

Land & Property Services

Summary of the Management Board meeting held in Queen's Court on Thursday 15th December 2011 at 9.30am

Present:

John Wilkinson	Chair and Chief Executive
Alan Brontë	Director of Mapping and Valuation Services
Anne Flanagan	Director of Business Services
Wilfie Hamilton	Independent Board Member
Richard Hyslop	Director of Transformation and Customer
Dennis Licence	External Adviser
Patricia McAuley	Director of Revenues and Benefits
Patricia Montgomery	Director of Registration
Ruth Thompson	Secretary

Apologies:

Louisa McKenna	Head of Corporate Finance (Agenda Item 3, Finance Report)
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1. Conflicts of interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2011

The minutes and summary of the meeting held on 24th November 2011 were agreed subject to a number of amendments.

3. Finance Report

The Board reviewed key finance issues; in the first instance the position with regard to the capital budget, which had been reforecast. It was agreed that an unallocated capital amount of £20,000 could now be surrendered to the Department and it was noted that assurances had been provided by budget holders that the remaining projects would be fully approved, procured and spent by 31st March 2012.

Another key issue was the situation with regard to the income forecast, which had been revised downwards in order to reflect likely activity in the remainder of the year. The Board noted the uncertainties in the current economic climate for Registration, mapping, and valuation income streams, the potential impact of increased DFP corporate overheads on

the cost of collection, and the possible affect of these on income this year and next. It was agreed that the Board should take this opportunity to review projections over the next two months, including setting income forecasts, so that appropriate plans could be made as necessary.

The Director of Business Services advised of work ongoing on segmental analysis and allocating costs, and the Board also noted the work ongoing with the Department in connection with the staffing resources for Revenues and Benefits and Mapping and Valuation Services.

Finally, the Board reviewed the potential risks with regard to 2011-2012 finance tolerances, including the Abbacus interest fix, outstanding legal cases, PFI costs and fluctuations with regard to the provision for legal debts. The November Management Accounts were noted.

4. Learning and Development Plan update

The Director of Business Services provided a detailed update on progress with regard to the LPS Learning and Development Plan. She drew the Board's attention to a number of key points including:

- Arrangements for delivering the Senior Management leadership Development Programme to the remaining senior managers who had not already participated in this.
- The new Revenues and Benefits training framework, which set out a structured learning route for Revenues and Benefits staff.
- Training to support the implementation of the Service Delivery Model.
- Work ongoing to identify the training required to support the recently completed capacity planning exercise and the development of a comprehensive procedures manual.
- The launch of the new LPS online induction

The Board discussed the importance of assessing the tangible benefits of learning and development, but recognised the challenges involved in doing so and the subsequent importance of feedback, including Staff Attitude Surveys. The Board stressed the importance of maintaining the focus on this work, taking staff's learning and development needs on-board, and in particular, moving onwards to continue progress on bringing about a single organisation, which should be included in the Learning and Development Plan updates.

5. LPS/DARD EU Audit Compliance Programme

The Board reviewed the latest update on the current status of LPS input into this DARD programme. The Director of Mapping and Valuation Services advised that the LPS targets were being met, despite challenging timescales. The Board noted that the Director would provide

a submission to the Minister in the New Year with regard to the LPS facilitation of this programme. The Board also noted that the need to move staff temporarily from the AD backlog to photogrammetry to support the work on this project, and that it was anticipated that with the allocation of additional resources, the target would still be met.

6.1 Managing Attendance Report

In reviewing this report, Management Board was pleased to note the ongoing progress on absence management. The LPS absence target was 8.3 days for 2011-2012, and the current projected end of year absence rate was 7.5 days. This was an improvement on the same period last year (April to October). Board members agreed that the excellent progress was due largely to the good work and commitment by managers and all staff in LPS.

