



***HALF YEARLY MEETING***

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 28 June 2013

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair)

Local Authorities

Councillor Ioan Thomas (Gwynedd)

Councillor B. Towyn Evans (Ceredigion)

Councillor Lynda G. Williams (Neath Port Talbot)

Councillor Stuart Egan (Vale of Glamorgan)

Welsh Government

Dr Hywel Owen – observer only

County Librarians

Mr T. Hywel James

CILIP Cymru/Wales

Mrs Carol M. Edwards

Estyn

Terwyn Tomos

Friends of the Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones

The Council's Panels

Mr David Barker

Vice-Chair

Mr Gareth Davies Jones

Honorary Secretary

Mr D. Geraint Lewis

Co-opted Members

Mr W. Gwyn Williams

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 Neville Evans (Distribution Centre Manager)

Mr Phil Davies (Director of Information and Promotion)

Mr Richard Owen (Head of the Grants Department)

Mr Sion Ilar (Head of the Design Department)

Miss Angharad Tomos (Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department)

Dr Lucy Thomas  
 Mrs Delyth G. M. Phillips  
 Ms Anwen Pierce  
 Mrs Emma Davies  
 Mr Owain Thomas

APOLOGIES: Councillors Chris Bithell; Hugh Jones; David W. M. Rees; Alun Lenny; Graham Davies; Huw Thomas; Messrs. W. Gwyn Jones; Alun P. Thomas; Gwydion Hughes; Ioan Kidd; Dafydd John Pritchard; R. Arwel Jones; Ms Mererid Morgan; Ms Marian Delyth; Mrs Marian Beech Hughes (Head of the Editorial Department).

## 1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, and extended a special welcome to Councillor Stuart Egan (Vale of Glamorgan) who was present for the first time.
- 1.2 Condolences were conveyed to Councillor Alun Lenny who had lost his father, Dafydd John Pritchard who had lost his brother, and Glenys Jenkins, Office Manager at the Distribution Centre, who had lost her father.
- 1.3 Congratulations were extended to the following:
  - Mr D. Geraint Lewis on the launch of the website *Gweiadur*;
  - Mr Tegwyn Jones on the publication of his latest book, *Ambell Air ac Ati*, and also for his work as editor of *Bro a Bywyd Hywel Teifi*, to be published in July;
  - Councillor Graham Davies who recently took up his post as Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil;
  - The Chair, Professor M. Wynn Thomas, on the publication of his latest title, *R. S. Thomas – Serial Obsessive*.
- 1.4 Mwynwen Mai Jones (South-west Wales Representative) and Huw Jones were congratulated on the recent birth of their daughter.
- 1.5 Good wishes were conveyed to two members of the Distribution Centre staff who had recently undergone surgery, or were awaiting treatment.
- 1.6 Sincere thanks were expressed to Mr Roger Davies for his gift of £500 in memory of his late wife, Mrs Catrin Pw Davies, to sponsor the annual Book Day lecture, delivered this year by Mr Trevor Fishlock.
- 1.7 Members were reminded of the need to declare an interest and to retire from the meeting as appropriate. Members' attention was also drawn to the declaration of interest forms they were all required to complete.

## 2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Meeting, held on 30 November 2012, were confirmed.

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

### 3.1 Operational Plan

The Chief Executive presented a copy of the Operational Plan 2013/14 to members, noting that it had been prepared in response to the Culture and Sports Minister's Remit Letter. He explained that the Plan had already been discussed with civil servants and they had forwarded it to the Minister.

He referred specifically to four strands which ran through the Plan: (i) the emphasis on supporting a wide range of diverse and appealing reading material which would lead to

maintaining the level of sales; (ii) exciting developments in the digital field; (iii) the importance of evaluating and monitoring the Council's work; (iv) the Council's commitment to developing the publishing industry in Wales.

The Council was also very aware of the current economic situation, and of the challenge facing all partners within the industry.

### 3.2 Friends of the Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones, Chair of the Friends of the Books Council, referred to the Annual Meeting held at Y Drwm, National Library of Wales, when Professor M. Wynn Thomas was in conversation with the poet and writer Eigra Lewis Roberts.

He noted that the Friends' financial position was strong, but as it was entirely dependent on membership fees he encouraged everyone to try and attract more new members.

The Chair reported that the Friends' pack would shortly be distributed to members. It would include the latest issue of *The Friend / Y Cyfaiil*, a book voucher, and copies of the supplements *Great Books for Summer* and *Llyfrau'r Haf*.

He referred to a reception to be held for the Friends on the Books Council stand at the Denbigh National Eisteddfod, at 6 pm on Wednesday, 7 August.

He thanked Bethan Gwanas, the Vice-Chair, for establishing a Facebook page and noted that, to date, 31 people had joined.

He also thanked office staff for their continued support.

### 3.3 Welsh Government

Several matters pertaining to the Welsh Government were discussed, including reporting that Huw Lewis, the previous Culture Minister, had earmarked additional financial support for publishing English-language books from Wales for children. Following a process of competitive tendering, commissions were awarded to two companies, Firefly and Atebol, to publish titles which will appear next year.

The Chair and the Chief Executive had recently met with John Griffiths, the Culture and Sports Minister, and they took the opportunity to present information on the work of the Council. It was also noted that the Minister will be visiting the Council in October.

It was reported that Richard Owen and the Chief Executive would be representing the Council at *Y Gynhadledd Fawr* – a discussion on the future of the Welsh language – which will be held at Aberystwyth on 4 July.

## 4 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

### 4.1 Grants for 2013/14

The Director of Finance and Business presented the balance sheet for the current year, drawing attention to the reduction in the grant for Reading Promotion Schemes.

### 4.2 Financial Position 2014/15

The Director of Finance and Business referred to a further reduction in the grant to support Reading Promotion in 2014/15, when responsibility for the Reading Communities scheme will be transferred to the Local Authorities. Council officers and Council representatives expressed their concern from the point of view of resources to support the activities.

## 5 PRESENTATIONS

### 5.1 Technical Developments

The Director of Information and Promotion gave a presentation on the latest technological developments.

He referred to the new server rooms at both Castell Brychan and the Distribution Centre, together with Vista's new computer which will be tested and used to run all the Council's systems from the end of August onwards.

He also referred to the developments to allow for sales of e-books on gwales, the scheme to support Welsh-language bookshops, and developments in hand to make the Children's Books Catalogue more interactive.

He described the new Welsh Books App which will ensure that publishers will be able to create and sell interactive books in an affordable and sustainable way.

### 5.2 Survey into Buying and Reading Welsh-language Books 2012

The Head of the Publishing Grants Department gave a presentation on the Survey into Buying and Reading Welsh-language Books 2012.

He referred to the research method utilised by Beaufort Research, and listed the main points of the report. The report showed an increase in the number of people reading Welsh-language books, compared with the results of a similar survey undertaken in 2003, and the Head of Department underlined the important contribution made by local bookshops in providing information about books.

In general, the report showed that the wide range of Welsh books available had led to an increase in the number of readers, and the reach of Welsh-language publications amongst the public. The increase in Welsh-language education and reading promotion schemes had also contributed to the increase, thus confirming that the investment made by the Welsh Government in the publishing industry had been beneficial.

The Chair thanked Phil Davies and Richard Owen for their presentations.