



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 1 December 2011

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; David Barker; Gwydion Hughes; Gareth Davies Jones; W. Gwyn Williams; Ioan Kidd; Dafydd John Pritchard; T. Hywel James; Dr Hywel Owen; Mrs Carol M. Edwards; Mrs Rona Aldrich; Councillor Paul Williams.

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; R. Arwel Jones; Alun Treharne; Wil T. Phillips; Tegwyn Jones; Ms Marian Delyth; Councillor Ron Page; Councillor David W. M. Rees; Councillor Eurfryn Davies; Councillor B. Towyn Evans.

1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Mr T. Hywel James (Chief Librarian, Gwynedd) and Mrs Rona Aldrich (co-opted member) who were attending their first meeting of the Executive Committee. Mr Gwydion Hughes, the Council's Honorary Counsellor, was also welcomed to the meeting and thanked for his sound advice at all times.
- 1.2 Mr Ioan Kidd was congratulated on the publication of his latest novel – *Un o Ble Wyt Ti?*
- 1.3 Copies of a press release were distributed, giving details of Cymdeithas Lyfrau Ceredigion's financial contribution to the Books Council.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

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

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Operational Plan 2011/12
The Chief Executive explained that the Minister had accepted the draft plan presented at the Half Yearly Meeting. The Council was currently in discussion with the Welsh Government regarding the 2012/13 plan.
- 3.2 Developments in the field of e-publishing
The Chief Executive reported that the Council had commissioned Canolfan Bedwyr, Bangor University, to draw up a report on the above, and to prepare technical guidelines to be used by publishers to enable them to produce their own e-books.

The Council is also in the process of preparing to sell e-books on Gwales. An application for funding had been presented to the Welsh Government, and publishers and the grants panels had been contacted regarding the latest developments.

3.3 Department of Education and Skills (AdAS)

The Chief Executive explained that this Department funded several of the Council's projects, including the production of subject catalogues for schools. A meeting had recently been held with the Department to seek a financial settlement lasting longer than 6 months, and to extend the contract for producing the catalogues.

It was reported that the Chair and the Chief Executive would meet with the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, and the Minister for Education, on 15 December.

4 BUILDING ON FIRM FOUNDATIONS

The Chief Executive presented the above document, which notes the Council's priorities for the next three years.

5 THE WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL'S 50 YEAR CELEBRATIONS

The Chief Executive presented a paper noting the ways in which the Council will be celebrating its half centenary. He referred especially to the press release, which had already attracted considerable interest, to the logo designed by Sion Ilar, Head of the Design Department, and the forthcoming volume to be edited by the Chair, Professor M. Wynn Thomas.

6 GRANTS 2012/13

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

7 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITY

7.1 Sales and Marketing/Distribution

Tom Ferris, the Sales and Marketing Manager, presented a short review of the sales figures eight months into the financial year. Although sales were disappointing during the first months of the year, the last quarter had shown a significant increase.

He emphasised that much of the decline in sales has been focused on the business with the national chains, for reasons that were beyond the department's control. The Council has a strong Christmas promotion running with Waterstones, and a new system to sell books to branches of W H Smith in Wales, introduced at the behest of that chain, has been implemented.

Recently there have been successes in recommencing trading with the Leekes chain of stores, and opening an account with Edinburgh Woollen Mill stores in Wales.

The Welsh publishing industry has had a presence at the Frankfurt Book Fair since the 1980s. Latterly this had been backed by International Business Wales, but this year's Welsh national stand was supported by the Creative Industries Sector of the Department for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science. Tom Ferris reported that more publishers attended this year's event compared with last year, with 13 Welsh publishers taking up space on the stand. Initial estimates indicate that a total of approximately £170,000 in new business was generated this year.

Neville Evans, Distribution Centre Manager, noted that the Council was still facing a difficult period regarding book sales due to the current economic downturn, but sales

during three of the four past months had exceeded those during the corresponding period of the previous year. One day during the past week, 376 orders were received by the Distribution Centre.

