



Valuation Tribunal Service

37 Broad Street, Wokingham,
Berkshire RG40 1AU
Tel: 0118 974 9200
Fax: 0118 977 3520
Email: thames.valley.group.vt@vto.gsx.gov.uk

THAMES VALLEY GROUP

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Valuation Tribunals

Clerk and Head of Administration
Mr. M. Campbell

Professional Tribunal Officer
Mr. P. Gleeson

Ms. Maragret Blane
Outside Appointments
West Berkshire D. C.
Council Offices
Market Street
Newbury RG14 5LD

29 January 2004

Dear Ms. Blane,

Reappointment of Valuation Tribunal Members

Further to my letter last year, I am writing to advise that several members are due to be reappointed by your authority by 31st March 2004. I detail below information about the appointment process and the requirements of the Tribunal.

1. Valuation Tribunals are constituted under the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The primary regulations, as far as appointing authorities are concerned, are the Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals Regulations 1989. There are 56 Valuation Tribunals in England and Wales. Currently they are independent entities which come within the overall jurisdiction of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). From 1st April 2004, the Tribunals will come under the authority of a Non-Departmental Public Body, known as The Valuation Tribunal Service, and sponsored by the ODPM. The new Service will have a Chief Executive and Board.
2. Valuation Tribunals are quasi-judicial tribunals charged with determining appeals arising from council tax, non-domestic rates, completion notice appeals, and a few more arcane 'local tax' related appeals.
3. Members are appointed to Valuation Tribunals by 'appointing authorities'. The members so appointed do not in any way represent the appointing authority, and indeed in some circumstances may be precluded from determining appeals arising in the area of their own appointing authority. Members sit throughout Berkshire in an entirely independent capacity.
4. The Berkshire Valuation Tribunal is one of three Tribunals in the Thames Valley VT Group. The others are the Buckinghamshire and the Oxfordshire VTs. Workloads in the three Counties have fallen and as a result there are overall too many members. Unfortunately, members have hitherto been appointed to only one discrete county. In the future it would be preferable if all three counties could appoint a member so that there would be fewer members in total, but all covering a larger area. This is a view that is strongly supported by the new Chief Executive and Chair of the Valuation Tribunal Service.
5. Berkshire is unusual in that county-based appointments are not made as they used to be by the old Berkshire County Council, and indeed are still done so by

Berkshire Valuation Tribunal President B TALFOURD-COOK, FCA, ATII

Buckinghamshire Valuation Tribunal President J.W. WALKER

Oxfordshire Valuation Tribunal President H.A. JOHN JP

Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. Instead each of the Berkshire Unitary Authorities makes a relatively small number of appointments.

6. Under the 1989 Regulations, which have been amended many times since that year, the number of members appointed by each appointing authority in Berkshire is as follows: Bracknell Forest (2); Reading (4); Slough (4); Windsor and Maidenhead (4); West Berkshire (4); and Wokingham (2).
7. Under Regulation 4, an appointment to fill any vacancy must be made by the relevant authority **and** the President of the Tribunal. This means that if the appointment cannot be informally agreed at officer level, as it has been hitherto, it will be necessary to set up an appointments panel comprising the President of the Tribunal and one representative of the appointing authority to determine the appointments. If they cannot agree, the matter is referred to the Secretary of State for determination who, under the regulation, will consult **solely** with the President. In summary therefore, the issue of who is appointed is not really at the discretion of the appointing authorities, though their view will of course be fully considered.
8. Under Regulation 5, no more than one third of the members appointed can be elected members of the appointing authority.
9. Under Regulation 6, Members are appointed for a term of up to six years and must retire on reaching the upper age bar of 72.
10. The current member appointed by West Berkshire is Mr. C.N.B. Marriage. It is the view of the President that he should be reappointed for a term of six years. This leaves three vacancies.
11. The President strongly recommends that all the appointing authorities appoint existing members of other tribunals in the Thames Valley Group when reappointments arise. This ensures that individual complements are not maintained at an unnecessarily high level and that existing members can fully utilize the knowledge, skills, and competencies they have garnered over many year's experience. As already mentioned the Tribunals are quasi-judicial bodies and the members do not in any way represent appointing authorities when fulfilling that function.
12. The President recommends that the three other vacancies are filled by the following members:

Mr. H.A. John of the Oaks, Shotover Hill, Headington, Oxford OX3 8TA (telephone number 01865 762225). Mr. John is 62 and a member and President of the Oxfordshire Valuation Tribunal.

Mr. J.P. Seddon of 53 Early Road, Witney Oxford OX28 1ET (Telephone 01865 882828). Mr. Seddon is 62 and a member and Chairman of the Oxfordshire Valuation Tribunal.

Mr. H. Davis of 57 Culverleigh Crescent, Furzton North, Milton Keynes MK4 1HY (Telephone 01908 505522). Mr. Davis is 62 and a member of the Buckinghamshire Valuation Tribunal.

All members are very experienced in, and knowledgeable about, the work of the Tribunals.

If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Murray Campbell
Clerk to the Tribunals and Head of Administration