



Valuation Office
Agency

BUSINESS PLAN 2017-19

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Foreword by Penny Ciniewicz

This Business Plan sets out our priorities for the next two years, including our plans to continue to transform our services for the benefit of our customers, and the performance we are committed to deliver. This plan builds on our achievements of the last two years in delivering important public services to local and national government, businesses, individuals and the wider public sector, while changing how we work to make the Agency more trusted, more expert, more digital and more efficient.

Our performance expectations

We have an ambitious change agenda, but we know how much our customers rely on the services we provide and so our focus on service delivery will remain as determined as ever. Over the next two years we will assess how well we're doing in terms of service delivery against targets we agree with our clients each year. These targets cover four main areas:

- volumes of work cleared
- our timeliness in progressing our work
- the quality of our work
- the quality of our customer service.



These targets can be found in more detail in the main part of the business plan. In particular, on business rates appeals clearance and customer service:

- we will focus on clearing appeals against 2010 valuations. During 2016-17, the Valuation Tribunal England (VTE) ran a pilot in Kent and Leicestershire to progress outstanding appeals more quickly. The pilot resulted in appreciably higher numbers of appeals being cleared, as well as fewer postponements. We will be working with the VTE on a rollout of the new processes in 2017-18;
- colleagues across the VOA take great pride in offering as good a customer service as possible. Our targets for improving customer service include answering more queries at first point of contact. We have made great strides in this in recent years. By the end of 2017-18, we expect to deal with at least 70% of customer enquiries to our key customer service points at first point of contact, increasing to 75% by the end of 2018-19.

Transforming our services

We operate in a changing world. We need to remain responsive to the government's priorities, as well as to changing customer needs, new technologies or changes in the economic environment. We recognise we must adapt so that we can continue to deliver what is required of us in the future.

From April 2018 we will operate from a new organisational structure, designed with the input of people across the organisation, with the aim of enabling us to respond flexibly to future challenges. In particular, we will reorganise much of our operational business along functional lines meaning we can flex to respond to workloads and equip people in the Agency to handle more varied work, helping them to progress their careers.

Another major area of focus for us will be the further development of the new process for appealing business rates valuations - Check, Challenge, Appeal (CCA). We will continue to work with customers and delivery partners to ensure we learn from users' experience of the new system and make improvements to it as we introduce new functionality to our digital service.

Throughout this business plan period we will continue our journey to become a digital by default organisation. This means our customers will be able to access our services digitally, at a time and from a place that suits them. We are setting out to achieve this goal in stages. By the end of 2017-18, 60% of customer transactions with us will be digital, increasing to 70% by the end of 2018-19.

Finally, we will also continue to implement our Diversity and Inclusion strategy. I am immensely proud of the ambition of this strategy and what it means for the Agency. Our vision for the VOA is to be an organisation in which customers and people working in the Agency feel valued, accepted and respected without exception. Customers and our staff will have the support they need in whichever guise best fits their individual needs. This will be done as seamlessly as possible and with the aim of it becoming business as usual – not a 'diversity issue'.

To deliver this plan will require the skills and professionalism of people across the Agency; I am confident we will rise to the challenge.

Penny Ciniewicz
Chief Executive

1 August 2017

Introduction

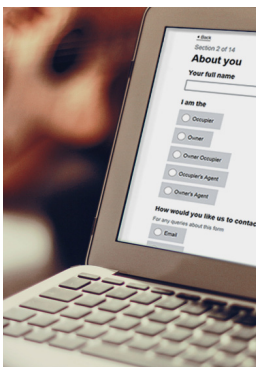
The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) provides valuation and property advice to support taxation and benefits. As well as undertaking council tax and business rates valuations for 326 English and 22 Welsh local authorities, which underpin the collection of £26 billion in council tax and £26 billion in business rates by local authorities, we also provide support to more than 2,000 other public sector bodies. Our valuations also underpin the collection of property-related national taxes and property-related benefits.

