

Minutes of OTS Board meeting 22 November 2016

Present

Angela Knight (chair)
Teresa Graham
John Whiting
James Bowler (HMT)
Kathleen Russ
John Cullinane
Sue Walton (HMRC, standing in for Edward Troup)

Apologies

Paul Johnson
Edward Troup

In attendance

David Halsey (OTS Head of Office)
Sue Youngman (OTS communications consultant)

1. Minutes of previous meeting (27 September 2016)

These had been circulated prior to the meeting. The minutes were confirmed as a correct record. There were no outstanding action points or matters arising that were not on the meeting agenda

2. Register of interests and potential conflicts

An updated register of Board members' interests was circulated and one adjustment noted. No potential conflicts were considered to arise in relation to matters on the agenda.

3. New Tax Director

The Board warmly welcomed the announcement, on 7 November, of the appointment of Paul Morton as the new Tax Director in succession to John Whiting. It was noted that the Treasury Select Committee had decided not to hold a post-appointment hearing.

Practical arrangements were discussed, the Board expressing its gratitude to John for being willing to stay on for a month or two longer than anticipated and in particular to see through the work on the CT review, to ensure a smooth transition.

4. Autumn Statement (23 November) and recently published reports

The Board noted that the OTS had published reports on SEPA and Lookthrough on 1 November, and the second stage of the IT/NICs closer alignment review on 14 November, and the communications work lying behind the various articles that had appeared in the press.

James Bowler explained that Ministers would be writing to the OTS the next day, at Autumn Statement, and that this would include a response to these reviews alongside other matters. HMT and OTS will publish the letter(s); arrangements for informing the Board prior to their publication were discussed.

5. OTS reputation, strategy and key themes

Sue Youngman presented the findings of a mini-reputation survey she had recently carried by way of 1-2-1 telephone interviews with some key stakeholders. She reported that the responses had been generally very positive and contained some valuable points for future consideration. These included taking the opportunity presented by the OTS being placed on a statutory footing; proposing that the OTS becomes more involved in the 'flow' of new policy; and clarifying how OTS projects were identified. The Board discussed the findings and it was agreed that the OTS would consider holding a key stakeholder round table event in the new year to follow up the survey and seek their suggestions for OTS reviews, as part of our continuing strategy development.

Separately, the Board also considered a note from the Chair which highlighted some key themes to give context to the OTS's future work. These included making tax digital (MTD), Brexit, amateur landlords and the Gig economy. On MTD, it was noted that the OTS was represented on the programme Board and had published a detailed response to the recent consultations. Consideration was given to what more the OTS might do to help ensure that the potential for simplification was being fully considered. It was agreed that the OTS would consider this matter further and revert to the Board in due course.

6. CT computation review

The Board noted the publication of a progress report and call for evidence on 1 November and discussed an update on this work. The Board would be given greater visibility on emerging findings for discussion at its meeting in January.

7. Next Reviews

The Board noted, and made comments on, the anticipated Terms of Reference for two new reviews, into (a) a variety of aspects of VAT and (b) the replacement of residual paper Stamp Duty, and considered potential candidates for their respective Consultative Committees.

The Board was also informed that work was under way to consider the potential for a review into aspects of owner managed or family businesses.

8. Other work streams

The Board was updated on the other work streams as follows;

- a draft of the Gig discussion paper is planned to publish shortly after Autumn Statement
- the OTS has published its responses to a number of current consultations
- a stocktake of previous OTS recommendations
- cross-government work relating to employee status
- engagement with aspects of the policy-making process

9. OTS governance

The Board was informed that it was expected that the OTS legislation would be brought into effect by Order on 28 November and the practicalities involved.

The Board noted a list of the significant meetings attended by the Chair, Tax Director or Head of Office since the last meeting, and of some upcoming meetings.

10. OTS operations

The Head of Office reported on OTS finances and staffing.

David Halsey OTS Head of Office