

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER - INFORMATION PACK

The organisation

History and role

The Valuation Tribunal has been in existence in one form or another since 1948. It deals with appeals related to the collection of local taxation, principally in connection with the correct valuation of property for Non-domestic Rating and Council Tax purposes. It gives an opportunity for ordinary ratepayers and council taxpayers to challenge the assessment of their property for these local taxation purposes in a non-court setting, in front of a panel of lay tribunal members. Cases can range from very simple and low-key in character (the majority of cases) to formal and pressured where appellants may be represented by professional rating surveyors or barristers (these are few in number per year).

Welsh Government Sponsored Body

The organisation is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body (WGSB). This means that it is an independent body funded out of public finances administered by the Welsh Government (WG). The VTW holds “an arm’s length” framework agreement with the WG, which principally addresses the management of the public funding given to the VTW. The WG makes quarterly funding payments and it also currently provides a payroll service to the VTW.

Staff status

The staff of the VTW are not civil servants; they are solely employees of the VTW itself. For staff pension purposes, the VTW is a scheduled body within the Local Government Pension Scheme. This does not mean that staff are local government officers (again they are solely employees of the VTW itself). Accordingly the VTW sets its own staffing terms and conditions; although these are based on the “Green Book” utilised by local government services.

Tribunal membership; staffing teams; and hearings

The “VTW itself” is the full membership of the tribunal (currently just under 75 members). These members are unpaid volunteers, who apply to become members of the tribunal from all walks of life. Some are chartered surveyors who understand the valuation of property and some are lawyers who are used to interpreting legislation, but many are not. All are supported in a tribunal hearing setting by the VTW’s tribunal clerks’ team. The tribunal clerks are experts in valuation for rating and council tax liability. Some hold qualifications from the Institute for Revenues, Rating and Valuation; some hold legal qualifications; some hold both. The tribunal clerks team constitutes the majority of the VTW’s staffing (9 out of 15). The remaining staffing is divided into an administrative support team (3 personnel) and an executive management team (3 personnel including the CEO). All of the current executive management team have tribunal clerk experience and qualifications; however it is very rare for them to act as a tribunal clerk -- although they can do so, if circumstances require it.

Since 2017 new tribunal members are appointed for a term of five years, which may be renewed for another period of five years. Ten years is the maximum period for these appointees. However many current members were originally appointed before 2017 and under different rules. The majority of these members have much more than ten years’ experience and are serving out final terms.

Members sit at tribunal hearings in panels of three, one of whom has the status of chairperson and presides over the hearing. Chairpersons are appointed internally by an appointments panel (see *The Governing Council* below for further information on appointments panels). Tribunal members do not receive fees; but they are reimbursed travelling and other expenses. Tribunal meetings take place in various hired venues across Wales and in the Tribunal's own office in Newport. The Newport office can handle both personally attended cases and cases heard by video link (principally through Zoom, although Microsoft Teams can also be used).

Training

Members are trained internally and regularly (at least once a year). Two training events are arranged per year; each designed to cater for half of the membership. The training is principally delivered by the tribunal clerks team; although outside trainers and speakers are sometimes brought in. If there are significant changes to relevant legislation, additional ad hoc events are arranged. Members' failure to attend training can result in them being disbarred from sitting on future tribunal panels. Chairpersons must attend both the general training arranged for all members and an annual training conference.

The COVID pandemic disrupted the Tribunal's training programme in 2020 and resulted in the development of bespoke training videos in early 2021. The Tribunal aims to develop an online library of these video training resources in the coming years, which will be accessible to tribunal members through a members' portal on the Tribunal's website.

Staff training includes both internally organised events and external courses and events. Traditionally the Tribunal has focused on tribunal clerks obtaining qualifications with the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV). The Tribunal still promotes and supports the obtaining of these qualifications, but it has recently widened its focus to include obtaining a graduate diploma in law in the first instance. All of the most recent intake of trainee clerks (three in number) have followed this path.

The Tribunal is also a supporter of residential "away days" for staff, to cement team-bonding across the whole organisation. The Tribunal closed two offices in October 2020 (Llandudno Junction and Swansea) and the affected workers then became home-based workers. Because of the mix of home-based and office-based workers in the organisation (half and half), the Tribunal believes that residential away-day events now have an elevated importance for the maintenance of morale and engagement.

The Governing Council

The full membership elects from amongst its number a President and three National Representatives to sit on the VTW's Governing Council. The Welsh Government currently appoints one person to sit on the council; and it holds the power to appoint a further two, should it so wish. Welsh Government appointees are usually not members of the Tribunal itself – although there is nothing to debar this.

The Governing Council acts on behalf of the full membership in setting the overall strategic direction of the VTW. It also convenes appointments panels periodically to appoint new members if required, re-appoint existing members for a further term when necessary, and appoint chairpersons. The Governing Council sets the membership and chairperson levels within certain statutory limits. The Governing Council monitors the VTW's overall performance. It requires the CEO to attend each of its

meetings. There is a programme of four meetings per year. Additional meetings are arranged for *ad hoc* purposes.

The CEO role

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the head of paid service at the Valuation Tribunal for Wales (VTW). They are ultimately responsible for all day-to-day operational and financial matters within the VTW.

