

PRESS NOTICE

‘ENSURING A COHERENT, ACCESSIBLE AND FAIR ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN WALES’

THE WELSH COMMITTEE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE AND TRIBUNALS COUNCIL PUBLISH FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

Devolved tribunals in Wales must be independent of government and the other agencies if they are to be truly effective, the Welsh Committee of the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council (AJTC) announced today, publishing its first Annual Report since its inception in June 2008.

The report seeks strong and informed leadership from the Welsh Assembly Government in establishing a single focal point for administrative justice in Wales and argues that learning lessons from appeals, complaints and redress would make for better initial decision-making to reduce the need for appeals.

Prof. Sir Adrian Webb, Chair of the Welsh Committee of the AJTC said:

“The Welsh Committee of the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council was set up in June 2008 to ensure a coherent, accessible and fair administrative justice system in Wales. In our first year we have worked hard to understand the administrative justice landscape in Wales, a landscape made complex by the intertwining of devolved and non-devolved systems.

“When members of the public feel they have cause to appeal a decision, they have the right to expect a service which is truly independent of the policy and decision makers in government. This is not always the case. Too many tribunals are funded and administrated by the very departments whose decisions they were created to challenge. This must be addressed.

“There is a need to focus on improving initial decision-making throughout government, local councils and agencies dealing with members of the public by learning the lessons that redress cases have to teach us. “Right First Time” means a better result for the individual, less work for appeals systems and lower costs for government; it is an obvious element in a citizen centred approach to public services and should be made a priority.

“We will continue to work closely with the Welsh Assembly Government on all these issues. A review of tribunals in Wales has been initiated, and will make recommendations to the Welsh Assembly Government on options for reform in 2009/10.”

- This is the first Annual Report of the Welsh Committee of the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council (AJTC), which was established under the *Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007*.
- The Committee came into existence on 1 June 2008 and this report formally covers the period from then until 31 March 2009.

- The AJTC is an independent advisory non-departmental public body sponsored by the Ministry of Justice. Created by the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007, it is the successor body to the Council on Tribunals (CoT). Its purpose is to keep under review the administrative justice system as a whole and to help make administrative justice and tribunals increasingly accessible, fair and effective by playing a pivotal role in the development of coherent principles and good practice; promoting understanding, learning and continuous improvement; and ensuring the needs of users are central. More about the AJTC can be found on its website: <http://www.ajtc.gov.uk>

The key functions of the AJTC and its Committees are set out in the Act and include:

- keeping the overall administrative justice system under review
- considering ways to make the system accessible, fair and efficient
- advising on the development of the system
- making proposals for changes in the system
- making proposals for research into the system
- keeping under review the constitution and working of the tribunals designated as being under the AJTC's oversight
- keeping under review the constitution and working of statutory Inquiries