

WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Council Chamber, Carmarthen

DATE: 24 November 2004

PRESENT: Mr D. Geraint Lewis (Chairman); Messrs W. Gwyn Jones; Gareth Davies Jones; Rhys Bebb Jones; Richard Houdmont; P. Mark Williams; Gareth William Jones; Professor M. Wynn Thomas; Mrs Ann Keane; Councillor R. Arwel Pierce; Dr Brynley F. Roberts; Mrs Rona Aldrich.

Staff: Miss Gwerfyl Pierce Jones; Messrs Elwyn Jones; Elgan Davies; Dewi Morris Jones; D. Philip Davies; Arwyn Roderick; Miss Menna Lloyd Williams; Mr Dafydd Charles Jones; Dr Kirsti Bohata.

APOLOGIES: Dr J. Lionel Madden; Mr W. Gwyn Williams; Mrs Catrin Puw Davies; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Alun Creunant Davies; Iolo M. Ll. Walters; John Valentine Williams; Alun P. Thomas; Milwyn Jarman; Dr Huw M. Edwards; Councillors Christopher Bithell; R. H. Poole; Mrs D. M. J. James; Margaret Davies.

1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 Mr D. Geraint Lewis welcomed members to the meeting stating that he would be acting as chairman in the absence of Dr J. Lionel Madden, who was indisposed. It was noted that the members wished to convey their best wishes to him for a full and speedy recovery. Apologies were received from other members including the Honorary Counsel, Mr Milwyn Jarman, QC. Sympathy was extended to Mr Jarman on the loss of his brother.
- 1.2 A special welcome was extended to members attending their first meeting: Mr P. Mark Williams, Mrs Ann Keane and Councillor R. Arwel Pierce (Gwynedd).
- 1.3 The chairman referred with sadness to the premature death of Mr Geoffrey Morgan, a member of Council staff. He had worked for the Council for a short period visiting bookshops. Sympathy was extended to the family in their bereavement.
- 1.4 Dr Huw Meirion Edwards, a member of the Council, was congratulated on winning the Chair at the Newport National Eisteddfod and Dr Jason Walford Davies, a member of the Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), on winning the Crown.
- 1.5 Professor M. Wynn Thomas was congratulated on a *festschrift* which was recently published in his honour. Mr Gareth William Jones was congratulated on the publication of a children's novel and Dr Kirsti Bohata, a member of staff, was also congratulated on her book.
- 1.6 Mr Dewi Morris Jones, Head of the Editorial Department, was congratulated and presented with a gift on completing 30 years of service as a member of staff.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 June 2004 were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

The Chairman referred to the procedure for appointing a Vice-Chairman approved at the last meeting. He referred to the minutes of a joint meeting between the Chief Officers' Panel and the Nominations Panel, dated 22 September 2004, included in the papers for the meeting, recommending the name of Professor M. Wynn Thomas.

It was unanimously agreed that Professor Thomas's name be recommended to the full Council. (Professor M. Wynn Thomas left the meeting while this item was being discussed.)

3.2 Reform of Public Bodies

The Director presented a report on the Assembly Government's intention of reforming the public bodies (ASPBs) supported by the Assembly and she referred to the speculation in the press regarding the possibility that the Books Council could be included in this exercise. It was noted that the Council is not a statutory public body and that the First Minister had confirmed on the floor of the Main Chamber that the Books Council's status would not change. This had also been confirmed by Assembly Government officers.

Mr Milwyn Jarman, Honorary Counsel for the Books Council, was thanked for his detailed advice to the Council's Chief Officers on this matter.

4 GRANTS FOR 2005/06

The director presented a paper outlining the likely situation regarding grants from the Assembly Government for 2005/06.

It was hoped that the extra £250,000 awarded in 2004/05 for writing in English would be incorporated in the Publishing Grants baseline. No increase was likely in the other grants for 2005/06. Mr Mark Williams confirmed that this was the probable state of affairs and that confirmation was expected shortly.

