



CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

VENUE: Ceredigion Council Chamber, Aberaeron

DATE: 30 November 2012

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair)

Local Authorities

Councillor Chris Bithell (Flintshire)
Councillor Fiona Gordon (Swansea)
Councillor Lynda G. Williams (Neath Port Talbot)
Councillor B. Towyn Evans (Ceredigion)
Councillor David W. M. Rees (Pembrokeshire)
Councillor Alun Lenny (Carmarthen)
Councillor Huw Thomas (Cardiff)

Welsh County Librarians

Mr Wil T. Phillips

National Library of Wales

Mr R. Arwel Jones

The Welsh Academy

Mr Dafydd John Pritchard

WJEC

Mrs Mererid Morgan

Estyn

Mr Terwyn Tomos

Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones
Ms Marian Delyth

Vice-Chair

Mr Gareth Davies Jones

Honorary Secretary

Mr D. Geraint Lewis

Honorary Treasurer

Mr W. Gwyn Jones

Co-opted Member

Mrs Rona Aldrich

Staff

Mr Elwyn Jones (Chief Executive)
Mr Arwyn Roderick (Director of Finance and Business)
Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf (Director of Administration and Services)

Mr D. Philip Davies (Director of Information and Promotion)
 Mrs Marian Beech Hughes (Head of the Editorial Department)
 Mr Neville Evans (Distribution Centre Manager)
 Mr Richard Owen (Head of the Publishing Grants Department)
 Mr Sion Ilar (Head of the Design Department)
 Miss Angharad Tomos (Head of Children's Books and Reading
 Promotion Department)

APOLOGIES: Councillors Eurfryn Davies; Wyn Ellis Jones; Graham Davies; Giles Howard;
 Messrs Alun P. Thomas; Gwydion Hughes; T. Hywel James; Ioan Kidd;
 David Barker; W. Gwyn Williams; Mrs Carol M. Edwards; Dr Hywel Owen.

1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, and extended a special welcome to Councillor Huw Thomas (Cardiff), Mr Terwyn Tomos (Estyn), Mrs Mererid Morgan (WJEC) and Miss Angharad Tomos (Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department).
- 1.2 The following members of staff were congratulated on giving many years of service to the Council – Mr Phil Davies (Director of Information and Promotion) (25 years); Mrs Eiry Williams (Clerical Assistant at the Distribution Centre) (30 years) and Mr Geraint Williams (Assistant at the Distribution Centre) (35 years). The Chair further noted the interesting fact that current staff had worked at the Council for a total of 565 years and 6 months.
- 1.3 Congratulations were extended to Sharon Owen (Book Club Administrator) and Arwel Jones (National Library of Wales) on the birth of their son at the beginning of October, and to Mari Elin Jones (Administrative Assistant at the Distribution Centre) on her recent marriage.
- 1.4 Warm wishes were conveyed to a member of staff at the Distribution Centre who had recently undergone surgery.
- 1.5 Members were reminded of the need to declare an interest, and to absent themselves from the meeting at the appropriate times. All members were also requested to sign the Register of Interests.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Half Yearly Meeting, held on 29 June 2012, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Operational Plan 2012/13
 The Chief Executive reported that the Minister had confirmed the draft version of the Operational Plan presented at the previous meeting. The Council was currently discussing the Remit Letter for 2013/14 with the Welsh Government.
- 3.2 Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Books Council
 The Chief Executive presented a report on the activities held during the year, namely a session with Fflur Dafydd at the Hay Festival, a staff reunion, and an event at the National Library with Eigr Lewis Roberts; he also referred to a forthcoming event at the Senedd on 5 December when guests would be addressed by the Minister for Heritage and by the poet Gwyneth Lewis.

The Chair explained that the celebration volume would not now be published until next year, as one of the contributors had withdrawn.

3.3 Developments in the field of e-publishing

The Director of Information and Promotion noted that 429 e-books were now available on the Books Council's Website, with 77 of them being Welsh-language titles.

These titles are not only for sale on the Gwales website; as Gardners is the company hosting the e-books, the titles are also available on the Waterstones and Tesco websites, and available to independent bookshops that are developing their own websites. Almost all the Welsh titles are also available through the scheme provided by libraries in Wales to offer e-books to their readers.

Y Lolfa is the main publisher as regards Welsh-language titles, but Gomer, Rily and Honno are also producing e-books – albeit on a smaller scale as they do not have the resources to do the work in-house.

The picture is more encouraging as regards English-language titles, with Parthian, Seren, Accent and Honno all making a concerted effort, and the number of titles increasing regularly as a high proportion of new books published in England – by companies such as The History Press – appear as e-books within a short space of time.