During 2016-17, we:



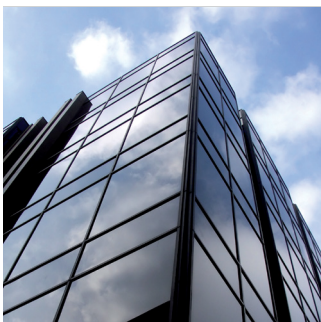
Revaluation 2017

Revalued almost 2 million properties for business rates purposes



Find Your Business Rates Valuation service

Had more than one million unique visitors use our new Find Your Business Rates Valuation online resource



2010 List Appeals

Cleared more than 154,000 business rates appeals from the 2010 lists


Check and Challenge

Launched a new check and challenge service for customers to challenge their valuations




Property Services

Delivered property advice to wider public sector clients, with 94% of our Property Services customers satisfied with the services they received



Statutory Valuations Team

Undertook statutory property valuations for public sector clients, with our valuations at 95% against our internal quality standard



CPIH

Collected and provided housing rental data for CPIH, the measure of owner occupiers' housing costs that the Office for National Statistics now uses as their most comprehensive measure of consumer inflation



This Business Plan sets out how we expect to deliver our services during 2017-19. It also includes details of how we are transforming our services and supporting our people to develop over the next two years, while ensuring our customers continue to receive the standard of service from us that they are entitled to expect.

We have set ourselves targets for improving our services to our customers. These targets cover 2017-18 and 2018-19.

Our Core Purpose and Strategic Objectives



Core purpose

We are the public sector's property valuation experts and advisers, helping people and businesses to pay the right property taxes and to receive the right financial support.

Our vision

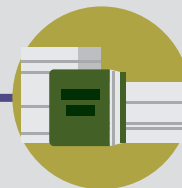
Our customers have confidence in our valuations and advice. We listen to and trust each other. Together, we make the VOA a great place to work.

Our vision describes the Agency we need to be if we are to successfully deliver our core purpose in the future. To help us get there, we are prioritising work that will make us:

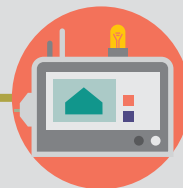
more trusted



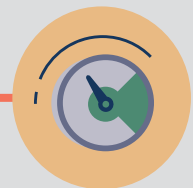
more expert



more digital



more efficient



The future VOA: bridging the gap between where we are now and where we want to be

We have begun transforming ourselves in recent years to become a more modern organisation. New digital services such as Find Your Business Rates Valuation on gov.uk and Billing Authority Reports submissions (BARS) service are making it easier for our customers and delivery partners to interact with us in ways which are convenient to them and more efficient. Better data-handling and training have enhanced our ability to answer queries at the first point of contact, and we are embracing techniques that enable us to continually improve our approach to customer service.

We are committed to becoming more accessible, more transparent and easier to interact with, and we want our customers to feel reassured our processes are efficient, consistent and professionally robust. As we work in transformed ways to deliver our services, we will become:

- a more customer-centric organisation;
- with consistent processes;
- and skilled and trusted people;
- that shares data and information where it is right to do so;
- with responsive and reliable technology;
- in a higher quality working environment;

Our strategic objectives are set to drive our improvement work over the coming years. If we are to become more trusted by our customers and stakeholders, we need to become even more expert, more digital and more efficient. And to achieve that, we need to continue our transformation at pace, while not losing the things that have made us successful throughout our 100 year history, most importantly our knowledge, skills, commitment and pride in public service.

We are organising our transformation activity into a portfolio of programmes delivering from 2017-18 onwards, with benefits clearly identified. Our transformation portfolio includes check and challenge services, our Estates Strategy which will be refreshed in the summer of 2017, our future technology infrastructure programme and our Target Organisational Model (TOM). These transformation activities are set out within the following sections of this Business Plan. They are all designed to help us to become the modern property valuation organisation government and the public, as taxpayers and customers, need us to be. We operate in a changing world, and to ensure we are responsive to this, we will continue to review our transformation portfolio.

We anticipate that by 2019-20 our budget will be 29% lower in real terms than it was in 2015-16, and so we need to make considerable savings over the next few years. Where possible, we are committed to



Our budget

We anticipate that by 2019-20 our budget will be 29% lower in real terms than it was in 2015-16, and so we need to make considerable savings over the next few years.

making these savings through becoming more efficient, rather than by reducing service levels. As such, we will need to reduce the cost of providing our services.

