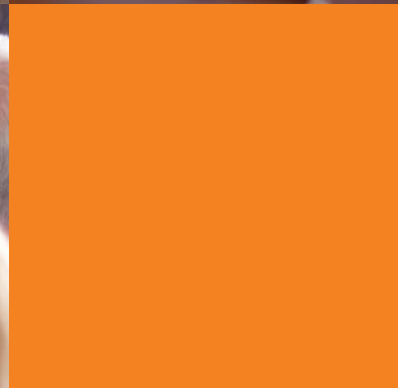
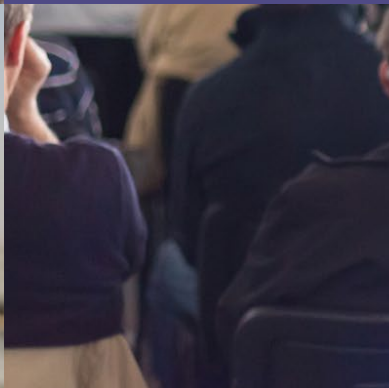
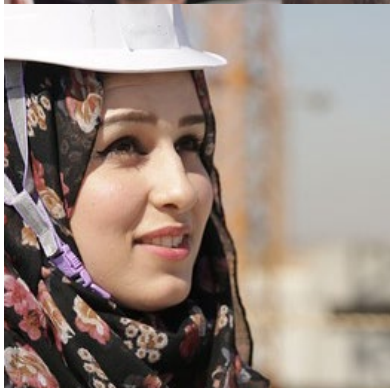
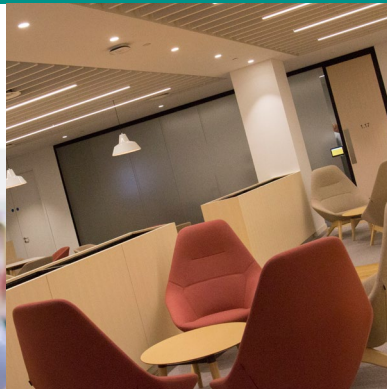
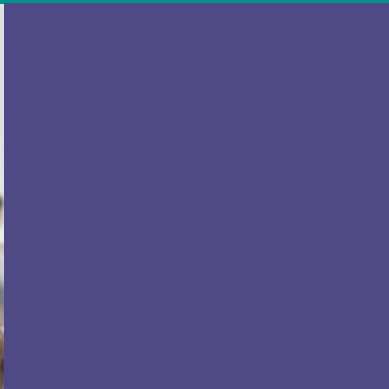
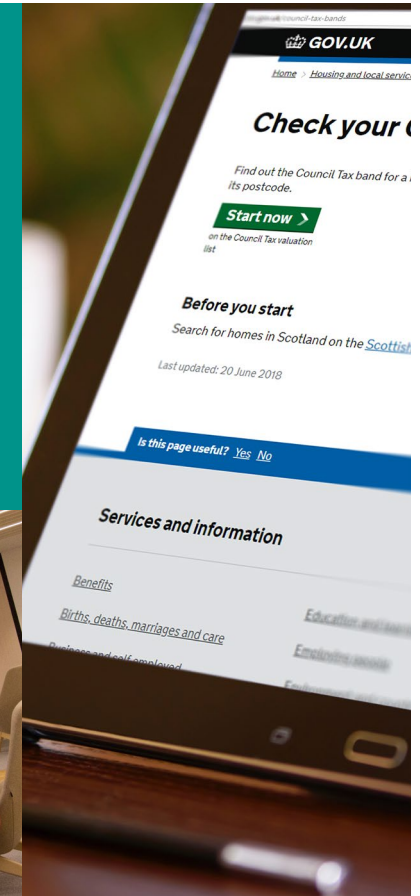




Valuation Office
Agency

VOA BUSINESS PLAN 2019-20



STRUCTURE



Foreword from CEO 3

Key achievements and challenges in 2018-19
Funding challenge and priorities for 2019-20



