

# WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

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## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 28 November 2007

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chairman); Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; W. Gwyn Jones; Tegwyn Jones; Ioan Kidd; R. Arwel Jones; Dr Brynley F. Roberts; Councillor Mrs Dorothy M. J. James.

Staff: Miss Gwerfyl Pierce Jones; Messrs Elwyn Jones; D. Philip Davies; Arwyn Roderick; Dafydd Charles Jones; Richard Owen; Mrs Marian Beech Hughes.

APOLOGIES: Mrs Ann E. John; Messrs Rhys Bebb Jones; David Barker; Alun Treharne; Alun P. Thomas; Milwyn Jarman, QC; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Mrs Siân E. Jones; Mrs Ann Keane; Councillor Nigel J. Gibbs; Councillor Margaret E. Davies; Councillor R. Arwel Pierce; Councillor Christopher Bithell; Miss Menna Lloyd Williams; Ms Helgard Krause; Mr Sion Ilar.

### **1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Mr R. Arwel Jones, who was attending for the first time, representing the Academi on the Executive Committee and the Council.
- 1.2 Mrs Marian Beech Hughes was welcomed to her first meeting, following her appointment as the Council's Senior Editorial Officer.
- 1.3 The Chairman reported that the Council had received a letter from Mr Milwyn Jarman, QC, who wished to tender his resignation as the Council's Honorary Counsel following his appointment as Chancery Judge. He thanked Mr Jarman warmly for his unstinting work on behalf of the Council. The Chief Officers were granted permission to seek a successor as soon as possible.
- 1.4 Sincere condolences were conveyed to Miss Menna Lloyd Williams on the recent death of her brother, and to Dr Jasmine Donahaye on the death of her sister.
- 1.5 Members expressed their sympathy with the family of Mrs Heather Bastow, a secretary in the Marketing Department, who had died recently following a courageous two-year battle against her illness.
- 1.6 The Chairman thanked members of the Council's staff on the success of the Publishing Trade Awards ceremony. Thanks were also conveyed to the National Library for their valuable cooperation at this event.
- 1.7 The Chairman stated that Council representatives had been present at the launch of the latest four volumes in the Library of Wales series, in the presence of the First

Minister for Wales, the Minister for Heritage and the President of the National Assembly.

## **2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 21 June 2007, were confirmed.

## **3 MATTERS ARISING**

### **3.1 The Welsh Assembly Government**

It was noted that there had been several changes in the ranks of the civil servants. John Howells had been appointed Director for Heritage, and Marie Knox as a successor to Margaret Evans. No successor to Mark Williams had been appointed to date, but Ann John was acting postholder.

### **3.2 National Year of Reading 2008**

The Director reported that the Welsh Assembly Government had agreed that there should be a National Year of Reading in Wales, as in England, and that the Council had been invited to coordinate the work in Wales. A budget of £350,000 had been earmarked for the year.

Although it was very short notice, the Director was pleased with the decision taken and promised that the Council would, as always, make the most of the opportunity.

Her remarks were seconded by the Chairman, but he added that the work would put additional pressure on staff, at a time when budgets were under great pressure.

## **4 GRANTS 2008/09**

A paper was tabled noting the probable grants position for 2008/09. The sum of £24,000 had been added to the Council's operational costs (an increase of 2%) but all other budgets had been frozen.

It was noted that an additional sum of at least £28,000 was required to meet salary costs, and that the Chairman and the Director had argued the case with the Minister for Heritage during the six-monthly meeting on 19 November 2007. The Minister had promised to give the matter his consideration.

## **5 SALES AND MARKETING**

### **5.1 Kewley/Richardson Report**

The Director reported that the work of implementing the report was proceeding well and referred to the minutes of the Chief Officers' Panel, 20 September 2007, item 5, for a full record of the progress made over the previous months.

### **5.2 The Distribution Centre**

Dafydd Charles Jones, Manager of the Distribution Centre, reported that the Centre was extremely busy in the run-up to Christmas; he added that the majority of the new books had already arrived at the Centre and had been distributed to bookshops.

He stated that the Sales and Marketing Team had arranged several promotional campaigns and specifically referred to the two supplements, *Gwledd y Nadolig* and

*Books from Wales*, and the television advertisements which were currently being broadcast on S4C.

He reported an increase of 10.56% in sales during the period April–October compared with the previous year, which was itself an excellent year for sales. He added that the months of November/December last year had broken every record, and that all concerned were making a concerted effort to achieve a corresponding figure again this year.

He referred also to the policy of benchmarking the work of the Centre so as to monitor and ensure a high standard of service to booksellers.

## **6 INFORMATION SERVICES**

Mr Phil Davies was congratulated on his appointment as Head of the Information Services Department.

He reported that the work of maintaining the Council's information systems was continuing; he thanked the Department's staff for their work and also the majority of publishers for sending information electronically to the Council. This ensured that information about the books was more comprehensive – an invaluable aid to booksellers, librarians and the Council's sales team. He also thanked all the Council's departments for their help in providing up-to-date information about the books.

He referred to the use made of information collected from publishers through the Council's various websites. Twenty out of the thirty main shops were now ordering their book-stock from the Centre through the gwales/shop website, while the representatives use laptops when collecting orders. He noted that the use of gwales/libraries was increasing monthly, with the work of developing the system in order to comply with the libraries' own bibliographic systems drawing to a close. He also reported that the latest developments allowed the Council to send details of books from Wales to international bibliographical systems.

Finally, he referred to the success of gwales.com, the module designed for use by the public, where it was possible to find information about books from Wales as well as ordering online.

## **7 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and approved:

- 7.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 20 September 2007
- 7.2 Nominations Panel, 29 September 2007
- 7.3 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 14/15 June 2007
- 7.4 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 8/9 November 2007
- 7.5 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 5/6 July 2007
- 7.6 Children's Books Panel, 11 July 2007
- 7.7 Steering Committee: Book Day, 16 July 2007

## **8 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PANELS**

In accordance with the Constitution, Mr Elwyn Jones presented a list of members of all Council committees and panels for the forthcoming year. He explained that all representatives of local authorities were members of the Council and that they were represented in rotation on the Executive Committee. Thanks were expressed to those members whose term of office on the Executive Committee was coming to an end.

It was noted that membership of the Panels had been updated following a recent meeting of the Nominations Panel.

The list was approved for presentation to the Council at the afternoon meeting.

## **9 RECENT APPOINTMENTS**

The following appointments, made since the last meeting, were confirmed:

Dr Jasmine Donahaye – Publishing Grants Officer (English-language)  
Eleri Lloyd-Cresci – Representative, South-east Wales area  
Ifan Arthur Saer – Schools Project – Primary Schools Officer

## **10 THE ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2006/07**

It was agreed that the reports be presented to the Council at the afternoon meeting.

## **11 PROBABLE FINANCIAL SITUATION 2007/08 AND ESTIMATES 2008/09**

It was agreed that the reports be presented to the Council at the afternoon meeting.

## **12 APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS TO AUDIT ACCOUNTS FOR 2007/08 AND 2008/09**

Following the Treasurer's recommendation, it was agreed to appoint Llŷr James, Chartered Accountants, for a further period of two years.

## **13 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING**

Mr Elwyn Jones noted that lunch had been prepared for members in the Reception Area and that the Annual Meeting would follow at 2.00 pm.