Last year our expenditure was £206m and we expect this expenditure to decrease to approximately £195m in 2018-19.

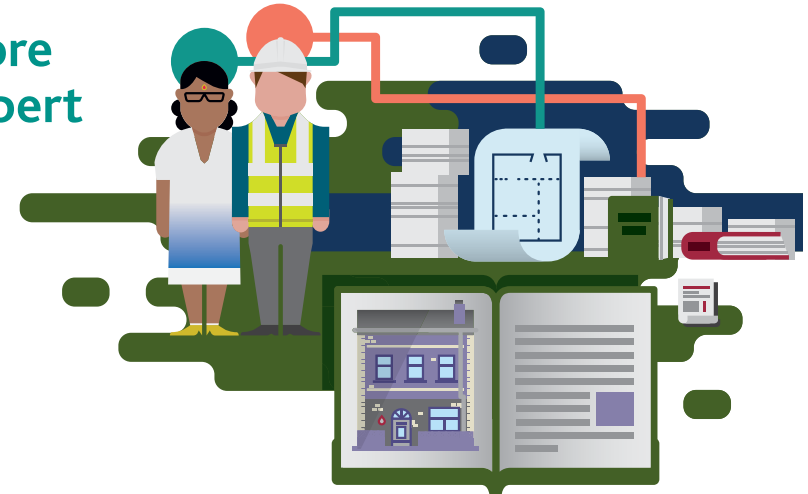
Our customer-facing work is enabled and actively supported by a range of corporate services teams including Digital Transformation and Live Services; Human Resources and Learning & Development; Finance and Planning and Risk; Estates Facilities Management and Transformation; and Strategy, Policy, and Information and Analysis.

Our commitments

More
Trusted



More
Expert



More
Digital



More
Efficient

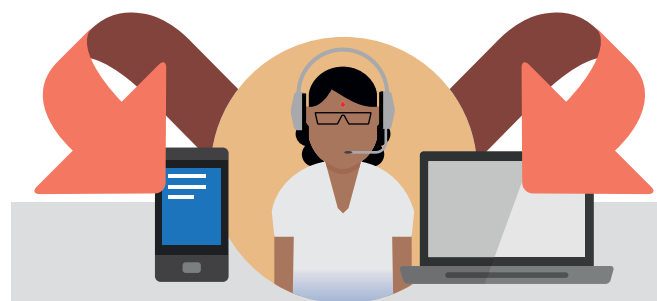


More Trusted

We provide property valuations which underpin the payment of local and national taxes, and the receipt of housing benefits. Our customers trust us to do this. However, we know there is more we can do to build even greater trust in our work.

We take pride in our professional valuation skills. We are committed to making it as easy as possible for our customers to communicate with us, to know what to expect from us, and to know what will happen if we do not get things right. During 2016-17, we improved the structure of our web content and introduced a number of online services to help our customers. We are now focussed on improving our customer service by:

- setting out the customer service we expect to deliver and providing training and tools for our people to make this a reality;
- improving our capability to understand and manage demand for our services, allowing us to deploy our resources flexibly;
- improving the services we provide at first point of contact so we can deal better with customer enquiries;
- standardising our online enquiry forms and centralising more processes so customers receive a consistent service from us;
- using our GOV.UK site to publish articles and video clips that explain more clearly how we reach our property valuations;
- launching a new online contact service that makes it easier for customers to find online answers to their questions and to contact us online if they still need help;
- developing our understanding of the impact of our services on customers to identify more clearly those who may need additional support; and



Customer Service training

We will provide training and tools for our people to create the customer service we expect to deliver.

- ensuring people have confidence in the data we hold about their property by developing digital systems to store that data, and digital means of allowing customers to check the data, for example through our new check and challenge service for business rates.

We will continue to play our part in the effective operation of the council tax and business rates systems. During 2017-18 and 2018-19, we will:

- keep council tax valuations and business rates ratings lists up to date;
- operate our part of the new Check, Challenge, Appeal (CCA) system – the new way of querying business rates valuations. We will improve and adapt the operation of our check and challenge service as we learn from our own and our customers' experiences during the first year the new system is in place;
- clear the majority of the outstanding business rates appeals that we received over the life of the 2010 list. There are around 48,000 appeals against the 2010 rating list that cannot currently be progressed, pending the outcome of litigation in the relevant courts; and
- continue to deliver exceptional valuation quality, ensuring our business rates and council tax valuations are at 94% or above on our internal valuation quality check.

