



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 29 June 2012

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; David Barker; Gareth Davies Jones; W. Gwyn Williams; R. Arwel Jones; Tegwyn Jones; Mrs Carol M. Edwards; Mrs Rona Aldrich; Ms Marian Delyth; Councillor Huw R. Davies; Councillor Giles Howard.

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; Ioan Kidd; Clive Phillips; Dafydd John Pritchard; Wil T. Phillips; T. Hywel James; Dr Hywel Owen; Ms Mererid Morgan; Councillor Fiona M. Gordon; Councillor Wyn Ellis Jones; Councillor Alun Lenny; Councillor David Wilkshire.

1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Councillor Huw R. Davies (Caerphilly) and Ms Marian Delyth (on behalf of the Friends), both of whom were attending their first meeting of the Executive Committee.
- 1.2 Condolences were extended to Mr Elwyn Jones who had lost his mother and an aunt in January; to Mr Neville Evans who had lost his father in March, and to Mr T. Hywel James who had also recently lost his father; sympathy was also extended to the family of Councillor Arwel Gwynn Jones (who represented Wrexham on the Executive Committee and the Council) who had died in April.
- 1.3 Mr D. Geraint Lewis was congratulated on the publication of his latest book, *Ar Flaen fy Nghafod – Casgliad o Ymadroddion Cymraeg*.
- 1.4 Mr Gareth Davies Jones was congratulated on being honoured by the Gorsedd of Bards.
- 1.5 Best wishes were conveyed to Ifana Savill (an Officer at the Grants Department) who had recently had a hip replacement operation, and to Glenys Jenkins (Distribution Centre) who had recently undergone surgery.
- 1.6 Thanks were paid to Mr Roger Davies, widower of the late Mrs Catrin Puw Davies, for sponsorship of £500 towards the World Book Day annual lecture which was delivered at the Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay, at the beginning of March this year.
- 1.7 Good wishes were conveyed to Delyth Humphreys (Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department) on her retirement at the end of September.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 1 December 2011, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Welsh Government: Remit Letter

The Chief Executive explained that the Council was in receipt of the Remit Letter, noting the main implementation points for the year, in addition to the budget for the work. It was further noted that the Council would receive funds from the Education Department in respect of several of the reading promotion schemes.

3.2 Operational Plan 2012/13

The Chief Executive noted that a draft copy of the 2012/13 Operational Plan had been presented to the Wales Government, and he referred to some specific fields which would need to be implemented and developed during the year. He noted particularly the field of e-publishing, the review of English-language magazines, and the market research into reading patterns in Welsh.

In addition to including targets for the year, the three-year strategy paper, 'Building on Firm Foundations' had been attached to the plan, and emphasis was placed on the role of the Council as a cultural institution, a body which protects the interests of the industry in addition to the books distribution business.

4 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

4.1 Grants 2012/13

The Director of Finance and Business presented a paper noting the grants received for 2012/13.

4.2 Financial Position 2013/14–2014/15

The Director of Finance and Business referred to the proposed changes to the core funding during the forthcoming year.

5 REPORTS OF DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITY

5.1 Sales and Marketing/Distribution

Neville Evans, Manager of the Distribution Centre, reported that the Council's stands at the Hay Festival and the Eryri Urdd National Eisteddfod had been very successful. Preparations for the Royal Welsh Show and the National Eisteddfod were in hand.

It was noted that the practice of benchmarking the Distribution Centre's work was ongoing, and that it reflected very high levels of customer service – 99.14% of the orders had been collected on the same day as the order was placed, and 99.54% of the orders placed were packed and distributed on the same day. He noted that the Centre had succeeded in keeping the level of debtors to 1.27% of the turnover during the past year, and that there was willing cooperation between the Centre and the bookshops. He voiced his concern that some shops had closed their doors during the past year.

He noted that the new arrangements for collecting returns from the shops (since September 2011) had borne fruit; during the first 7 months of implementing the scheme, transport costs had been reduced by £25,000. There had also been an improvement in the time taken to process returns; this is particularly important for the small shops as they are now credited within a few days of returning the books.

Reference was made to the maintenance and electrical work done at the Centre recently.

Neville Evans thanked the staff of the Distribution Centre for their commitment and enthusiasm. He conveyed good wishes to Glenys Jenkins, the Distribution Centre's Office Manager, who had undergone surgery twice during the past months.

Tom Ferris, Sales and Marketing Manager, presented a short report on the sales figures. He noted that there had been a small increase of less than 1% in the Distribution Centre's sales figures during the year – a very encouraging figure in the light of the current economic climate. He noted that sales until the end of June were on a par with the corresponding period last year.

He referred specifically to the independent bookshop sector and congratulated them on maintaining their sales in a difficult period. He also referred to the Council's schemes to support them.

He noted that sales through WH Smith shops were relatively healthy at present, and he explained the changes in the arrangements with Waterstones shops in Wales which now receive stock directly from the Distribution Centre. Following discussions with publishers, it was noted that a selection of Welsh books are now available on the Amazon website.

As part of the Department's work in promoting books, Tom Ferris reported that the *Daily Post* is now including short reviews of titles from Wales on their books page.

6 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

- 6.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 31 May 2012
- 6.2 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 12/13 March 2012
- 6.3 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 7/8 February 2012
- 6.4 Children's Books and Reading Promotion Panel, 28 May 2012

7 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

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

Angharad Tomos – Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department.

8 STAFFING MATTERS

The Director for Administration and Services referred to the minute in the Chief Officers' minutes, drawing attention to the following:

- the fact that staff had not received a salary increase over the past three years, but that discussions were ongoing regarding the forthcoming year;
- the system of job appraisal developed by the Books Council;
- the Business Continuation Scheme which is being developed by the Books Council.

9 THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HALF-YEARLY MEETING

The Director for Administration and Services reported that refreshments would be served in the reception area, with the Half-Yearly Meeting following at 2 pm.