These e-books are in an EPUB format, thus enabling users to download them to every possible device apart from Kindle. The Director of Information and Promotion explained the background to the decision to opt for an open format which could be used on any computer, notebook, laptop, Android phone, iPad, Kobo, Nook, Sony Reader, etc. The fact that Amazon does not sell Welsh-language books on the Kindle system is a matter for concern, and proves that using other devices is the way ahead for the book trade in Wales, and the best option for the average user.

Phil Davies had reported in the morning meeting that the Gwales website was currently being adapted in order for bookshops to receive a commission on sales through the website. The necessary technical work is currently ongoing to enable Gwales customers to nominate a shop of their choice to receive commission of 5% on the sales of every book, including e-books. In addition, where a customer gains access to Gwales by means of a link on a shop's website, the shop will receive an additional 2.5% in commission. The Gwales website will also contain a map to enable customers to find their nearest bookshop. The scheme has been warmly welcomed, and has proved to booksellers that the Council is committed to securing their interests in the context of developing e-books.

3.4 Review of English-language Magazines from Wales

The Chief Executive explained that the Panel, chaired by Dr Tony Bianchi, had commenced its work and the ensuing report would be considered in the July meeting of the Publishing Grants Panel (English-language). Wavehill had conducted a review amongst readers and had received a good number of responses.

3.5 Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones, Chair of the Friends, presented a report on the year's activity, referring especially to the Annual Meeting held recently at the National Library, with an enjoyable question and answer session in the company of the author and poet Eigr Lewis Roberts. She was presented with an *englyn* which had been composed to note the occasion by Crowned Bard Dafydd John Pritchard.

Reference was made to the fact that members of the Steering Committee had targeted various book festivals at Aberystwyth, Caernarfon and Bala in an attempt to gain new members. In addition, a reception had been held for the Friends on the Books Council's stand at the Vale of Glamorgan National Eisteddfod.

It was reported that the financial position of the Friends was satisfactory.

Tegwyn Jones referred to the contents of the Friends' latest information pack, and noted that membership continued to be approximately 350.

He paid warm thanks to fellow members of the Steering Committee for their cooperation, and to the Books Council staff for their continued support.

4 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Chairman reported that the Executive Committee, at its meeting that morning, had approved the following amendments to the Constitution for presentation to the Council. They were formally presented to the Council and approved.

Change of Nomenclature

Welsh Assembly Government

The amended title to read: **Welsh Government**

Amend current clause

IV(ch) MEMBERSHIP: Representatives

Insert 'observer status on the Council only'

Welsh Government

Amended clause to read:

Welsh Government – observer status on the Council only

5 CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

The Chief Executive presented the strategy, referring to the four main strands. He noted that this was a live document which would be reviewed and adapted in consultation with the relevant Department of the Welsh Government.

6 GRANTS 2013/14

The Director of Finance and Business presented a paper noting the projected grants position for 2013/14.

7 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PANELS

The Director of Administration and Services, in accordance with the Constitution, presented a list of members of the Council, the Executive Committee and the various Panels. She explained that representatives of the local authorities were all members of the Council, and were represented in rotation on the Executive Committee. She thanked those who had served on various committees and panels in 2012.

All those present were asked to complete the Interests Register.

8 PRESENTATION OF THE FINANCIAL REPORT 2011/12

The accounts for 2011/12 were presented to the members by the Honorary Treasurer.

9 PROBABLE FINANCIAL POSITION 2012/13 AND ESTIMATES 2013/14

The Honorary Treasurer presented papers noting the projected financial position, adding that the estimates included savings that had been agreed upon.

10 PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

In presenting the Annual Report, the Chief Executive referred to the programme of events held to celebrate the Books Council's half centenary; he added that the aim was to reflect all aspects of the Council's work in promoting books and reading in both Welsh and English. He also referred to recent changes within the publishing industry due to the advance of digital publishing, and emphasized that it was vital for the industry in Wales to be a part of these developments. The Gwales website has now been developed in order to provide a platform for selling e-books as well as print titles, and some 450 e-books are currently for sale on the website.

These developments had been introduced despite a cut in the Council's core funding, and the Chief Executive emphasized that the Council had recently had to make difficult decisions in order to operate within budget.

In his closing remarks, the Chief Executive thanked the staff, the Chief Officers and all members of the Panels and Council for their work throughout the year.

Mr Dafydd John Pritchard, on behalf of the Welsh Academy, paid thanks to the Chief Executive and his staff.