6.2 LPS Corporate Balanced Scorecard 2011-2012

The Director of Business Services highlighted current developments with regard to the Corporate Balanced Score-card, and changes in projections over the last month as follows:

- Target C3a - *Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) available to all councils*: the projection to year end was now moved from 'action required' to 'will be achieved' as a result of progress made on SOLACE agreeing the MOU.
- Target BP1c - *To reduce the value of end-dated accounts within Abbacus by 31 March 2012*: the projection had moved from 'will not be achieved' to 'action/monitoring required' as a result of additional resources being made available, and analysis enabling a more targeted approach.
- Target BP1g - *Number of properties entitled to agricultural allowance validated by 31 March 2012*: this projection had moved from 'will be achieved' to 'action/monitoring required'. The Board noted the reasons for this and the steps that were subsequently being taken.

6.3 CCCU Statistics

The November report for CCCU and IMU showed that for MLA correspondence, LPS performance was 91%, for Private Office correspondence 83%, and for Stage 2 complaints 71%. However, there was 100% performance on all other correspondence and on FOIs. Management Board recognised the effort that staff put into dealing with this often challenging work, and was pleased that, overall, LPS was meeting the Balanced Score-card target in connection with this area.

6.4 Registration Directorate performance at the end of December 2011

The Director of Registration reported on the performance of Registration. The Board noted that:

- The total number of registration applications in November 2011 was the highest output in the current year and a 15% increase on the October 2011 figure.
- Most of the applications relating to the registration of the banks' equitable interest had been received, and approximately 70% of these had been completed. The remainder were in progress.
- E-registration take-up remained at between 73% and 74%.

The Board discussed Registration income and the possible impact on fees in future. The Board also discussed the value of reviewing the positives and negatives across the organisation and agreed to start work on establishing a 'barometer of success' for LPS in 2012.

6.5 Revenues and Benefits Directorate performance at end of November 2011.

The Director of Revenues and Benefits provided an analysis of progress on collection, cash, recovery, and penny product. She alerted the Board to the fact that, while collection was still ahead of target, the margins were reducing and additional actions were being taken as a result. These focused on maximising collection and recovery activity and included:

- Moving resources into the courts' side of the work where they were most needed.
- Issuing over 3,000 letters regarding non payment of rates.
- Scheduling non domestic vacant rating inspections with six councils.
- Using tracing services for end-dated accounts.
- Proactively tackling the expected reductions in direct debit payments in December.

The Management Board noted that the 31st October Actual Penny Product (APP) forecast information had recently been issued to councils. There had been very little growth from the Estimated Penny Product position. The Director also provided an update on Rating of Empty Homes, advising that as at 27th November 2011, £2.25 million had been collected from 7,325 empty domestic properties. However, collection at this stage was lower than expected, with a considerable number of appeals received. Management Board noted:

- The progress made in Revenues and Benefits, and the actions in hand to address the issues highlighted in the report.
- The bids for additional resources identified from the Capacity Plan

- exercise.
- The operational priority being given to the APP Work and the activities to maximise rate collection.

6.6 Mapping and Valuation Services Directorate

The Director of Mapping and Valuation Services provided the Management Board with a summary of progress in delivering the Corporate and Directorate level Balanced Scorecard targets for the Directorate, including details of the main risks and issues, and how these were being managed. He advised the Board that the INSPIRE portal was now operational, but the system would not be publicly available until completion of data loading and testing.

He also provided updates with regard to Rating of Empty Homes, including the increasing number of applications for revision, and work ongoing with councils regarding completion notices.

The Board noted the progress on delivery of the Corporate and Directorate Scorecard targets; the risks considered significant at Directorate level and the controls being implemented.

7. Review of matters arising and action points

The action points from the previous meeting were reviewed, and the attached schedule was updated accordingly.

8. Key Management Board issues for the next Team Brief

It was agreed that the key issues for the Management Board report would be the Learning and Development Plan update, the Managing Attendance Report, and the CCCU statistics.

9. Any other business

- The Chief Executive provided an update on the Stocktake meeting held on 12th December 2011.
- The Director of Mapping and Valuation Services referred to the need to be aware of contingent liabilities, and the preparatory work for the Large Retail Levy.
- The Director of Transformation and Customer mentioned the effect of the recent industrial action on the 'one and done' customer contact targets.

Finally, as this was the External Advisor's last Management Board meeting, the Chief Executive thanked him for all his work with the Board, saying that LPS had greatly benefited from his involvement and support over the past two years.