



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 1 July 2011

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; David Barker; Gareth Davies Jones; Alun Treharne; W. Gwyn Williams; Clive Phillips; Dr Brynley F. Roberts; Dr Hywel Owen; Mrs Carol M. Edwards; Councillor Eurfryn G. Davies; Councillor B. Towyn Evans; Councillor D. W. M. Rees; Councillor Paul Williams.

Staff: Messrs Elwyn Jones; Arwyn Roderick; Neville Evans; Richard Owen; Sion Ilar; D. Philip Davies; Tom Ferris; Mrs Marian Beech Hughes; Mrs Delyth Humphreys; Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf.

APOLOGIES: Messrs Alun P. Thomas; W. Gwyn Jones; Gwydion Hughes; Tegwyn Jones; R. Arwel Jones; Ioan Kidd; Steve Hardman; Councillor Ron Page.

1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Mrs Carol Edwards, CILIP Cymru/Wales; Mr Clive Phillips, representing Mrs Ann Keane, Estyn; Anita Thomas, representing Neil Bennett (Chief Librarian of Pembrokeshire) and Mrs Delyth Humphreys (Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department), who were attending their first meeting of the Executive Committee.
- 1.2 Warm wishes were conveyed to Afan ab Alun on his retirement following 42 years of service to the Council.
- 1.3 Sincere condolences were extended to Phil Davies, Director of Information and Promotion, who had lost his mother, and to Delyth Humphreys, Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department, who had recently lost her mother-in-law.
- 1.4 The following were congratulated:
 - Mr D. Geraint Lewis on the publication of his book *Mewn Geiriau Eraill – Thesawrws i Blant* in February.
 - Delyth Humphreys on her promotion to Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department
 - Ifana Savill and Richard Owen (both from the Publications Grants Department) on reaching the impressive milestone of 30 years' service on the Council's staff.
- 1.5 Thanks were conveyed to Mr Roger Davies for his gift of £500 once again this year in memory of his late wife, Catrin Puw Davies, to sponsor the World Book Day lecture delivered by Mr Leighton Andrews on 3 March at Cardiff.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 10 December 2010, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Welsh Government: Department of Housing, Regeneration and Heritage

The Chief Executive explained that the Welsh Government had agreed that the Books Council would remain within the Heritage Department under the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage. The Chair and the Chief Executive would be meeting the Minister on 4 July.

Dr Hywel Owen, on behalf of the Welsh Government, explained that the Minister for Education had established a Partnership Council for linguistic bodies and that the Books Council would be represented on the committee.

3.2 The Welsh Government: Remit Letter

The Chief Executive presented the Remit Letter to the attention of the members, noting that it would form the basis of the discussion with the Minister on 4 July.

3.3 Support for the Welsh-language Press: Golwg 360

The Chief Executive reported that the recommendations of the Wavehill report were already being implemented, and that Golwg 360 was reporting back regularly to the Books Council regarding the number of visits to the website.

3.4 Additional Money: Creative Editor Posts

The Chief Executive reported that 24 posts had been filled, and that training in the form of structured courses and a mentoring scheme was being undertaken under the leadership of Mairwen Prys Jones. The long-term aim was to raise the standard of the output and promote sales of books.

He noted that there was a possibility of extending the training to include taster sessions for students.

3.5 Staffing Structure

The Chief Executive presented a chart showing the changes made to the staffing structure, undertaken mainly in response to observations made by the Charities Commission. The main change was setting up a Management Team of four members (three directors and the Chief Executive) who would be responsible for the various departments. He thanked the staff for their response to the consultation.

4 OPERATIONAL PLAN 2011/12

The Chief Executive presented the Operational Plan for 2011/12, noting the main priorities for the year.

Following a comment by one of the members, it was agreed that CILIP could be added as a partner in the Operational Plan.

5 READING PROMOTION SCHEMES

5.1 World Book Day

World Book Day was held on 3 March and, in addition to the usual activities, several new elements were introduced in 2011, such as producing a bilingual class resource (Chwarae'r Gêm / Play On!); two events, bringing together a thousand children, authors and sports stars were held at the Liberty Stadium, Swansea, and at the Racecourse, Wrexham. In addition, a number of stories, in both English and Welsh, were commissioned and a professional actor presented them on podcasts so that the

schools of Wales could join together in an enormous story-telling session on World Book Day. These stories were still available on the Council's website.

With campaigns such as World Book Day now contributing to the Welsh Government's National Literacy Plan, there were more opportunities this year to dovetail some of the Education Department's schemes with the World Book Day activities, including 'Make time to read' – the campaign to encourage parents to read with their children.

Give a Book Week, as such, was not held in 2011, but the act of giving a book as a gift played a part as one of the sub-themes of the World Book Day celebrations. With the co-operation of the publishers and booksellers, a sales campaign was arranged, and leaflets distributed with copies of the *Western Mail*, the *Daily Post* and the *papurau bro*. The response to this development was favourable, and a significant number of books for children and adults were sold.

5.2 Quick Reads / Stori Sydyn

The Minister for Education launched the new books in the Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn series in the Senedd building. Eight new titles were produced for 2011, 4 in English and 4 in Welsh.

The publishing tenders for Quick Reads and Stori Sydyn 2012 have been awarded to Accent Press and Y Lolfa.

5.3 Reading Communities

Ten Reading Communities were established in some of the Welsh Government's Strategic Regeneration Areas, namely Tredegar; Ammanford; Pontardawe; Gurnos, Merthyr; Penywaun, Aberdare; Penparcau, Aberystwyth; Peblig Ward, Caernarfon; West Ward, Rhyl; Townhill, Swansea, and Llangefni. Each of the Communities has its own local co-ordinator who is responsible for promoting reading and literacy amongst children aged 7–11 years, their families and the wider community, by arranging various activities and events.

