



## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

VENUE: Council Chamber, Llandrindod Wells

DATE: 10 December 2010

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; W. Gwyn Jones; Gareth Davies Jones; Tegwyn Jones; David Barker; R. Arwel Jones; Alun Treharne; Ioan Kidd; Dr Brynley F. Roberts; Councillor Alwyn Gruffudd; Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer.

Staff: Messrs Elwyn Jones; Arwyn Roderick; Neville Evans; Richard Owen; Sion Ilar; D. Philip Davies; Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf; Mrs Marian Beech Hughes.

APOLOGIES: Dr Hywel Owen; Messrs Gwydion Hughes; Alan Watkin; Steve Hardman; Alun P. Thomas; Rhys Bebb Jones; W. Gwyn Williams; Mrs Ann Keane; Councillor Gwilym Fychan; Mr Tom Ferris

### **1 CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer (Flintshire) and Neville Evans, Distribution Centre Manager, who were attending their first meeting of the Executive Committee.
- 1.2 Warm wishes were extended to Mrs Ann Davies, the Receptionist at Castell Brychan, who had returned to work following an illness, and to Afan ab Alun who was receiving medical treatment.
- 1.3 Best wishes were extended to Miss Menna Lloyd Williams on her retirement at the end of November, and thanks were paid to her for her leadership during her time as Head of the Children's Books Department.
- 1.4 Apologies were received from Councillor Gwilym Fychan (Powys) who was unable to attend the meeting due to a family illness.

### **2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 24 June 2010, were confirmed.

### **3 MATTERS ARISING**

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

The Director said that financial matters were the main focus of the discussions held this year between himself, the Chair and Assembly representatives. He was pleased that the Council had succeeded in protecting the publishing grants for the next three years, noting the importance of protecting the output in order to maintain developments seen over recent years. However, the Books Council's core funding was to be cut by 3.87% during

the next financial year, and by about 4% for the following two years. Recent staff changes would be helpful in the short term, but the Director noted that the services provided by the Council would have to be scrutinised in the longer term.

The Chair thanked the Director and staff for their achievement in ensuring that grants had not been cut. He noted also that the Minister was very appreciative of the work of the Council.

A question was raised about the possibility of increasing the Council's income. The Director explained that 40% of the Council's core funding was already in addition to the support provided by the Assembly.

A question was also asked regarding the future of the Children's Books Department, following the recent retirement of the Head of Department. The Director replied that there was no threat to the department as it is responsible for leading the work on reading campaigns, and there would be an opportunity to develop this element further in support of the Assembly's National Literacy Plan.

### 3.2 Support for the Welsh-language Press: Golwg 360

The Director reported that Wavehill, an Aberaeron-based company, had completed its review of the on-line news service, and that the report was currently available on the Council's website.

The report was very encouraging, and identified opportunities for further development and for attracting new readers.

The Vice-Chair reported on the presentation given by Golwg 360 to the Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), noting that the company was both realistic and hopeful in its references to the report's recommendations.

### 3.3 Additional Funds: Creative Editor Posts

The Director reported that 23 posts in 7 publishing houses had been filled, with one other post in the pipeline.

To date, the Council had made contact with Tŷ Newydd Writers' Centre, Llanystumdwy, and Bangor University to discuss various means of collaborating.

Training, in the form of courses and a mentoring scheme, was being provided under the leadership of Mairwen Prys Jones, with the long-term aim of promoting the sales of books.

Concern was voiced regarding the possibility that the editors would eventually become copy editors rather than creative editors, but the Vice-Chair emphasised that the main focus was on creative editing.

In response to a query regarding the possibility of extending the scheme to include editors of magazines, the Director stated that it was hoped that they, and the Council's external editors, could be offered training at a later date.

## **4 SCHEMES TO PROMOTE READING**

The Director reported that a number of important developments had been achieved this year, and that the Council had cooperated closely with the Assembly's Education Department in order to support the National Literacy Plan.

He drew attention to the World Book Day activities, which included a lecture delivered by the Education Minister, Leighton Andrews.

The Vice-Chair noted that this was an indication of the Assembly's confidence in the Council, and he thanked the officers for their work.

