



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 25 June 2009

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; Gareth Davies Jones; Tegwyn Jones; David Barker; Steve Hardman; Ioan Kidd; Alan Watkin; R. Arwel Jones; Dafydd J. Pritchard; W. Gwyn Williams; Dr Brynley F. Roberts; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Mrs Ann Keane; Councillor B. Towyn Evans; Councillor Jim Criddle; Councillor Morfudd M. Jones; Councillor Wyn Ellis Jones.

Staff: Miss Gwerfyl Pierce Jones; Messrs Elwyn Jones; Arwyn Roderick; Dafydd Charles Jones; Richard Owen; Sion Iar; D. Philip Davies; Miss Menna Lloyd Williams.

APOLOGIES: Messrs W. Gwyn Jones; Gwydion Hughes; Alun Treharne; Rhys Bebb Jones; Alun P. Thomas; William Howells; Neil Bennett; Ms Gill Evans; Ms Ann Jones; Councillor Keith Morgan.

Staff: Ms Helgard Krause; Mrs Marian Beech Hughes.

1 APPOINTMENT OF A NEW DIRECTOR

(The staff were not present during this item.)

The Chair referred to the letter which he had sent to the members on 24 April 2009 informing them that Gwerfyl Pierce Jones wished to retire in the autumn. He thanked the members for approving the arrangements for appointing her successor. He reported that the appointments committee had met the previous day and that the unanimous recommendation of the committee was that Mr Elwyn Jones's name should be put forward as the next Director of the Books Council. The recommendation was unanimously accepted.

2 CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

2.1 The Chair warmly congratulated Elwyn on his appointment as Director; he also conveyed his best wishes to Gwerfyl, noting that there would be an opportunity later to thank her.

2.2 The Chair welcomed the members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Mr Leighton James, Welsh Assembly Government; Councillor Wyn Ellis Jones (Conwy); Councillor Jim Criddle (Caerphilly) and Mr Steve Hardman, Chief Librarian of Swansea – all of whom were attending their first meeting of the Executive Committee. [After the meeting had ended, it was noted that Mr Dafydd John Pritchard was also attending his first meeting, representing the Academi.]

2.3 Mr Arwel Jones was congratulated on his engagement.

- 2.4 Mr Andrew Green was congratulated on being made an honorary member of the Gorsedd of Bards at the National Eisteddfod.
- 2.5 Mr Ioan Kidd was congratulated on the publication of his latest novel.
- 2.6 Best wishes were conveyed to two members of staff on their recent marriages – Tanwen Haf (Design Department) and Emma Lloyd Davies (Grants Department).
- 2.7 Thanks were expressed to Dr Dewi Davies for his further donation of £1,000. The interest on the investments pay for prizes awarded at the annual book competitions for children.
- 2.8 Welsh Country Magazine: correspondence
The Chair referred to correspondence between the Books Council and the publishers of *Welsh Country Magazine*, adding that this matter would be dealt with when the minutes of the Chief Officers' Panel were presented. He thanked Councillor Towyn Evans, a member of the Council, for attending the Executive Committee in order to contribute to the discussion on this matter.
- 2.9 The Vice-Chair (Mr Gareth Davies Jones) extended the Council's congratulations to Professor M. Wynn Thomas on his appointment to the Emyr Humphreys Chair at Swansea University.

3 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 27 November 2008, were confirmed.

4 MATTERS ARISING / CORRESPONDENCE

- 4.1 Welsh Assembly Government: Remit Letter
The Director presented the remit letter for the year which had been received from the Minister for Heritage, and which formed the basis for the Operational Plan (see also item 5).
- 4.2 Support for the Welsh-language Press: Golwg 360
The Director presented a full report on the new on-line news service, Golwg 360, which was launched on 15 May. She referred to the serious technical problems experienced for about a week following the initial launch and to the negative publicity given in the press and media in the wake of those difficulties. Despite the inauspicious start, the problems had soon been overcome; the news content was promising and there were a number of further developments in the pipeline.
- This development was discussed at length, and hope was expressed that the website would go from strength to strength from now on. It was confirmed that the project was being monitored carefully, with the officers reporting back regularly to the Assembly Government.
- 4.3 Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery
Elwyn Jones referred to the minutes of the previous meeting, which included mention of a request from the Curator of the Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery for the loan of Islwyn Ffowc Elis's chair to be displayed in an exhibition to celebrate the fact that Liverpool had been selected as the European City of Culture. It was reported that the exhibition had been very successful, and that the Curator was grateful to the Council for its willing co-operation. The chair had now been returned safely.