The work of benchmarking is ongoing, and reflects very high levels of service to customers. It was noted that the Distribution Centre had succeeded in keeping the level of debtors to 1.21% of the total takings during the past year, and that there was willing co-operation between the Distribution Centre and bookshops that are currently facing difficulties.

It was explained that the Centre had implemented numerous changes in order to try and reduce running costs, but without creating a detrimental effect on the service provided; the changes included re-formulating an annual contract with one of the distribution companies and implementing a new method of collecting returns from shops.

Neville Evans also thanked the staff of the Distribution Centre for their commitment and enthusiasm.

7.2 Reading Promotion Activities

A report was presented by Delyth Humphreys, Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department, on the following activities:

World Book Day 2012 – World Book Day 2012 will be held on 1 March, with the annual lecture being delivered by Ann Keane at the Pierhead Building, Cardiff.

The flagship events will be held at Caerphilly Castle and at Nant Gwrtheyrn, on the Llŷn Peninsula, and will include 2,000 children from some of the Reading Communities. A class resource on the theme Off We Go! / Ar Daith is also being prepared.

Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn

The theme for 2012 will be 'Falling in Love with Reading'. Eight new titles have been commissioned in Wales – four in Welsh and four in English – and these will be launched on 25 January, St Dwynwen's Day.

Give a Book Week

Between 13 February and 3 March 2012, a promotion similar to that arranged in 2011 will be held in co-operation with publishers and booksellers.

T. Llew Jones Day

There was extensive press and media coverage for the day, held on 11 October.

Catalogues

The catalogue *Wales in English* – a bi-annual publication containing information about English-language books from Wales for children – was published, in addition to three further catalogues in the series which the Council is responsible for co-ordinating on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.

Reading Communities

The activities in the ten Reading Communities continue apace. Delyth Humphreys referred specifically to one example, namely the Gurnos Estate, Merthyr Tydfil, where the good work achieved by the local reading community co-ordinator is currently being extended to include other communities in the Merthyr area.

Book Club

A pilot scheme was arranged to try and increase sales during the current term. Siop y Bont, Pontypridd, visited four primary schools to display and sell the books featured in the Club's leaflet. An increase of 605% was achieved in these schools' orders compared with the corresponding term last year. The pilot will certainly be extended to include more shops and schools during Spring Term 2012.

Schools Officers

Following the retirement of Alun Evans, North Wales Primary Schools Officer, the schools officers team was restructured. Rather than having one secondary schools officer serving the whole of Wales, and three primary officers working in specific areas, the three remaining officers now visit both primary and secondary schools within their designated areas. The new arrangements will lead to considerable savings in travel and subsistence costs. To date, the sales figures are very encouraging.

Chatterbooks/Clonclyfrau

One of the most exciting developments seen during the past 6 months is the Council's successful application to CyMAL for funding to enable the production of bilingual materials for the *Chatterbooks/Clonclyfrau* scheme – a network of reading clubs for children between 4 and 12 years of age established by the Reading Agency, and held in schools and libraries. Training sessions have already been held, and most of Wales's library authorities and the Reading Communities were represented.

7.3 Information Services

The Director of Information and Promotion reported that the Gwales website had enjoyed a flourishing period for sales, with the year to date showing an increase of 12.9%; sales during the past month were higher than any other month in the website's history.

Currently, the information on Gwales is updated six times daily and, as a result, users are able to view information about new titles during the day, rather than having to wait until the following morning. In addition, a new scanning system has been installed, enabling staff at the Department and the Distribution Centre to send a cover image to the system, for instant publication on the website.

The Council's corporate website is developing steadily, with information about various campaigns given prominence. For example, it is possible to view the Christmas television advertisements and follow the World Book Day arrangements, in addition to reading recent reports (such as the one on e-books) and the latest information about the grants system.

The Council's e-mail system had been successfully transferred to the Google Apps system.

Phil Davies thanked Delyth Morgans for ensuring that the information on the Gwales website is updated promptly. Most of the information is now received electronically, which greatly facilitates the process.

