



## ***EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE***

VENUE: Ceredigion Council Chamber, Aberaeron

DATE: 30 November 2012

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; W. Gwyn Jones; Gareth Davies Jones; R. Arwel Jones; Dafydd John Pritchard; Tegwyn Jones; Ms Marian Delyth; Mrs Rona Aldrich; Mrs Mererid Morgan; Councillor Fiona Gordon.

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

APOLOGIES: Messrs Alun P. Thomas; Wil T. Phillips; David Barker; Gwydion Hughes; Ioan Kidd; W. Gwyn Williams; T. Hywel James; Mrs Carol M. Edwards; Councillor Wyn Ellis Jones; Graham Davies; Giles Howard.

### **1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Councillor Fiona Gordon (Swansea), Mrs Mererid Morgan (WJEC) and Miss Angharad Tomos (Head of the Children's Books and Reading Promotion Department).
- 1.2 The following members of staff were congratulated on giving many years of service to the Council – Mr Phil Davies (Director of Information and Promotion) (25 years); Mrs Eiry Williams (Clerical Assistant at the Distribution Centre) (30 years) and Mr Geraint Williams (Assistant at the Distribution Centre) (35 years). The Chair further noted the interesting fact that current staff had worked at the Council for a total of 565 years and 6 months.
- 1.3 Congratulations were extended to Sharon Owen (Book Club Administrator) and Arwel Jones (National Library of Wales) on the birth of their son at the beginning of October, and to Mari Elin Jones (Administrative Assistant at the Distribution Centre) on her recent marriage.
- 1.4 Warm wishes were conveyed to a member of staff at the Distribution Centre who had recently undergone surgery.
- 1.5 Members were reminded of the need to declare an interest and to absent themselves from the meeting at the appropriate times. All members were also requested to sign an Interests Register.

### **2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 29 June 2012, were confirmed.

### 3 MATTERS ARISING

#### 3.1 Operational Plan 2012/13

The Chief Executive explained that the Minister had confirmed the draft version of the Operational Plan presented at the previous meeting. The Council was currently in the process of discussing the Remit Letter for 2013/14 with the Welsh Government.

#### 3.2 LitCam Conference

The Chief Executive explained that the Council had been invited to give a presentation on the Reading Communities scheme at the above conference in Frankfurt, together with representatives from New Zealand and Namibia. This was considered to be a special privilege, recognising the pioneering work achieved under the auspices of the scheme. The Council was represented by Garry Nicholas, the Reading Communities Coordinator.

#### 3.3 Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Books Council

The Chief Executive presented a report on the activities held during the year, namely a session with Fflur Dafydd at the Hay Festival, a staff reunion, and an event in the company of Eigr Lewis Roberts at the National Library. He also referred to an event at the Senedd on 5 December when guests would be addressed by the Minister for Heritage and by the poet Gwyneth Lewis.

The Chair explained that the celebration volume would not now be published until next year, as one of the contributors had withdrawn.

#### 3.4 Review of English-language Magazines from Wales

The Chief Executive explained that the Panel, chaired by Dr Tony Bianchi, had commenced its work and the ensuing report would be considered in the July meeting of the Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language). Wavehill had conducted a review amongst readers and had received a good number of responses.

### 4 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Chair referred to a paper, which had been circulated to members, recommending changes to the Constitution. The following recommendations were approved for presentation to the Council at the afternoon meeting.

#### Change of Nomenclature

Welsh Assembly Government

The amended title to read: **Welsh Government**

#### Amend current clause

IV(ch) MEMBERSHIP: Representatives

Insert 'observer status on the Council only'

Welsh Government

Amended clause to read:

**Welsh Government – observer status on the Council only**

## 5 CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

The Chief Executive presented the strategy, referring to the four main fields. He noted that this was a live document which would be reviewed and adapted in consultation with the relevant Department of the Welsh Government.

## 6 GRANTS 2013/14

The Director of Finance and Business presented a paper noting the grants for 2013/14.

## 7 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITY

### 7.1 Sales and Marketing/Distribution

Neville Evans, Distribution Centre Manager, noted that the Council is still suffering in the wake of the current economic climate, although sales in October were substantially higher than those of last year. Unfortunately, this trend has not continued during November.

He noted that the work of benchmarking the Distribution Centre's activities was ongoing, and that it continued to show high levels of customer service. Keeping a close eye on debtors continued to be a priority, and the sum owing had been kept to 1.27% of the full receipts during the previous financial year.

The Manager also referred to the condition of the Distribution Centre building, noting that work was needed on the roof. A new heating system had recently been installed, and some electrical work was still outstanding.

He referred also to the activities of the Sales and Marketing Department since the half-yearly meeting. Sales conferences had been held, with twelve publishers attending to present information about the books to be published in time for Christmas. The relationship between the Council and Waterstones has developed during the past six months, and this has been reflected in higher sales in their shops. Again this year, the Books Council had a stall at the Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells, and at the National Eisteddfod at the Vale of Glamorgan. Although the number of visitors to these festivals was similar to previous years, the same could not be said of the sales figures.

