



CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 26 November 2009

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair)

Local Authorities

Councillor B. Towyn Evans (Ceredigion)
Councillor Gwilym Fychan (Powys)
Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd (Gwynedd)
Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer (Flintshire)
Councillor Jim B. Criddle (Caerphilly)
Councillor Jason Owen (Blaenau Gwent)
Councillor Peter H. C. Davies (Newport)
Councillor Giles Howard (Monmouthshire)
Councillor A. D. Hampton (Blaenau Gwent)

Welsh County Librarians

Mr Alan Watkin

Welsh Assembly Government

Mr Leighton James

WJEC

Mr Alun Treharne

CILIP

Mr Rhys Bebb Jones

Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones
Dr Brynley F. Roberts

Council Panels

Mr David Barker (Chair, Children's Books Panel)

Vice-Chair

Mr Gareth Davies Jones

Honorary Secretary

Mr D. Geraint Lewis

Honorary Treasurer

Mr W. Gwyn Jones

Honorary Counsel

Mr Gwydion Hughes

Staff

Mr Elwyn Jones (Director)
 Mr Arwyn Roderick (Head of Finance, Business and Information Technology)
 Mrs Marian Beech Hughes (Senior Editorial Officer)
 Mr D. Philip Davies (Head of Information Services)
 Mr Dafydd Charles Jones (Manager of the Distribution Centre)
 Mr Richard Owen (Senior Grants Officer)
 Mr Sion Ilar (Senior Design Officer)
 Miss Menna Lloyd Williams (Head of the Children's Books Department)

Officers

Miss Delyth G. Morgans
 Mrs Tanwen Haf
 Mrs Karina Wyn Dafis

APOLOGIES: Councillors Morfudd M. Jones; Margaret E. Davies; Messrs Keith Morgan; ; David W. M. Rees; Ron Page; Eirwyn Williams; Mrs Ann Keane; Ms Gillian Evans; Mrs Ann Jones; Messrs W. Gwyn Jones; Ioan Kidd; Alun P. Thomas; William Howells; Neil Bennett; Steve Hardman; R. Arwel Jones; Dafydd John Pritchard; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Mr Tom Ferris (Head of Sales and Marketing).

1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 Before commencing the meeting, the Chair presented a gift to Gwerfyl Pierce Jones, former Director of the Books Council, as an appreciation of her work and to note her retirement. Gareth Davies Jones, the Vice-Chair, thanked Gwerfyl warmly on behalf of all members.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, and extended a special welcome to Councillor Giles Howard (Monmouth) and Councillor Peter H. C. Davies (Newport) who were present for the first time.
- 1.3 Mr Gwydion Hughes, the Council's Honorary Counsel, was welcomed to the meeting and thanked for his presence.
- 1.4 A welcome was extended to Dr Claire Flay, Grants Officer (English-language) and Dan Webb, IT Technician, both of whom were attending their first meeting.
- 1.5 Condolences were extended to two members of staff at the Distribution Centre, namely Geraint Williams who had lost his father, and Ann-Marie Hinde following the death of her sister.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Half Yearly Meeting, held on 25 June 2009, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING3.1 Welsh Assembly Government

The Director reported that the Minister for Heritage had visited the Books Council early in the summer, and there had been an opportunity to present the case for additional funding for Welsh-language publishing.

It was further noted that the Minister had, at the beginning of November, announced that the Council would receive a sum of £300,000 which had been earmarked for the purpose of appointing creative editors and commissioning authors.

3.2 Schemes to Promote Reading

Following the earmarking of £177,000 by the Assembly Government's Education Department towards supporting the World Book Day activities and the main legacy schemes following the Year of Reading in 2009/10, the Director reported that the work of coordinating the projects was already in hand.

Delyth Humphreys was thanked for her work in leading these projects, and appreciation was also conveyed to local authorities and numerous partners for their cooperation in ensuring the success of various activities at a local level.

It was noted that the Year of Reading projects were now under the auspices of the World Book Day Steering Committee, thus providing an opportunity to reconsider membership of the Committee in light of the new responsibilities.

3.3 Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Tegwyn Jones, Chair of the Friends, reported on the very successful meeting of the Friends held at Aberystwyth in September, where Professor M. Wynn Thomas was in conversation with Gwerfyl Pierce Jones about her upbringing in Anglesey and her work leading the Books Council.

He further noted that the Friends' Steering Committee had met recently, and at the recommendation of the Treasurer it had been agreed to earmark funds to sponsor the Mary Vaughan Jones Award for 2009, and to put money aside annually to sponsor the Award which is presented every three years. In addition, funds were available this year to buy books for members of the 08 Reading Clubs.

Tegwyn Jones thanked Lyn Léwis Dafis for his work in preparing the newsletter *The Friend/Y Cyfaill*.

3.4 Publishing Grants

The Director outlined the process followed when applications were considered for a franchise for a Welsh-language current affairs magazine. Mr Gareth Davies Jones noted that the Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language) had presented a recommendation to the Executive Committee that *Barn* should be awarded the franchise for the next two years. He further reported that the recommendation had been confirmed by the Executive Committee earlier in the day.