Our work relating to the taxes people pay and the benefits they receive extends beyond local property taxes.

In accordance with relevant legislation, we certify that the housing benefit levels claimed by local authorities are appropriate. Last year we provided some 130,000 decisions to support this work. We determined over 96% of those cases not needing inspection within three days. Where no inspection is required, we are committed to determining 96% of Housing Benefit referrals within three working days.

Our Housing Allowances team manage a register of Fair Rents, setting the maximum rent that can be charged for a 'regulated tenancy' in England. Last year we received around 36,000 requests from Housing Associations to determine Fair Rent levels with 100% resolved within 40 working days. We are committed to determining 95% of cases within 40 working days.



Continue to deliver exceptional valuation quality

We will continue to deliver exceptional valuation quality, ensuring our business rates and council tax valuations are at 94% or above on our internal valuation quality check.

We gather data to support our valuations. Customers trust us to keep this data secure. We will continue to use robust and proportionate systems to keep the data we hold safe. We are committed to having zero incidents that result in enforcement action from the Information Commissioner.

As well as working directly with our customers, we provide important services to other public sector organisations to help them deliver for their customers.

We will continue to gather rental data from residential letting agents, landlords and bodies representing property owners in the private rental sector for use by ourselves and other public sector bodies. From March 2017, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has been using CPIH, which includes a measure of owner occupiers' housing costs based upon our data, as their most comprehensive measure of consumer inflation.

We will continue to provide council tax data to support the provision of FloodRe, the flood reinsurance scheme for households at highest flood risk. The Census Transformation Programme run by the ONS also uses the council tax data we provide to enhance the provision of population statistics from 2021.

Valuation services are at the heart of our delivery to our wider public sector clients. Our Property Services team has delivered property consultancy advice to the public sector since 1910. We use the unique perspective we gain from operating within government to provide informed professional expertise that is free from conflicts of interest. During 2017-18 and beyond, we will continue to supply independent and impartial advice with a strong focus on addressing public interest issues and delivering best value outcomes for the public purse. We are committed to maintaining our 94% customer satisfaction rating.

Our Statutory Valuations Team will continue to deliver fair and impartial valuation advice to our clients. We will support HM Revenue and Customs with valuations and advice to support national taxes. We will also provide statutory property valuations and advice to other public sector clients. The team will deliver this advice in a timely and efficient way and on a cost-recovery basis.

We will continue to provide policy advice and support to government departments as they consider changes to the property tax system.



Private Rental Data

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has been using CPIH, which includes a measure of owner occupiers' housing costs based upon our data, as their most comprehensive measure of consumer inflation.

It is also important our delivery partners, for example local authorities and valuation tribunals, trust us as well.

We will further develop the Local Authority Information Gateway, our secure means of exchanging information with local authorities, which we introduced in 2016-17. This will help local authorities and us to get the information we each need, while minimising the times when ratepayers are asked to provide the same information to both parties.

Our customers, public sector clients and delivery partners trust us because of the quality of our work. We have the utmost confidence in our surveying and valuation expertise. Valuations in our Housing Allowances, Statutory Valuations and Property Services business areas will continue to achieve 95% or higher against our internal quality standard.

It is important to us that our people continue to trust each other too. In common with other government departments and agencies, we will conduct annual People Surveys to help us understand how people feel about working in the VOA. We will also conduct regular 'pulse' surveys to chart our progress towards improving engagement and achieving our vision. We will continue to act on the findings from these surveys and build a more inclusive organisation that recognises and values difference.

In 2017-18, in response to the last People Survey, we will continue to improve our leadership and management of change. We will strive to match our leadership to the aims of the Civil Service leadership statement, developing inspiring, confident and empowering leaders who build engagement and ensure we continue to deliver for our clients and customers.



Improving our leadership

In response to the last People Survey, we will continue to improve our leadership and management of change.