The visit to the Frankfurt Book Fair had been encouraging and positive; 16 publishers from Wales had exhibited their work and the feedback had been very enthusiastic.

The Manager thanked his colleagues at the Centre for their continued commitment and enthusiasm, and for the advice and cooperation provided by staff at Castell Brychan.

### 7.2 Information Services

In his report, the Director of Information and Promotion centred on the work which is ongoing to reassure the booksellers as they face a threat to their turnover in the wake of the popularity of e-books.

In developing the Gwales website in order for the Council to make e-books available for customers, it had been necessary to find a way of providing e-books for inclusion in the Gwales website whilst at the same time allowing bookshops to sell them on their own website, if they wished. Gardners was the company selected to host the e-books; they already deal with most bookshops in Wales, and have created a system to supply e-books to the trade.

It became apparent, however, in comments received from booksellers, that the technical work and the cost involved in creating and adapting their own websites in order for them

to sell e-books was beyond the capabilities of many of them; consequently, they felt that there was a real danger that they would suffer financially as the demand for e-books grew. The Council therefore set out to look at various options that would reassure the booksellers whilst continuing to provide a service to customers.

The system allows individuals, as they order through the Gwales website, to select a local bookshop that will receive a 5% commission on the sale. Also, any shop that has directed a customer to the Gwales website through a link on their own site will receive an additional 2.5% – a total commission of 7.5% to the shop on sales through Gwales. The system that has been devised pays commission to shops on all direct sales, not exclusively on the sale of e-books.

An interactive map will also be included on the Gwales home page so that users can locate a bookshop. Some customers will be able to use the information to pay a visit to the shop of their choice, whilst others will use the map to select a shop that will receive a commission on their orders.

#### 7.4 Editorial / Design Services

Marian Beech Hughes, Head of the Editorial Department, presented an overview of the Department's work.

She explained that offering an editorial service was the Department's main task – to publishers as well as to the Council itself.

She referred to the editors at the publishing houses, and to the close cooperation that exists between them and the department. The editors at the publishing houses are responsible for commissioning material and for the creative editing aspect, with the Editorial Department then providing a copy-editing and proofreading service. She gave examples to show that the boundary between the work of the editors in the publishing houses and the work of the Department is not always clearly defined.

The Department is always at hand to offer guidance and advice to the editors based at the publishing houses. It also takes a leading role in the training days arranged by the Council for these editors; this year, two very constructive days were held: one focusing on adapting work successfully and the various challenges faced by translators, and the other on writing in the first person.

She referred to the challenge of dealing with the variety of books dealt with by the Department, the number of typescripts received, and the assistance given by their team of external editors.

She explained that the aim of the Department is to act as a bridge between the author and the reader. The author and the publishers' editors will have worked on several drafts of the text; the Department's role is to read it with fresh eyes, and amend any aspect which could be an obstacle to the reader.

#### Design Services

Sion Ilar, Head of the Design Department, presented a report on the work of the department, noting that part of the nature of the design process was that the reader would only be aware of part of the work involved, as several drafts would have been prepared before deciding on the final design.

He explained how the latest technology had transformed the work of designers, as it is now possible to print a rough sketch to a high standard. He noted that the same effort goes into designing the in-house work of the Council itself, from headed notepaper to the Book Club leaflets and various promotional catalogues.

He noted that the Department had dealt with over 100 different titles during the year, on behalf of ten publishers. The work involved included creating covers, adapting several titles, and assisting in the work of finding illustrations. The Department had also been instrumental in the work of creating guidelines for publishing e-books.

He referred also to the design course held in June, in which the Head of Department and a number of other designers discussed their work and offered advice. There had been a positive response to the day, and it had raised awareness of what constituted design of a high standard.

## **8 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

- 8.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 9 November 2012  
(Members of staff absented themselves from the meeting before the report on 4.3)
- 8.2 Nominations Panel, 8 November 2012
- 8.3 Publication Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 25/26 June 2012  
(Marian Delyth absented herself during the discussion on these minutes)
- 8.4 Publication Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 19/20 November 2012 (oral report)
- 8.5 Publication Grants Panel (English-language), 10/11 July 2012
- 8.6 Children's Books and Reading Promotion Panel, 14 November 2012

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

The Director of Administration and Services, in accordance with the Constitution, presented a list of members of the Council's committees and panels for the forthcoming year. She noted that representatives of local authorities were members of the Executive Committee in rotation. Thanks were paid to the members whose term of office would be ending in 2012.

All lists were confirmed for presentation to the Council during the afternoon meeting.

All those present were asked to complete the Interests Register.

## **10 RECENT APPOINTMENTS**

The following appointments, made since the previous meeting, were noted:  
Olwen Fowler – Design Officer  
Siân Evans – Book Club Administrator to cover maternity leave.

## **11 TO CONSIDER THE ANNUAL REPORT AND THE FINANCIAL REPORT 2011/12**

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

## **12 PROJECTED FINANCIAL POSITION 2012/13 AND ESTIMATES FOR 2013/14**

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

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

The Director of Administration and Services noted that refreshments had been provided for members, and the Annual Meeting would follow at 2 pm.