5 OPERATIONAL PLAN 2009/10

The Operational Plan was discussed and approved.

6 NATIONAL YEAR OF READING: EVALUATION REPORTS

Elwyn Jones reported that two evaluation reports had been commissioned on the activities of the National Year of Reading, and copies distributed to members. The Books Council had invited Professor D. Hywel E. Roberts to prepare a report, and he presented his findings at the end-of-year conference held in Cardiff in February. The Assembly Government had commissioned an external report on the activities: this had been prepared by Arad Consulting. It was noted that both reports confirmed each other's recommendations, with both recommending that the Year's main campaigns should continue into the future. Elwyn thanked the small team who had led the work under the direction of Delyth Humphreys, and the partners for their unstinting support with the activities.

The members were pleased to see two such positive reports and they wished to thank the staff on the undoubted success of the Year.

7 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

7.1 Additional grants

The Director reported on the grants situation, referring particularly to the sum of £177,000 received from the Assembly Government's Education Department towards continuing the activities of World Book Day and the National Year of Reading.

7.2 Visit by the Minister for Heritage

The Director referred to the visit by the Minister for Heritage to the Council on 21 May. He had been given an opportunity to see at first hand the services provided by the Council to the book trade, but he had also agreed to meet with representatives of *Cwlwm Cyhoeddwyr Cymru* and the Writers Guild to discuss the Council's request for further resources on the grants side (on the basis of a report presented to the Assembly Government some time ago). It was noted that the meeting proved useful and the Minister recognised the need for further investment, although no firm commitment could be made in the light of the present economic situation.

A business meeting with the Minister within the month would provide the Chairman and Director with a further opportunity to champion the Council's case.

8 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

It was agreed to postpone this item until the meeting of the Council in the afternoon.

9 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

9.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 16 April 2009

The Chair referred to the correspondence with *Welsh Country* over a period of several months, which he and the Chief Officers had scrutinised carefully. The owners of the company were not satisfied that there were grants available for English-language literary/cultural magazines, as their commercial magazine fell outside the remit of the

grant. The officers had explained that they would be able to apply for a literary supplement grant, but the company chose not to do so. They had also published one book but did not intend to develop a publishing programme – the intention to develop a publishing programme of books (of whatever size) was a condition before an application by a new publisher could be considered.

The outcome of the discussions was that representatives of *Welsh Country* were very critical of the grants system in its entirety as, in their opinion, it favoured a small number of selected publishers.

Councillor Towyn Evans had attended a meeting at the Books Council with the owners of the company, but it had not been possible to persuade them otherwise. The officers had also been in discussions with the local Member of Parliament.

Councillor Towyn Evans wished to state that the officers had done their utmost to deal with the matter in a courteous and reasonable manner. The Chief Officers were of the same opinion.

The Chair thanked Councillor Towyn Evans for his help with this matter.

9.2 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 12/13 March 2009

9.3 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 5/6 February 2009

9.4 Children's Books Panel, 11 December 2008

10 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

A report was presented on appointments made since the previous meeting:

Daniel Webb – IT Technician

Dr Claire Flay – Publishing Grants Officer (English-language)

Helena O'Sullivan – Sales and Marketing Manager

11 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HALF YEARLY MEETING

At the close of the meeting, the Chair invited Mr D. Geraint Lewis, Honorary Secretary of the Books Council, to offer a vote of thanks to the Director. Mr Lewis did so in a warm and sincere manner, and the members also showed their appreciation through their applause.

The Head of Administration invited the members to lunch in the Reception area, and noted that the Half Yearly Meeting would follow at 2.00 pm.