More Expert

We recognise the importance of our valuation expertise to the public sector and beyond. Our customers expect us to be expert in everything we do. We will ensure people in the Agency, whatever their profession and role, are able to develop their skills so they can play a full part in delivering responsive, informed and innovative services. And we will continue our work to ensure the diversity of our people reflects that of the communities we serve.

We offer a minimum of five days learning and development a year to everyone at the VOA, with the aim of supporting them to deliver effectively for our customers.

We will continue to focus on providing expert property valuation and advice services by investing in our core surveying and valuation skills. We will:

- continue our commitment to, at any point in time, support more than 200 people to work towards professional qualifications;
- provide appropriate and timely continuous professional development for all our surveyors and property professionals; and
- comply with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) professional standards in all our valuation work.



Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

We will comply with RICS professional standards in all our valuation work.

We will also invest in the development of other priority skills including digital capability, programme and project management, and leading and managing change. We will build upon the digital skills and knowledge already present within the Agency and support people to develop their digital skills further. For our specialists, we will grow the best practice digital delivery function we have developed over the past two years. We will also play our part in the government's Transformation Strategy by ensuring our plans align with the Civil Service's digital, data and technology plans.

During 2016-17, we piloted a new performance achievement scheme on behalf of the Civil Service. As part of this scheme, we trained all our line managers to have coaching conversations with their teams and be aware of unconscious bias. The aim has been to equip our managers to get the best out of their teams for the benefit of our customers. We will build on this in the years ahead by:

- developing line managers' leadership skills through regular development workshops and a range of programmes;
- ensuring line managers continue to hold monthly performance achievement conversations with all their people; and
- supporting local performance development review panels to identify and support people with potential and address performance issues.

As well as investing in the expertise of our current workforce, we are committed to investing in the talent of the future. We currently have more than 100 apprentices in post and were shortlisted for a Civil Service Award for our digital apprenticeship scheme last year. We will build on our existing apprenticeship opportunities in digital, surveying and operational delivery. We will also introduce new apprenticeships in procurement, project management, team management and business administration. We plan to offer 90 apprenticeships a year for the next two years.

A workforce that is more representative of the communities we serve will be more expert and better equipped to understand our customers' diverse needs. The Public Sector Equality Duty (2011) requires public bodies to agree and publish equality objectives and report on them externally. Over the next two years, we will:

- improve the breadth and depth of our workforce diversity data to enable us to better understand our people and take action to build a more inclusive workplace;



Apprenticeships

We currently have more than 100 apprentices, and plan to offer 90 apprenticeships a year.

- nurture and sustain a workforce that reflects the communities we serve and creates a work environment that fosters good relations, values difference and advances equality of opportunity for everyone. We are working towards increasing our annual People Survey's inclusion and fair treatment scores, aiming for a 5 percentage point increase by 2020;
- develop our understanding about the impact of our services on customers to identify more clearly those who may need additional support; and
- act on this improved knowledge of our customers' needs to provide services that are accessible and usable by the widest possible range of customers. We will take steps to ensure all equality-related complaints are captured, analysed and reported.

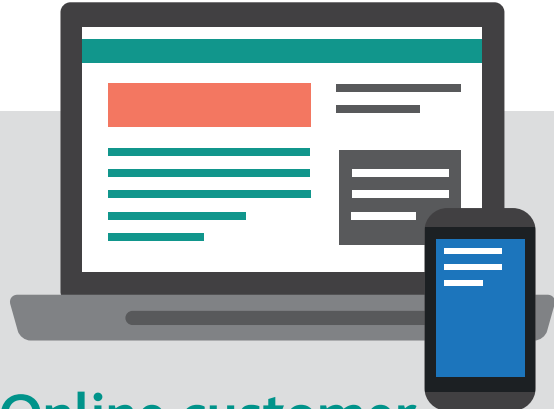
More Digital

Over the next two years, we will continue to work towards becoming a digital by default organisation. This will help us to improve our service to our customers, to make the VOA a great place to work and to reduce our costs. Our Digital Strategy, agreed in 2016, guides our 'more digital' work.

Our customers expect to be able to access our services digitally and these services will be intuitive, reliable and built around their needs. We are committed to providing services that are accessible and usable by the widest possible range of customers.