5.4 Summer Reading Challenge

The aim of this campaign in libraries is to encourage children to enjoy reading during the summer holidays, and an annual sum is provided from the World Book Day budget in order to produce bilingual resources. The Council will be collaborating with the Reading Agency, the organisation responsible for creating and presenting the Challenge in the United Kingdom.

6 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

6.1 Money from DCELLS

The Director of Finance and Business referred to the money received from the Welsh Government's Education Department to support reading schemes and to produce a series of catalogues.

6.2 Capital Funding at the end of 2010/11

The Director of Administration and Services reported that the Council had received the sum of £20,000 from the Welsh Government for exhibition materials; improving the version of gwales used by the Schools Officers; upgrading the fire alarm system and the central heating system in Castell Brychan, and purchasing Human Resources software.

6.3 Grants 2011/12

The Director of Finance and Business presented a paper outlining the grants position in the current financial year.

6.4 Financial Situation 2012/13–2013/14

Referring to the Operational Plan, the Director of Finance and Business explained the financial situation for 2012/13 and 2013/14. He said that there would be a cut for the next two years, but that funds for reading promotion schemes would be in addition to the budget.

7 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITY

7.1 Sales and Marketing/Distribution

Mr Tom Ferris, Sales and Marketing Manager, reported that the current trading conditions were difficult due to the general economic climate.

He noted that the Council's traditional bookshops were generally holding their own, with two out of the three regions showing a small increase in sales on the May 2010 figures. He referred also to the tourism sector, and described how the Council was increasing its presence in various locations beyond the traditional bookshops.

The outlets causing most concern at present were the chain stores, W H Smith and Waterstone's. Selling to Waterstone's was problematic because of their dependence on their central purchasing system. The Council was in regular contact with Waterstone's local managers in Wales as the business was experiencing a period of uncertainty following the sale of the business.

The Council continues to support the booksellers and the publishers by means of a number of marketing campaigns such as the Outreach Scheme. Recently, the new-look catalogue of Welsh-language books, *Llyfrau'r Haf*, was produced. For the first time, books were arranged by topic rather than in the form of advertisements from various publishers, in the hope that the new format would be more user-friendly. Tom Ferris thanked Cwlwm Cyhoeddwy for their support for the scheme. It was hoped to continue with the same format with the Christmas supplements.

Neville Evans, Distribution Centre Manager, reported on the daily benchmarking at the Centre, which showed that 100% of the orders received before 1 pm during May had been distributed on the same day and delivered to booksellers the following day. The Centre kept the level of debtors down to 1.25% of the turnover over the past year, compared with a target of 2%.

He referred to the retirement of Afan ab Alun, one of the Distribution Centre staff, thanking him warmly for his unstinting work for the Books Council over many years. He wished Afan well, and hoped he would have a full and speedy return to full health.

He also thanked all the Distribution Centre staff for their commitment and enthusiasm.

7.2 Information Services

Phil Davies, Director of Information and Promotion, presented a report on the Council's websites.

It was reported that the total number of individuals registered as users on the Gwales website has now reached 13,700, an increase of 900 since the previous meeting. The number of sessions opened by visitors to the website has exceeded 724,000 annually, a monthly average of over 60,000. To date, Gwales has 460 Facebook supporters.

The Director mentioned the latest improvements to the means of adding information and photographs to the Council's website, and the intention of facilitating and accelerating the process of receiving information electronically from the publishers. The process used by the representatives and the schools officers to update their off-line systems has also been accelerated.

There were almost 250,000 visits per annum, a monthly average of 20,575, to the Council's corporate website.

Since the creation of the Welsh Book Trade Info website (WBTI), the number of 'sessions' has increased regularly and the percentage increase between 2009/10 and 2010/11 was 24.5%. The increase brings the total number of 'sessions' to 134,798 per annum, a monthly average of 11,233. The WBTI website continues to be a very useful and convenient source of information for the books industry in Wales. Phil Davies thanked Gwilym and Eleri Huws for their work in ensuring that data is updated daily.

8 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

- 8.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 26 May 2011
- 8.2 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 14/15 March 2011
- 8.3 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 6/7 June 2011
- 8.4 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 3/4 February 2011
- 8.5 Children's Books Panel, 20 June 2011
- 8.6 World Book Day Steering Committee, 18 March 2011

9 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

It was reported that the following appointments had been confirmed since the previous meeting:

Elinor Tuckey – Representative to visit Booksellers in South-east Wales
 Delyth Humphreys – Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department
 Dorry Spikes – Design Officer – permanent part time, job share with Tanwen Haf

10 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL

10.1 Co-opted membership of the Executive Committee and the Council

It was agreed to recommend re-electing Mr W. Gwyn Williams and Mr Ioan Kidd to serve on the Council and the Executive Committee for a further three-year period. It was also agreed to recommend the co-optation of one new member, namely Mrs Rona Aldrich.

10.2 Representation of Chief Librarians

The Chief Executive reported on the discussions held with the Society of Chief Librarians, where it was agreed that the Society should send two representatives to the Council. The following two names had been received:

- Gwynedd – T. Hywel James
- Carmarthenshire – Wil T. Phillips

At the Chair's recommendation, and in accordance with the Constitution, it was agreed to invite Mr T. Hywel James and Mr Wil T. Phillips to represent the Chief Librarians on the Executive Committee.

11 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HALF-YEARLY MEETING

The Director of Administration and Services noted that refreshments were available in the reception area and that the Half-yearly Meeting would follow at 2.00 pm.