



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 26 November 2009

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chairman); Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; Gareth Davies Jones; Gwydion Hughes; Tegwyn Jones; David Barker; R. Arwel Jones; Alan Watkin; Rhys Bebb Jones; W. Gwyn Williams; Dr Brynley F. Roberts; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Councillor Jim B. Criddle; Councillor Giles Howard.

Staff: Messrs Elwyn Jones; Arwyn Roderick; Dafydd Charles Jones; Richard Owen; Sion Ilar; D. Philip Davies; Mrs Marian Beech Hughes; Miss Menna Lloyd Williams.

APOLOGIES: Messrs W. Gwyn Jones; Steve Hardman; Leighton James; Alun Treharne; Ioan Kidd; Dafydd John Pritchard; Alun P. Thomas; Mrs Ann Keane; Councillor Eirwyn Williams; Councillor Morfudd M. Jones; Councillor Keith Morgan; Mr Tom Ferris (Head of Sales and Marketing).

1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed the members to the meeting, referring especially to Councillor Giles Howard (Monmouth) who was attending his first meeting of the Executive Committee. Mr Gwydion Hughes, the Council's Honorary Counsellor, was welcomed to the meeting and thanked for his valuable advice at all times.
- 1.2 The Executive Committee extended their sympathy to two members of the Distribution Centre staff, namely Geraint Williams who had lost his father, and Ann-Marie Hinde following the death of her sister.
- 1.3 Mr Arwel Jones was congratulated on his marriage to Sharon Owen, a member of staff at the Council's Children's Books Department.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 25 June 2009, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Welsh Assembly Government

The Director referred to the meeting held with the Minister for Heritage, at which the Council's application for additional resources to develop Welsh-language publishing was discussed.

It was now known that the Minister had responded favourably to the application, and that an additional sum of £300,000 had been earmarked in the Council's budget in order to develop the field. It was reported that the money would be utilised for the purpose of appointing creative editors in the publishing houses, together with providing additional funds for commissioning authors and publishing factual and illustrated books.

Thanks were conveyed to all those who had been involved in the task of preparing and presenting the application.

3.2 Projects for Promoting Reading

As a result of two appraisal reports received on the activities of the National Year of Reading, the Director reported that the Assembly Government's Education Department had made available additional funding to enable the Council to coordinate the activities of World Book Day 2010 and to continue with the main projects of the Year of Reading, namely the Communities Reading scheme, the 08 Reading Clubs, and the Give a Book Week campaign. It was noted that the Council will receive the sum of £177,000 towards these campaigns.

Thanks were conveyed to Jane Hutt, the Minister for Education, for her support throughout the National Year of Reading.

3.3 Support for the Welsh-language Press

The Director reported that the website's news content was commendable, with an average of 25 news stories being added to the site daily compared with a target of ten. It was further noted that the company had confirmed that two further elements – 'Lle Pawb' and the 'Maes' – would be going 'live' in the near future.

As soon as this work is complete, the company will then put in place a promotional programme in order to increase the number of visitors to the site.

It was noted that the Council would be holding an independent review of the website during 2010.

4 GRANTS 2010/11

The Director presented a paper outlining the grants situation for 2010/11. It was reported that an increase of 1.5% in the core costs was likely, whilst the remaining grants would be frozen. Confirmation of these figures was expected shortly.

5 SALES AND MARKETING / DISTRIBUTION

Dafydd Charles Jones, Distribution Centre Manager, reported that a large number of books had been published for the Christmas market and that the Centre was extremely busy distributing them to various outlets. This was very encouraging news, given the present economic climate that was affecting sales. Dafydd stated that members were aware of the problems faced by the Borders chain of bookshops, and the situation had undoubtedly had a detrimental effect on sales this year. However, he was glad to note that the Council was supplying books to a number of Tesco outlets in Wales, with a hope of extending the provision during the forthcoming year.

Dafydd reported that sales during the first seven months of the financial year had shown a 6% decrease on the previous year, but the Sales and Marketing Department were making every effort to ensure high levels of sales over the Christmas period.

It was noted that the two books supplements, *Gwledd y Nadolig* and *Books from Wales*, had been produced and distributed widely, and a series of adverts had been broadcast on S4C promoting some of the main Christmas titles.

There had been some recent staff changes in the Sales and Marketing Department, with Tom Ferris being appointed Head of Department and Helena O'Sullivan appointed Sales and Marketing Manager.

6 INFORMATION SERVICES

Phil Davies, Head of the Council's Information Services, reported that the Council's newly designed corporate website was now 'live'. He thanked Cardiff-based Sequence for their technical expertise, together with the contributions made by the Council's Design and Editorial Departments.

In addition to providing full information regarding the services offered by the Council, the new website is also hosting a number of additional sites which have been developed in order to promote various schemes, such as World Book Day.

He noted that the WBC website is also a gateway to the Welsh Books Trade Info website, a useful reference resource for the book trade and a valuable source of information for both the trade and the general public.

He also reported that the gwales websites were going from strength to strength and that the Distribution Centre was now receiving some 70% of its orders through the gwales/shop website.

Phil Davies thanked Delyth Morgans, the Council's Information Officer, for her work in ensuring the accuracy of the information provided.

7 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and approved:

- 7.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 18 November 2009
- 7.2 Nominations Panel, 18 November 2009
- 7.3 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 18/19 June 2009
- 7.4 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 24/25 November 2009
Mr Gareth Davies Jones, Chair of the Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), reported on the Panel's deliberations, noting their recommendation to award the franchise for a current affairs magazine to *Barn*, for a period of two years.
- 7.5 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 7/8 July 2009
- 7.6 Children's Books Panel, 29 June 2009
- 7.7 Children's Books Panel, 9 November 2009
- 7.8 World Book Day Steering Committee, 21 September 2009

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

Elwyn Jones presented a list of members of the Council's committees and panels for the forthcoming year. He stated that local authorities were represented in rotation on the Executive Committee and thanked those members who were nearing the end of their tenure.

He added that the list of panel members had been updated following a meeting of the Nominations Panel. The lists were all recommended for presentation to the Council during the afternoon meeting.

9 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

The appointments made since the previous meeting were as follows:

Elwyn Jones – Director
Tom Ferris – Head of Sales and Marketing
Moelwen Gwyndaf – Head of Administration

10 CONSIDERATION OF THE ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2008/09

It was agreed to present the reports to the Council during the afternoon meeting.

11 PROBABLE FINANCIAL POSITION 2009/10 AND ESTIMATES 2010/11

It was agreed to present the reports to the Council during the afternoon meeting.

12 APPOINTING AUDITORS TO AUDIT THE ACCOUNTS FOR 2009/10 AND 2010/11

At the recommendation of the Treasurer, it was agreed to appoint Llŷr James and his company for a further two-year period.

13 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

The Director noted that the Annual Meeting would follow at 2pm, and that a gift would be presented to Gwerfyl Pierce Jones, the former Director.