Background

1.1 The VTS was created as a corporate body by the Local Government Act 2003 and formally established as an NDPB on 1 April 2004, originally sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, recently renamed the Department for Communities and Local Government.

1.2 The VTS comprises a Chairman and Members appointed by the Secretary of State, commonly referred to as the 'VTS Board'. The current Membership of the Board is listed at Appendix C.

1.2.1 The VTS appoints a Chief Executive with the consent of the Secretary of State.

1.2.2 The VTS is the employer of all staff supporting the Chief Executive's Office and valuation tribunals.

1.3 The VTS has the following functions in providing or arranging the services required for the operation of the tribunals in England, such as:

- Accommodation.
- Staff (including clerks to tribunals).
- Information Technology.
- Equipment.
- Training for members and staff of (including clerks to) tribunals.
- The provision of general advice about procedures relating to proceedings before tribunals.

1.4 The VTS has a Chief Executive's Office based in London.

1.5 There are 56 valuation tribunals in England geographically located in 20 offices and grouped into four regions.

1.6 118 staff are currently employed in the regional offices to provide service to customers, and guidance and support to a current lay membership of 998. A further 13 full-time staff are located within the Chief Executive's office.

1.7 There are a number of Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments relating to the work and jurisdiction of valuation tribunals.

1.8 The tribunals were established on 1 May 1989 as successors to Local Valuation Panels, constituted by the Local Government Act 1948.

1.9 The Local Government Finance Act 1988 renamed Local Valuation Panels and Courts. Jurisdiction was extended to include appeals against certain aspects of the newly created Community Charge, together with valuation assessment appeals against the 1990 revaluation of non-domestic properties. Jurisdiction continued in respect of the right to hear appeals against Land Drainage assessments. Further powers were extended to consider the validation of completion notices.

1.10 The Local Government Finance Act 1992 extended jurisdiction to deal with council tax valuation and liability appeals.

1.11 The jurisdiction of valuation tribunals was further extended to deal with appeals arising from the 1995, 2000 and 2005 revaluations of non-domestic properties.

1.12 Section 72 of the Local Government Act 2003 further empowered valuation tribunals to hear appeals against the Valuation Officer's decision to invoke a penalty for failure to provide requested rent return information.

1.13 The VTS is resourced from public funding and is responsible and accountable for its activities to the sponsoring department.

1.14 The VTS will work in accordance with a Corporate Governance Framework and requirements laid down by its sponsoring department.

## **Appendix C**

### **Valuation Tribunal Service Board Membership**

- Mrs Anne Galbraith OBE, re-appointed as Chairman until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.
- Mr Paul Wood OBE, re-appointed as Deputy Chairman until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008.
- Mr Ted Gunby re-appointed as a Member until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008.
- Mr Peter Lawton re-appointed as a Member until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008.
- Mrs Irene Robinson appointed as a Member until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.
- Mr Michael Tildesley OBE, appointed as a Member until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.
- Dr Ronald Barham, appointed as a Member until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.