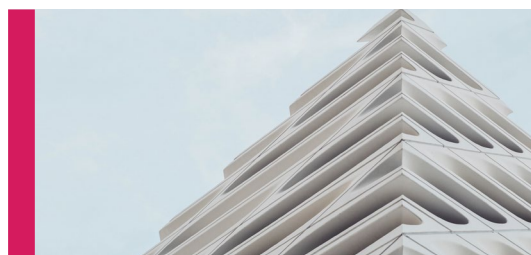
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CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD

What we do matters. We are the public sector's property valuation experts. Our business rate and council tax valuations underpin more than £50 billion of taxation, so our work is vital in funding local public services.

This business plan sets out our priorities and targets for this financial year - including work to deliver the next revaluation and the ongoing transformation of our business.

It builds on our strong record of delivery over the last two years. In that time we have introduced and developed our new Check and Challenge service, enabling our customers to deal with us digitally; made better use of data and analysis, so we can focus our valuation expertise where it has the biggest impact and moved more of our people into modern offices to support new ways of working.

We continue to focus on delivering Government priorities and meeting customer needs. As a result, we have refreshed our strategic objectives to make sure we are focused on our business priorities.

This year we'll move into the valuation phase of the 2021 Revaluation. We plan to deliver 60% of around two million business rates valuations. It's a huge undertaking, which we'll deliver alongside our other key work.

To support this, we'll continue to strengthen our workforce, including launching further recruitment campaigns to attract additional chartered surveyors. We'll also carry on embedding new ways of working, making us more flexible, efficient and better placed to handle changes in demand for our services.



Melissa Tatton, CEO

Efficiency and effectiveness remain a priority for us. We'll further exploit the opportunities offered by the automation of processes, using tools like robotics, and develop our use of data and analytics. Reviewing our processes to improve our productivity and efficiency will be more important than ever.

We'll also keep taking action to make the VOA a better place to work, for example: improving our working environments and investing in people's professional development.

I'm proud to lead this organisation. Although I have no doubt the year ahead will be stretching, I have every confidence we can rise to the challenge.

Melissa Tatton, CBE
Chief Executive
12 July 2019

ABOUT US

£30 billion

in council tax revenue is collected as a result of our work

£25 billion

in business rates is collected as a result of our work

Introduction

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) is an executive agency of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). We employ approximately 3,200 people, based on full-time equivalents, with offices in 43 locations throughout England, Wales and Scotland.

We provide valuation and property advice to support taxation and benefits. As well as undertaking council tax and business rates valuations, which underpin the collection of £30 billion in council tax and £25 billion in business rates by local billing authorities, we also provide support to other public sector bodies. Our valuations also underpin the collection of property-related national taxes and benefits.

Context

In 2017 we published a two-year business plan covering 2017-19. Since then the context in which we operate has changed, with the Chancellor's announcement to bring forward the next business rates revaluation to 2021 and thereafter every three years. In light of this we have taken the opportunity to revise our purpose, vision and objectives.

Our Core Purpose

We are the public sector's property valuation experts and advisers, providing the valuations needed to support local taxation and benefits; our work underpins the funding of vital public services.

Our Vision

To be a world-leading provider of public sector valuations.

Our Strategic Objectives

Our three strategic objectives we will deliver against during 2019-20 are to:

1. Produce reliable property valuations;
2. Provide a clear and consistent experience for our customers, clients and stakeholders;
3. Design and deliver a professional, efficient and engaged organisation.

WHAT WE DO

The work we do enables the collection of approximately £55 billion of revenue in non-domestic rates (also known as business rates) and council tax in England and Wales, which helps to fund essential public services. We also help determine fair rents and housing allowance received, as well as undertaking property valuation work for a range of public sector clients.

Business rates

We compile and maintain statutory rating lists of the rateable values for over two million non-domestic properties, enabling the collection of approximately £25 billion¹ in business rates by billing authorities throughout England and Wales.

Council tax

We compile and maintain statutory valuation lists of council tax bands for approximately 26 million domestic properties, enabling the collection of approximately £30 billion¹ in council tax across England and Wales.