Specifically, we will:

- continue to develop our check and challenge, Find Your Business Rates Valuation and Rent and Lease Details online services in the light of feedback from our customers;
- improve our online contact tool so customers can get their questions answered more quickly;
- understand how we can improve our digital offering for customers so they can interact with us easily and at their own convenience;
- explore opportunities to link our customer-facing platforms with those of other government departments to provide a consistent, joined-up experience for our customers; and
- ensure we build online services which can be used by everyone and which meet industry standard accessibility criteria.



Online customer contact tool

We will improve our online contact tool so customers can get their questions answered more quickly.

Becoming a more digital organisation is not just about providing services our customers can access digitally. It is also about how we work with partner organisations, how our internal technology and processes work for our people, and how we organise ourselves.

During 2017-18, we will further enhance digital services such as the Local Authority Information Gateway and the Billing Authority Report Submissions (BARS) service that we and our delivery partners use to exchange information.

Our Digital Strategy also focuses on providing our people with modern tools that enable them to do their jobs more effectively, with the aim that our internal digital systems will enable us to work more efficiently and flexibly to meet our customers' needs.

In 2016-17, we stabilised the performance of our existing systems, provided better networks to home-based workers and rolled out new technology to hundreds of our people.

During 2017-18, we will build on these foundations and continue to develop the modernised technology that will give us more useful, reliable and recoverable applications for our work. These will, over time, provide us with more efficient and reliable ways of working without needing to enter the same data repeatedly or log in to lots of different applications.

We will develop new digital services for how we manage and analyse our business, including how we gather information to inform our improvement work. We will enhance our back-end system to support the check and challenge online service, continuing to enhance elements of our new case management system and modernised applications.

We will provide new ways for people to keep in touch and share knowledge, including through collaboration tools and new technology.



Becoming a more digital organisation

Our Digital Strategy also focusses on providing our people with modern tools that enable them to do their jobs, with the aim that our internal digital systems will enable us to work more flexibly to meet our customers' needs.

More Efficient

To deliver on commitments made by government, the VOA - like other public sector organisations - needs to make considerable savings by the end of the Spending Review period (2020-21).

As well as delivering improvements for our customers and our people, our transformation programme will play a significant role in helping us to become more efficient as an organisation.

Over the next two years we will continue transforming how we are organised. We are moving from an organisation structured according to the services we deliver (for example council tax or business rates) to one organised by functions. These functions will cover:

- customer service;
- operational delivery (property data collection and casework); and
- valuation and technical advice.

This will enable us to deploy our people more flexibly to meet customer demand.

We have already applied this functional organisation approach to the way we deliver our check and challenge services. We also have our Chief Valuer, process, policy and transformation functions now in place. Across the Agency, further work is progressing on job design for customer service, property data collection and casework, as well as on organisational design and management functions. Roles will change in future as people work across more services than they do now. This will give us the flexibility we need to manage work peaks as we become smaller. The roles which people have will be more varied and interesting as a result.



Flexible roles

Roles will change in future as people work across more services than they do now. This will give us the flexibility we need to manage work peaks as we become smaller.

In line with our Spending Review commitments we are managing our staffing levels within the assumption that we will employ around 1,000 fewer full-time equivalents at the end of the Spending Review than we did in 2015-16. We are conducting our workforce planning in conjunction with our drive to organise our people by function.

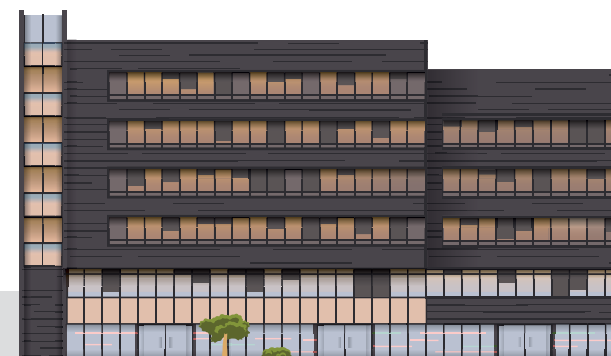
In 2015 our people occupied 70 offices across the country. We now occupy 53 offices and our programme of transforming our office estate continues. During 2017-18, we will reduce our offices to 50, achieving further annualised cost savings of £275,000. This includes four office closures and the opening of one new office in Croydon, where we will occupy space in the HMRC Regional Centre. During 2018-19, we expect to operate from around 40 offices, achieving further annualised cost savings of around £1.5 million.