The role is a statutory officer position created by regulation 15 of the Valuation Tribunal for Wales Regulations 2010 [WSI 2010 No. 713 (w.69)]. Under this regulation the CEO is also the Clerk to the Tribunal. The Clerk holds numerous responsibilities under various non-domestic rating and council tax statutory regulations regarding the receipt of appeals, the issuing of notices, and the making and keeping of records. These activities are delegated to and undertaken by the other staff within the organisation; but it is the CEO's responsibility to ensure that they are undertaken correctly and, when there are changes, that the changes are implemented correctly. In practice, the Tribunal depends heavily on its bespoke IT database system to manage many of these processes automatically. So the CEO needs to be well aware of the system's requirements and implementation and work closely with the Executive Manager who takes the lead in VTW IT system delivery.

The CEO reports to the Governing Council on the VTW's performance. This includes not only the operational processing of appeals, but also performance with respect to other regulatory required functions, such as health & safety, data protection, HR, and Welsh standards compliance. The CEO holds overall responsibility for ensuring the good management of finances, risk, premises, facilities and personnel (including training). The CEO works closely with the other two managers in the Executive Team to secure this. The CEO flags important issues in these areas with the Governing Council, promotes the development of new policies when required and the consideration of policy changes when necessary. It is the CEO's responsibility to ensure the corporate well-being of the organisation at all times. The CEO drafts the VTW's operational plans and writes the VTW's annual reports

The CEO represents the VTW at periodic meetings with the VTW's sponsorship team at Welsh Government. In recent times the CEO has attended these meetings with the other members of the Executive Management Team in order to present detailed information to Welsh Government on the VTW's work, progress and ambitions. The CEO also represents the VTW at events and meetings organised by other outside bodies, such as the Professional Bodies Liaison Group of the Valuation Office Agency and the Law Commission. At times the CEO will work closely with the President of the Tribunal in representing the organisation from both an administrative and judicial perspective.

Terms and Conditions

The CEO pay scale is:

VTW pay point	Annual salary (£)
51	58,186
52	59,356
53	60,550
54	61,769
55	63,014
56	64,285
57	65,582
58	66,906
59	68,257

Initial starting point may vary dependent on the appointee's experience and demonstrated abilities. Incremental progression through the pay points takes place annually on the 1st April each year until the top point is reached.

In addition to salary, the appointee will receive an annual car user allowance of £1,239 and, if home-based, a non-taxable homeworking allowance of £24 per month (£288pa).

Initial appointment will be on a two-year fixed-term contract, which will commence with a six-month probation period. The contract may be renewed for another fixed term at the end of the initial two years by agreement between the parties; it may alternatively be made permanent at that point. If the appointed candidate is not a fluent Welsh speaker, they will be required to develop at least simple conversational Welsh before the end of first two years.

The post is full-time (37 hours per work). The Tribunal operates a flexitime working scheme.

The job will be home-based or located at the VTW office in Newport, dependent upon the location of the appointee's home. Any appointee within reasonable travelling distance of Newport will be required to be office-based. If the appointee resides in England at the time of appointment, they will be expected to relocate their main residence to Wales within 12 months of the starting date. Relocation expenses will be paid in accordance with the VTW's relocation scheme.

Annual holiday entitlement ranges from 25 days to 31 days personal leave (dependent upon any previous experience under "Green Book" terms and conditions and subsequent length of service with the Tribunal), *plus* all UK public/bank holidays, *plus* 4 discretionary days awarded and fixed by the VTW. If a person starts with a 25-day entitlement, they will secure 30 days after five years' service. They will have 31 days after 10 years' service.

The VTW operates a paid sickness leave scheme in line with the provisions of the "Green Book" (the National Joint Council for Local Government Services' *National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service*)

The pension scheme is the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). In line with the statutory provisions of the scheme the appointee will be automatically enrolled at the commencement of employment. Employee contributions into the pension fund are 8.5% of salary. Staff can choose to opt out of the scheme immediately after auto-enrolment or at a later date. Employee contributions

into the scheme may be refunded within the “vesting period” (normal two years); after that they are locked into the fund. Full details are available on request.

Assessment and interview

After the closing date for applications (6 January 2023) the Tribunal will select a long list of candidates, who will be invited to attend an open day at the VTW’s Newport office to meet members of the Governing Council, the current Executive Management team and other staff. The open day(s) may include an element of assessment testing. The open day(s) will take place in January / early February by agreement.

Short-listing will take place following the open day(s) and selected candidates will be required to undertake DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks by the end of February. Formal interviews will take place during February; and a job offer is expected to be made to the chosen candidate by the end of that month. The projected starting date for the role will be as soon as can be agreed from 1 April 2023.

How to apply

Please use our application form. Do not supply a CV.

Applications may be submitted electronically or in hard copy; and they must be received before 6 January 2023.

Email electronic applications to:

jobs@valuationtribunal.wales

Post hard copy applications to:

Job Applications
Valuation Tribunal for Wales
22 Gold Tops
Newport
NP20 4PG

Do not send both electronic and hard copy applications. Use one or the other; not BOTH.