Housing allowances

We determine Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates and maintain a register of fair rents, setting the maximum that can be charged for regulated tenancies in England.

We advise local authorities of the maximum subsidy level payable for housing benefit claims under the local reference rent system. We also collect and interpret rental data on residential properties, which is used to inform parts of the benefits system and reporting for Consumer Pricing Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH).

¹ Source: Country and regional public sector finances: Financial year ending March 2017 (ONS).



Statutory valuations

We provide statutory valuations to support taxes administered by HMRC. We deal with Right to Buy determinations and Community Infrastructure Levy appeals in England and Wales.

We also provide the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with valuations to support the administration of benefits.

District Valuer Services

We provide a range of independent property advice and valuations right throughout the public sector, in cases where a public function or public money is involved.

HOW THE VOA WILL ACHIEVE ITS STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES IN 2019-2020

Our 2017-19 business plan detailed how we would focus on the service delivery against targets agreed with our clients, while changing the way we worked to be more efficient and enabling us to respond flexibly to future challenges.

The 2017 business rates revaluation was a huge undertaking and was achieved whilst we simultaneously modernised the way we deliver revaluations. We improved the digital journey for our customers (through Find Your Business Rates) and worked closely with stakeholders and partners to deliver a reliable revaluation.

We also focussed on our check and challenge service, which is part of the Check Challenge Appeal (CCA) system, delivering the digital improvements in our road map published on 14 May 2018. They included expanding the property types on the service, new functionality enabling both property linking and the capability for our customers to develop software that communicates directly with our system. Throughout the year we met all of the milestones published in the road map.

The VOA has a number of immediate priorities we need to deliver whilst maintaining our customer service and operational performance in 2019-20:

Objective 1 – Produce reliable property valuations

Central and local governments rely on our valuations to ensure customers pay the right property taxes. We must deliver a service our customers, clients and stakeholders can rely on.



We are now preparing for the next business rates revaluation in 2021, followed by further revaluations every three years thereafter.

To do this we will need to take an increasingly risk-based approach, making use of modern technology and analytical methods to focus our effort where it can bring the most value.

Investing in our IT remains a priority – both to help us become a more productive agency and deliver improved customer service.

In 2019-20 we will:

- Deliver key milestones towards the 2021 business rates revaluation and prepare for the more frequent revaluations thereafter

- Clear the majority of the remaining business rate appeals we received over the life of the 2010 list, where they are not held up pending the outcome of litigation in the relevant courts or awaiting listing, relisting or a decision from the Valuation Tribunal
- Keep council tax valuations and business ratings rates lists up to date
- Maintain effective operation of the check and challenge service
- Maintain our valuation quality, ensuring our business rates and council tax valuations are at 94% or above against our internal valuation standard
- Continue to collect and interpret rental information for domestic properties for use in the operation of parts of the benefits system, determine local housing allowance rates across England and manage a register of fair rents
- Undertake statutory property valuations and deliver property advice for public sector clients, ensuring our valuations are at 95% or above against our internal valuation standard
- Continue to gather data about lettings in the private rental sector to support the production of the CPIH measure of consumer inflation

Objective 2: Provide a clear and consistent experience for our customers, clients and stakeholders.

Our aim is to make things as straightforward as possible for our customers; work collaboratively with our stakeholders and ensure we can consistently deliver what we promise.

In 2019-20 we will:

- Provide a consistent service for our customers in their contact with us, supported by moving towards a two customer service centre model and further enhance our online support material to enable our customers to self-serve
- Continuously improve our customer service with at least 70% of customer queries resolved at the first point of contact
- Continue to engage with stakeholders through regular forums with representatives of business and local government, as well as with industry and professional bodies
- Continue to develop our delivery partnership with billing authorities to support the service we deliver to our customers and the efficient delivery of our valuation work

Objective 3: Design and deliver a professional, efficient and engaged organisation.