4 **GRANTS 2010/11**

The Director outlined the likely situation regarding grants for 2010/11, noting that confirmation was expected soon from the Assembly Government.

5 **MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PANELS**

In accordance with the Constitution, the Director presented a list of members of the Council, the Executive Committee and various Panels. He explained that all local authority representatives were members of the Council, and that they were represented in rotation on the Executive Committee. The Chair thanked the Councillors for their support.

Following a recent meeting of the Nominations Panel, a paper was presented outlining the latest situation regarding panel membership. The nominations were accepted.

6 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

6.1 Information Services

Phil Davies, Head of the Books Council's Information Services, reported that the Council's newly designed corporate website was now 'live'. He thanked Cardiff-based Sequence for their technical expertise, together with the contributions made by the Council's Design and Editorial Departments.

In addition to providing full information regarding the services offered by the Council, the new website also hosts a number of additional sites which have been developed in order to promote various projects, such as World Book Day.

He noted that the website is also a gateway to the Welsh Books Trade Info website, a useful reference resource for the book trade and a valuable source of information for both the trade and the general public.

He also reported that the gwales websites were going from strength to strength and that the Distribution Centre now received approximately 70% of its orders through the gwales/shop website.

Phil Davies thanked Delyth Morgans, the Books Council's Information Officer, for her work in ensuring the accuracy of the information provided.

6.2 Sales and Marketing

Dafydd Charles Jones, Distribution Centre Manager, presented a report on the Department's work, noting that a large number of books had been published recently and that the Distribution Centre was extremely busy distributing them to various outlets.

The Sales and Marketing Department, under the leadership of Tom Ferris, had also been busy preparing attractive book supplements, and both *Gwledd y Nadolig* and *Books from Wales* had already been widely distributed.

Dafydd reported that sales through the Distribution Centre showed a 6% decrease on the first seven months of the year, thereby reflecting the present economic climate. Members were aware of the problems faced by the Borders book chain and this had had a significant effect on sales through the Distribution Centre. On the other hand, the Books Council was now supplying books to 19 Tesco outlets throughout Wales, with a hope of extending the stock in the new year. Dafydd noted that the Distribution Centre was benchmarking the work regularly in order to ensure that they were offering a first-class service to the trade.

6.3 Children's Books Department

Menna Lloyd Williams, Head of the Children's Books Department, reported on the Department's work in coordinating the activities of the national day to commemorate the late author T. Llew Jones, held on 9 October. Very successful celebrations were held throughout Wales in schools, libraries and shops, and there was a positive response to the schools competitions.

It was reported that the Department, following in-house discussions that had gained the support of members of the Children's Books Panel, had arranged for the Book Club leaflets to be redesigned. One family leaflet is now being produced to replace the three leaflets previously offered. A pilot leaflet had also been published for the secondary sector. It was reported that there had been a positive response to the primary leaflet, but that the response to the secondary sector leaflet had been disappointing.

It was noted that the work of preparing the annual Children's Books Catalogue was in hand, and that the *Wales in English* catalogue, published in alternate years, was ready for printing.

7 PRESENTATION OF THE FINANCIAL REPORT 2008/09

In the absence of the Honorary Treasurer, Mr W. Gwyn Jones, the Chair presented the accounts for 2008/09 to members. He noted the Treasurer's thanks to Mr Arwyn Roderick and his staff for their work in preparing the accounts, and to Llŷr James and company for auditing them.

8 PROBABLE FINANCIAL POSITION 2009/10 AND ESTIMATES 2010/11

The Treasurer presented the estimates to the members. He referred to the small increase received towards meeting the Council's operational costs, but noted that the Publishing Grants had been frozen once again.

The estimates were approved.

9 APPOINT AUDITORS TO AUDIT THE ACCOUNTS FOR 2009/10 AND 2010/11

At the recommendation of the Executive Committee, Llŷr James and company were reappointed to audit the Council's accounts for a further two years at a cost of £5,950 per annum. The recommendation was approved.

10 PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

In presenting the Annual Report for the attention of members, the Director referred to the contribution made by Gwerfyl Pierce Jones to the work of the Books Council, thanking her for her wise and strong leadership over the years.

He also noted that one of the main duties of the Director of the Books Council was to lead the team of committed staff, and he thanked them all for their support and assistance.

The last financial year had been a challenging one, due to the effect of the economic climate, and although every sector of the book market had been affected by the financial constraints, opportunities had also arisen to offer readers a wider choice of books from Wales.

One of the highlights of the year had been the success of the activities arranged under the auspices of the National Year of Reading, and thanks were paid to Jane Hutt, the Minister for Education, for her unstinting support.

The Council also welcomed the recent announcement made by Alun Ffred Jones, the Minister for Heritage, to earmark additional resources in the field of Welsh-language publishing.

At the end of the presentation, he thanked the Chief Officers for their support and advice throughout the year and to all members of the Council for their presence, confirming the close partnership which exists between the Council, the local authorities and a number of institutions in Wales.

Mr Alan Watkin paid thanks to the Director and staff for their sterling work.