## 5 GRANTS 2011/12

The Director presented the grants paper, noting that a shortfall of £5,000 experienced this year had been restored to the budget.

## 6 SALES AND MARKETING / DISTRIBUTION

Neville Evans, Distribution Centre Manager, paid tribute to the Council's sales team for their perseverance and commitment during a particularly challenging period in terms of selling books; he also thanked the staff of the Distribution Centre.

He referred to the colourful supplements produced – *Llyfrau'r Haf*, *Gwledd y Nadolig* and *Books from Wales* – and the Book Club catalogues, in addition to the attractive advertisements which appeared in national newspapers in Wales, and on television. Excellent publicity was given by television programmes such as *Wedi 7*, which included live coverage of a number of book launches held the length and breadth of Wales.

He referred to the host of promotional events and book-signing sessions held throughout Wales, and to the usual presence at national festivals.

He reported that the Distribution Centre continued to ensure that 98% of all orders received by the Distribution Centre by 1 pm were being distributed on the same day and reaching the booksellers on the following day.

He also noted that the practice of benchmarking the activities of the Distribution Centre on a daily basis made it possible to give immediate attention to any problems arising.

He referred to the fact that sales had been good during the months of October and November, and said that the annual book Sale would be held a little earlier during 2011, in mid-January.

## 7 INFORMATION SERVICES

Phil Davies, Head of the Books Council's Information Services, reported that a new version of *gwales.com* had been made 'live' since the Half Yearly Meeting, thereby providing an improved service to customers, including over 12,800 registered users.

He explained that the new version of Gwales, whilst using a modern, fresh design, nevertheless retained popular elements such as details of New Books, Forthcoming Titles, Special Offers, Reviews and lists of Best Sellers.

He also explained how the methods of searching the website had been strengthened and how, under a new section 'Readers' Recommendations', users are able to suggest titles suitable for other readers.

The facility is available in the user's chosen language, and it is possible to make use of all the website's features in either English or Welsh.

He noted that the Department was wholly dependent on the publishers sending information to them by electronic means, and he thanked them for their willing co-operation. A further

improvement to the system, soon to be implemented, will allow the department to transfer data directly to the website without the need for re-typing.

Phil Davies mentioned the following further developments to the Council's corporate website, which is also under the auspices of the Department:

- Using Google Analytics in order to analyse the use made of the Gwales website provided the Council with very useful statistics.
- Gwales currently has over 400 followers on Facebook, and information about campaigns is regularly placed on Facebook. An advertisement placed on Facebook for a month was seen by 200,000 people.
- It is now possible to send an enquiry electronically to the Books Council website and Gwales staff; the system recognises the type of enquiry received, and transfers the message directly to the appropriate department

## **8 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

- 8.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 19 November 2010
- 8.2 Nominations Panel, 19 November 2010
- 8.3 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 16/17 June 2010
- 8.4 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 10/11 November 2010
- 8.5 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 5/6 July 2010
- 8.6 Children's Books Panel, 22 June 2010
- 8.7 Children's Books Panel, 16 November 2010

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

In accordance with the Constitution, the Head of Administration presented a list of the members of the Council, the Executive Committee and the various Panels. It was explained that all representatives of the local authorities were members of the Council, and that they were represented in rotation on the Executive Committee. The Chair thanked the Councillors for their support.

Following the last meeting of the Nominations Panel, a paper was presented outlining the latest situation as regards membership of the panels. The paper was commended.

The Head of Administration also reported that Dr Rhidian Griffiths had resigned as a co-opted member. It was agreed to consider a new name at the Half Yearly Meeting.

## **10 RECENT APPOINTMENTS**

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

- Dorry Spikes – Design Officer (maternity leave)
- Anwen Pierce – Editorial Officer (maternity leave)

## **11 CONSIDERATION OF ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2009/10**

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

**12 PROBABLE FINANCIAL SITUATION 2010/11 AND ESTIMATES FOR 2011/12**

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

**13 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING**

The Head of Administration said that refreshments would be served in the reception area, and that the Annual Meeting would follow at 2.00 pm.