We can only deliver reliable valuations and a clear and consistent experience for our customers, clients and stakeholders with an efficient organisation and professional, engaged people.

We will encourage this by investing in our people, offering clear development and career opportunities and ensuring we have the tools and working environments to do our jobs efficiently.

To ensure we are ready to deliver the 2021 revaluation, we are building on our existing skilled workforce. At the same time, we are taking the opportunity to think differently about the way we conduct our revaluations to become more productive – so we are able to compress a five-year process into three, and are ready for 2024.

We want to ensure our expertise and experience sit at the heart of our future, making us an organisation that is modern, professional and can continue to deliver reliable and efficient valuation services.

In 2019-20 we will:

- Support our people to develop their careers and continue to build stronger links with universities to encourage graduate development
- Continue to invest in our people and offer attractive development opportunities



- Continue to exploit opportunities offered by the automation of processes, using tools - like robotics, to make the best use of our data
- Continue to deliver our estates consolidation, aligning with Government policy, moving to a smaller number of locations to drive greater operational effectiveness, better local career pathways and more visible leadership

OUR ORGANISATION AND RESOURCES

2019-20 Budget and Efficiencies

Since the publication of our 2017-19 business plan, the landscape has changed. We are now delivering the business rates revaluation a year earlier than originally planned; as a result, our budget profile this financial year has changed. Consequently, we are continuing to drive efficiencies across the Agency whilst working to meet our financial commitments.

	2019-20 Budget
Resource	£203.6m
Capital	£8m

Funding allocations for future years have not yet been determined and will be set as part of the Spending Review 2019 or at Autumn Budget.

ANNEX 1: MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

579,000

council Tax reports, band reviews and proposals

243,500

business rates reports expected to be cleared in 2019-20

122,500

checks expected to be completed during 2019-20

480,000

items of lettings data expected to be collected during 2019-20

Our approach to managing performance

We have designed our approach to performance management with the aim of ensuring the executive committee, our senior managers and people all know the extent to which we are meeting priorities in an efficient and effective manner.

Working closely with our funding providers, our executive committee identified a series of performance measures and targets we monitor monthly. Additional indicators are monitored at management and team level. Every year, we publish an annual report setting out how we have delivered against our targets.

Our key performance indicators

Our performance measures and targets cover three main areas: 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 measures, we have had to balance this commitment against our available resources. The targets are challenging and performance is impacted by the volumes of cases we receive.

Our volume assumptions

We are forecasting the following volumes in 2019-20; these are hard to predict and any change in our assumptions will have an impact on our performance.

On council tax (England and Wales), we expect to clear around 579,000 reports, band reviews and proposals and 3,600 appeals.

On business rates (England and Wales), we expect to clear around 243,500 reports and 23,000 appeals².

On our check and challenge service, we expect to complete work on around 122,500 checks and 9,500 challenges.

On our housing allowances work, we expect to collect in the region of 480,000 items of lettings information.

² Includes appeals against the 2005 and 2010 ratings lists and 2017 Wales ratings list.

2019-20 Performance Targets

Measure	Performance Target for 2019-20
Timeliness	
Council tax	Clear 95% of reports within 90 working days
Business rates	Clear 95% of reports within 90 working days
Check and challenge service	Resolve 90% of check cases within three months of receipt and 90% of challenge cases resolved within 12 months of receipt.
Housing allowances	Where no inspections are required, determine more than 96% of housing benefit referrals within three working days.
Fair rent	Determine 95% of fair cases within 40 working days.
Statutory valuations	Clear all initial appraisals for HMRC within an average of five working days. Report 80% of DWP cases within seven working days.
Valuation Quality	
Valuation quality – a check on the quality of our valuation, process compliance and timeliness in making a valuation decision	For our housing allowances, fair rent, statutory valuations and property services business areas, achieve valuation quality of at least 95%. For our business rates and council tax business areas, achieve valuation quality of at least 94%.
Serving our Customers	
How we deal with customer enquiries	Deal with at least 70% of enquiries to our customer contact points at first point of contact.