We will continue to explore further opportunities for shared services where these offer better value and/or reliability than our existing solutions. We have already moved to shared service arrangements for most transactional services in human resources, such as payroll, HR records changes and transactional advice for line managers. We are also now receiving routine health and safety advice from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), although more complex cases are still handled by our health and safety manager. During the first quarter of 2017-18, we are taking a similar approach with our Accounts Receivable function.

We will continue to make savings across VOA contracts over the next two years. Our aim is to make savings of £1 million across all our contracts by 2020. We will ensure that our business contract managers have the skills to effectively manage risks, issues and opportunities with our suppliers. We will work with HMRC to manage our exit from the ASPIRE contract and take advantage of the opportunity this will bring us to develop and directly manage more flexible contracts for our technology and digital functions.

We are continuing to deliver continuous improvement training to our people in our customer-facing business areas. Our approach to continuous improvement is centred on changing and improving the way we work by:

- taking a fresh look at our business processes from the customers' point of view;
- introducing a new discipline to how we manage these processes;
- getting everyone involved in finding ways to do things better; and
- equipping our people with new tools, techniques and skills.



Number of offices

During 2018-19, we expect to operate from around 40 offices, achieving further annualised cost savings of around £1.5 million.

In 2016-17, we provided continuous improvement training to more than 1,000 people, mainly across our council tax and business rates maintenance teams. Our customers are already benefiting from changes put in place as a result. In 2017-18, we will provide this training to people working on business rates appeals. We will also train colleagues working on the check and challenge service.

Annexes

Annex 1: table of performance indicators

Our approach to managing performance

We have designed our approach to performance management with the aim of ensuring the Board, managers and our people all know the extent to which we are meeting our customers' needs in an efficient and effective manner.

Working closely with our funders, our delivery partners and our customers, our Board has identified a series of performance measures and targets that we monitor at our monthly Agency performance hub.

Additional indicators are monitored at management and team level.

Our key performance indicators

Our performance measures and targets cover four main areas: the volume of cases cleared; our timeliness in dealing with our work; the quality of our valuations; and the quality of our customer service.

While we are committed to improving our performance against these four sets of measures, we have had to balance this commitment against the anticipated 29% reduction in our budgets by 2020-21.

In some areas of our work, our transformation programme will allow us to deliver improved performance for our customers despite reductions in expenditure. The 'serving our customers' targets set out within the table below commit us to a year on year improvement in performance for the next two years.

In other areas, we have set targets that protect current levels of service over the next two years.

Our 2018-19 targets are indicative until funding and agreement is reached with our delivery clients.

Every year, the VOA publishes an Annual Report setting out how well we have delivered against our targets.

Name of measure	Our 2017-18 target	Our 2018-19 target
Volumes		
Council tax work cleared (England and Wales combined)	By the end of 2017-18, we expect to have cleared a total of 470,500 reports, band reviews and proposals, and 4,500 appeals.	By the end of 2018-19, we expect to have cleared a total of 468,000 reports, band reviews and proposals, and 4,700 appeals.
Business rates work cleared (England and Wales combined)	By the end of 2017-18, we expect to have cleared 278,000 maintenance reports and 124,500 appeals.	By the end of 2018-19, we expect to have cleared 260,000 maintenance reports and 80,000 appeals.
Housing Allowance lettings – the volumes of lettings collected	We expect to collect 480,000 items of lettings data a year over 2017-18 and 2018-19.	
Timeliness targets		
Business rates	Our previous business rates timeliness target did not reflect the volume, complexity and diverse nature of the changes required to the rating lists to maintain them. We will review our business rates timeliness targets as part of a wider conversation with local authorities and other stakeholders, and during the first half of 2017-18 we will develop a revised approach and customer-facing target. In advance of the new target being agreed, we will continue to handle business rates cases in a timely manner and will proactively monitor our performance.	
Check, Challenge, Appeal	<p>Check – We will complete or substantially respond to 90% of checks within three months of receipt. Challenge - We will complete 90% of challenges within 12 months of receipt.</p> <p>In addition to monitoring these timeliness targets, we will proactively monitor performance of the new check and challenge services from a customer perspective. We will publish information on customers' engagement with our services six months in to the system's operation, and again at the end of the first year of operation.</p>	
Council tax	<p>We will clear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of reports within 8 working days; • 75% of reports within 25 working days; and • 99% of reports within 90 working days. 	