7.4 Editorial / Design Services

Marian Beech Hughes, Head of the Editorial Department, presented a detailed report of the department's work.

She described how the department was working closely with the new editors in the publishing houses and explained the various roles, referring to the importance of accuracy as regards grammar and syntax and also register and consistency. The department is available at all times to provide guidance and advice to the new editors, and staff have taken part in the training arranged for them.

She referred to the huge variety of work undertaken, and to the fact that the demands on the Department were currently extremely heavy. To help with the work, especially at the busiest times of the year, the Department has a small team of freelance editors, and their contribution is invaluable to enable tight deadlines to be met.

The Editorial Department is also responsible for editing all the Books Council's internal publications: from the Annual Report to advertisements to appear in newspapers and magazines; from various catalogues – including *Catalog Llyfrau Plant* and *Books from Wales* – to the staff handbook, and from press releases to the contents of the Council's websites. The Department is also responsible for editing and publishing over 400 book

reviews per annum on the Gwales website – work which is achieved with the help of three reviews editors who undertake the work of commissioning the reviews and uploading them on the website.

Reference was also made to the Reader's Report service offered by the Department; an inexperienced author who wishes to receive a report on his or her work before offering it to a publisher is, if necessary, given guidelines and advice on how to improve the work.

The Design Department

Sion Ilar, Head of the Design Department, presented a report on the department's work.

He explained that the department is very busy throughout the year, and especially so during July and November.

The original aim of the department was to improve production standards in the context of Welsh-language books; current new developments in the field are extremely beneficial to the process of publishing, especially books in minority languages.

He explained that a book's cover is one of the main ways in which the author and publisher can persuade the public to purchase, and it is imperative that the same effort is put into producing the cover as into producing the text itself. The cover should draw attention to the contents of the book, and he described the elements that make a successful cover.

The main work of the department entails preparing books covers, but staff also advise on all aspects of book production – from basic elements such as choice of paper, the size of the book and production method – to designing whole volumes cover-to-cover and selecting elements such as typeface and illustrations.

The department deals with approximately 100 book covers annually, on behalf of some 10 publishers, with extremely busy periods leading to the National Eisteddfod and Christmas.

An incalculable percentage of the Design Department's work involves the Council's internal publications, including creating materials for use by the Sales and Marketing Department and the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department – e.g. advertisements for inclusion in newspapers and magazines, posters and leaflets, catalogues and reports – in addition to creating job advertisements and office stationery.

Sion Ilar referred to recent developments in the field of e-books, and described how the department is currently experimenting with the new technical guidelines prepared by Canolfan Bedwyr.

8 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

- 8.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 11 November 2011
- 8.2 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 14/15 November 2011
- 8.3 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 5/6 July 2011
- 8.4 Children's Books Panel, 17 November 2011

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

In accordance with the Constitution, the Director 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

It was noted that the list of panel members had been updated, and reference was made to the decision to amalgamate the Children's Books Panel and the World Book Day Steering Committee.

Each list was approved for presentation to the Council during the afternoon meeting.

10 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

The following appointments, made since the previous meeting, were noted:

Anwen Pierce – Editorial Officer – appointed to a full-time post following the resignation of Karina Wyn Dafis. Best wishes were conveyed to Karina.
Owain Thomas – Information Technology Officer

11 PRESENTATION OF THE FINANCIAL REPORT 2010/11

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

12 PROBABLE FINANCIAL POSITION 2011/12 AND ESTIMATES 2012/13

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

13 APPOINT AUDITORS TO AUDIT THE ACCOUNTS FOR 2011/12 AND 2012/13

In the unavoidable absence of the Treasurer, the Director of Finance and Business presented his recommendation, namely to reappoint Llŷr James and company as financial auditors for 2011/12 and 2012/13 at a cost of £6,250 per annum.

14 ARRANGEMENTS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

The Director of Administration and Services announced that refreshments were available in the reception area, and that the Annual Meeting would follow at 2 pm.