

## Minutes of OTS Board meeting 22 March 2022

(held as a hybrid meeting)

### Present

Kathryn Cearns (Chair)

Kathleen Russ

Paul Aplin

Jonathan Athow (HMRC)

Bill Dodwell (Tax Director)

Judith Freedman

Beth Russell (HMT)

### Apologies

John Cullinane

Teresa Graham (Observer)

### In attendance

David Halsey (OTS Head of Office), Bethan Kay (OTS), John Hall (OTS), Julia Neate (OTS), Sue Youngman (OTS), Zoe Judd (OTS), Caroline Eele (HMRC), James Konya (OTS)

#### 1. Minutes of previous meeting (20 January 2022)

These had been circulated prior to the meeting and were confirmed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

#### 2. Register of interests and potential conflicts

An updated register of Board members' interests had been circulated. Kathryn Cearns reminded Board members to notify her, and David Halsey, of any changes.

#### 3. Tax Director's Report

Bill Dodwell noted continued external engagement, and ongoing discussions with HMRC teams.

Bill Dodwell reported on current recruitment activity externally and from HM Treasury and HMRC.

- He was delighted that James Konya would be joining the OTS as Head of Office on 25 April, which would allow for some handover with David Halsey.

- The Board warmly thanked Bethan Kay for her contribution, including leading a number of projects, as she prepared shortly to return to a new role in HMRC on tax administration

- Bill and David also reported that Andy Richens had re-joined the staff on a one year appointment, that the Office was in the process of appointing two new people who would bring valuable and varied HMRC and HM Treasury experience to the team, and that the OTS was currently advertising for further people from the private sector tax profession.

Bill and Kathryn, and the whole board, expressed their grateful thanks to David Halsey for his contribution as Head of Office over the last 6 years and wished him well for his retirement from the Civil Service and future plans.

Bill Dodwell updated the Board on the progress being made in various areas of the Office's work, discussed later in the meeting.

#### **4. Board appointments**

Kathryn Cearns reported that work was well under way towards advertising for 2 new Board members, and outlined the skills and experience being looked for, following the changes made to the legislation about this. The Board discussed options for attracting a diverse field of applicants.

#### **5. Review of Simplification**

Bill Dodwell reported on progress with this review, in particular through a wide range of meetings, building on the specific discussion held with board members.

The Board discussed possible approaches to making the most of the review, including in relation to the manner and timing of its publication, and the possibility of holding an event of some kind.

#### **6. 2021 review of the OTS**

David Halsey presented a draft staff skills matrix on which the board made a number of comments and suggestions. An updated version would be brought back to the May board meeting.

The Board also noted an update from HM Treasury and HMRC on their ongoing action points from the review.

#### **7. Evaluation review papers**

The Board welcomed the publication of all the remaining notes from this project, noting in particular the pick-up in the media on the note relating to the High-Income Child Benefit Charge.

David Halsey commented that the way this project, led by Julia Neate, had expanded, in particular in producing a number of stand-alone notes led by a number of others in a true team effort.

It was agreed that there continued to be merit in the OTS actively engaging with HMRC during the early stages of its thinking and planning, for example in relation to the Single Customer Account.

#### **8. Property income review**

The Board noted that this review was now under way. Encouragingly, there had already been over 600 responses to the online survey.

#### **9. Future work**

One of the recommendations from the 2021 review was to develop a fuller forward programme.

In that regard, the Board was pleased to be able to consider and offer suggestions about draft scoping notes for three potential projects, relating to charities and the third sector, hybrid or distance working, and clearances and rulings. Discussions would continue with HM Treasury and HMRC about the time at which to start one or more of these areas of work.

#### **10. Administrative matters**

The Board received a report on meetings recently held by the OTS.

#### **11. Any other business**

The Board noted the meeting dates for the remainder of 2022.