5 OPERATIONAL PLAN 2004/05 CORPORATE PLAN 2005/06–2007/08

Both documents were presented by the Director who said that this was the first time that the Books Council had compiled a formal Operational Plan as a separate document.

The documents were carefully scrutinised with special attention given to the main recommendations during the period concerned. It was noted that the Assembly Government had approved the documents.

The Director and staff were thanked for the comprehensive documents which included strong elements of development.

6 JOINT MARKETING STRATEGY

The Director presented a paper outlining the approximate cost of implementing the Strategy noting that around £500,000 would be required to implement it fully, and that a number of elements would require annual funding for several years.

It was explained that the document had been presented to the Assembly Government, which had specifically requested the Strategy, and it was very much hoped that additional funding would be available in order to implement the scheme.

In the meantime, it would be possible to proceed with a few elements within existing budgets, as £75,000 had been allocated in the Welsh-language Publishing Grant for marketing and that some of the £250,000 for publishing in the English language could also be used in the same way. It was also noted that certain elements which dealt exclusively with the Books Council, such as the review of the trade representation service, were proceeding.

The report was accepted.

7 THE DISTRIBUTION CENTRE

The Distribution Centre Manager said that he was glad that so many Christmas books had arrived early this year and were already on sale in the shops. He thanked the publishers for their co-operation.

Total sales up to the end of October showed a reduction of 6% on the year but he was happy to report that a substantial increase could already be seen in sales for November this year.

As a result of special efforts to promote books through the medium of colourful supplements, television advertisements, launches and authors' tours, he was confident of substantial sales in the run-up from now until Christmas.

8 PROJECT SCHEMES

8.1 World Book Day

The Head of Administration and Public Relations referred to the minutes of the last meeting which noted that Mr Gareth Davies Jones was preparing a report evaluating World Book Day 2004. The report had now been completed and presented to Jane Davidson, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

It was noted that the report included a general portrayal of the activities which had been held throughout the whole of Wales, as well as focusing on activities in specific areas. The report shows clearly that World Book Day has become a focus for activities to promote reading and literacy.

It was also noted that arrangements were in hand for World Book Day 2005 and that it would be held on Thursday, 3 March 2005. Delyth Humphreys was thanked for leading on this work on behalf of World Book Day Steering Committee.

It was emphasised that the Council still hopes to secure financial security for three years rather than one year at a time, as this would help with forward planning and forging new partnerships.

8.2 Culturenet Cymru: Books from the Past

Dr Kirsti Bohata reported that ten new titles would be added to the site next year, five Welsh-language and five English-language titles. These would be additional to the nine titles already on the site.

Professor M. Wynn Thomas noted that he used the site at University of Wales, Swansea.

9 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and approved:

- 9.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 22 September 2004
- 9.2 Information Systems sub-Panel, 20 October 2004
- 9.3 Nominations Panel, 22 September 2004
- 9.4 Nominations Panel / Chief Officers' Panel, 22 September 2004
- 9.5 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 12/13 July 2004
- 9.6 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 30 September/1 October 2004
- 9.7 Children's Books Panel, 10 June 2004
- 9.8 Marketing Panel, 13 October 2004
- 9.9 Trade Representation Scheme: Steering Committee, 22 October 2004
- 9.10 Steering Committee: World Book Day, 6 July 2004

10 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

The appointment made since the last meeting was presented and confirmed.

Geoffrey Morgan – Sales Assistant
 Date appointed: 17 June 2004
 Starting date: 17 July 2004
 Short-term six-month contract.

11 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

The Head of Administration and Public Relations presented a list of the Council's committees and panels for the forthcoming year. The list was approved for submission at the Council's afternoon meeting.

12 CONSIDERATION OF 2003/04 ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORT

It was agreed that the reports should be presented to the Council in the afternoon.

13 CONSIDERATION OF ESTIMATES FOR 2004/05–2005/6

It was agreed that the estimates should be presented to the Council in the afternoon.

14 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

The Head of Administration and Public Relations announced that lunch had been arranged for the members at the invitation of Councillor Gerald Meyler, Chairman of Carmarthen County Council.