Name of measure	Our 2017-18 target	Our 2018-19 target
Timeliness targets		
Housing Allowances	Where no inspection is required, we will determine 96% of Housing Benefit referrals within three working days.	
Fair Rent	We will determine 95% of cases within 40 working days.	
Statutory Valuations team	<p>We will clear all initial appraisals for HMRC within an average of 5 working days.</p> <p>We will report 80% of DWP cases within 7 working days.</p>	
Valuation quality		
Valuation quality – a check on the quality of our valuation, process compliance and timeliness in making a valuation decision	<p>Our Housing Allowances, Statutory Valuations and Property Services business areas will each achieve valuation quality of 95% or higher.</p> <p>Our business rates and council tax teams will achieve valuation quality of 94% or higher.</p>	
Serving our customers		
Digital service - proportion of overall Agency transactions carried out using our new digital services	By end of 2017-18, 60% of transactions with us will be through digital channels.	By end of 2018-19, 70% of transactions with us will be through digital channels.
How we deal with customer enquiries	We will deal with at least 70% of enquiries to our customer contact points at first point of contact.	We will deal with at least 75% of enquiries to our customer contact points at first point of contact.

Annex 2: Managing our risks

The Agency is maturing its approach to managing risks throughout the organisation. We are enhancing our approach to risk identification and management.

The Board and executive team also review the strategic risk landscape and identify significant Agency level risks to our strategic objectives along with current and future performance. These risks are actively owned and managed at executive level and kept under review by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Board.

Where issues emerge these are managed in issue management forums, either at business stream level or, if they fit set criteria, at Agency level.

The table on the following page sets out the Agency's key risk areas.

Risk description	There is a risk to the Agency that...
Meeting customer needs	Planned levels of concurrent change adversely affect the Agency's ability to deliver agreed customer service commitments.
Managing our resources	We fail to understand the right numbers of people, skills and knowledge required to deliver our services in the future.
Engaging with our people	Our people become disengaged with the future direction of the Agency and/or the work they are doing.
Leadership	Our leaders and managers do not have the capability or confidence to move the organisation from where it is now to where it needs to be in the future.
Cyber threats and security	We fail to implement and maintain effective cyber security capability, controls and response.
Valuations	Our customers do not trust our valuations and property advice.
Pace and scale of change	We fail to plan for and manage the pace and scale of change required in order to deliver the Agency's Spending Review commitments.

Effective management of risk is vital to the successful work of any organisation and the Agency is no exception to this. Our work will inevitably involve a degree of risk and we are robust in our identification of risks and manage and escalate them through various Governance Board and Committees:

- The VOA Board – this Board supports the Accounting Officer and the Chief Executive in the discharge of her accountabilities and responsibilities. The schedule of matters reserved for the Board include: strategy, performance, people, financial reporting and controls, strategic risk, corporate governance matters and policies.

- The Agency Performance Hub – this forum oversees the Agency’s performance, both in terms of immediate and future objectives. Within a dedicated performance hub, displaying performance indicators agreed by the Board, it analyses VOA performance against targets and measures and considers ways to improve performance in all areas.
- The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee – this committee is chaired by a Non-Executive Director and its remit is to advise and support the Accounting Officer and the Board with their responsibilities for issue of risk, control and governance by reviewing the comprehensiveness of assurances and reviewing the reliability and integrity of those assurances.
- Transformation Committee – this committee supports the Transformation Portfolio Senior Responsible Officer in the discharge of their accountabilities and responsibilities through providing senior governance and ensuring effective delivery of the Agency’s Transformation Portfolio.

The Boards and Committees listed above help us to effectively manage the risks we face in a valuable way and help make the VOA a better, more efficient place to work.

Through open, honest and collaborative discussion about our risks, we create a culture where people are comfortable in escalating risks and concerns. Doing so helps inform business decisions; enables a more effective use of precious resources; enhances strategic and business planning; and strengthens contingency planning.