



## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 29 November 2013

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Messrs. D. Geraint Lewis; David Barker; T. Hywel James; Chris Edwards; W. Gwyn Williams; Tegwyn Jones; Dafydd John Pritchard; Mrs Rona Aldrich; Mrs Carol M. Edwards; Ms Marian Delyth; Councillor Ioan Thomas.

Staff: Messrs Elwyn Jones; Arwyn Roderick; Neville Evans; Richard Owen; Mrs Marian Beech Hughes; Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf.

APOLOGIES: Messrs. Gareth Davies Jones; Alun P. Thomas; W. Gwyn Jones; Gwydion Hughes; Ioan Kidd; Terwyn Tomos; R. Arwel Jones; Mrs Mererid Morgan; Councillors Chris Bithell; Stuart Egan; Mr Sion Iar Joyce; Mr D. Philip Davies.

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

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Mr Chris Edwards (Vale of Glamorgan), representing the Chief Librarians, who was attending for the first time.
- 1.2 The Chair, on behalf of the Council, extended sympathy to the following: Miss Jane Hopkins (Secretary of the Grants and Design Departments) who had lost her mother; Mr D. Geraint Lewis (the Council's Honorary Secretary) on losing a brother-in-law; Mrs Mererid Morgan (WJEC) who had lost her father; the family of the late Mr Roger Davies (who had provided generous support for the Book Day Lecture); and also the family of the late Mr Afan ab Alun (a former member of staff, who had worked at the Distribution Centre for 42 years before his retirement in 2010).
- 1.3 Two members were congratulated on the birth of a grand-child, namely Mr W. Gwyn Jones (Honorary Treasurer) and Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Mr Ioan Kidd was congratulated on the publication of *Dewis*, his latest novel for adults.
- 1.4 Good wishes were extended to Mr Gareth Davies Jones (Vice-Chair) following his recent operation, to Geraint Williams and Peter Morgan, two members of staff at the Distribution Centre who had recently undergone surgery, and to those who are currently awaiting treatment.
- 1.5 Best wishes were extended to three members of staff who will be retiring before the end of March 2014, namely Neville Evans (Manager of the Distribution Centre); Arwyn Roderick (Head of Finance and Business) who had given almost 20 years of service to the Council, and Richard Owen (Head of the Publishing Grants Committee) who had given over 30 years of service. They were warmly thanked for their sterling work and valuable contribution to the Books Council over many years.
- 1.6 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 28 June 2013, were confirmed.

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

### 3.1 Commissioning English-language Books for Children

The Chief Executive referred to point 3.2 in the minutes of the previous meeting, noting that the publishing company Firefly had commissioned authors to write fiction for children aged 7–9, and that Atebol were currently developing a series of factual books for children aged 9–11. It was noted that both companies are now at the stage of asking children for their response to the content and design of the books.

It was noted that the Council had recently held meetings with both publishers, and a progress report had been presented to the Welsh Government. The first titles will be published in spring 2014.

### 3.2 Review of Welsh-language Books for Children

Following a review conducted into the reading patterns of Welsh speakers, the Chief Executive noted that the Council's Publishing Grants Department had commissioned Mairwen Prys Jones to conduct a survey of Welsh-language children's books. She had been asked to pay specific attention to the standard of the books, the challenge of promoting the titles to children, parents and teachers, and the importance of digital developments to the readers.

It was noted that the report would be presented to the next meeting of the Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language). Hywel James said that the Society of Chief Librarians would be very interested in the conclusions of the report.

## 4 WELSH GOVERNMENT

### 4.1 Meeting with the Minister for Culture and Sport, and the Minister for Education

The Chair reported that he and the Chief Executive had, the previous week, attended the six-monthly meeting with both Ministers, at which they had presented a full report on the Council's work. They had referred to a number of specific schemes, including Golwg360, the success of the Library of Wales series, and digital developments. They had noted the importance of the reading promotion schemes, and had thanked the Ministers for the opportunity of presenting an application to develop the Summer Reading Challenge in co-operation with the Reading Agency and public libraries throughout Wales.

They had noted that the funding to commission English-language books for children had been warmly welcomed, adding that the Council would be eager to further develop the scheme. The Minister promised to give the matter his consideration.

Following the meeting, the Department for Education and Skills had informed the Council that the sum of £300 had been earmarked for every primary school in Wales to enable them to purchase educational resources (Welsh, English or bilingual), as part of the support for the literacy framework. The scheme would be administered through the Books Council.

It was further noted that plans were already in place to implement the scheme, and letters had been sent to every primary school. The Council's Schools Officers were currently contacting the schools to collect orders. The scheme was warmly welcomed by all members of the Executive Committee.

#### 4.2 Visit by Baroness Kay Andrews

The Chief Executive explained that Baroness Kay Andrews, a former librarian at the House of Lords, was conducting a review on behalf of the Government on the contribution made by the culture sector to reduce child poverty. She had recently visited the Council, and had shown a lively interest in a number of the reading promotion schemes.

### 5 GRANTS 2014/15

The Director of Finance and Business presented a paper noting the grants received in respect of the current financial year, together with the likely position for 2014/15.

In accordance with the Welsh Government's draft budget, there was a cut of £200,000 in the Council's grant for the forthcoming year. The Council was currently discussing how to distribute the money between the core funding and the publishing grants. The Publishing Grants Department was already in discussion with members of both Grant Panels, and discussions would be held with publishers in the near future. The Council was also holding discussions with the staff in respect of any effects that the cuts would have on the core funding.

### 6 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITY

#### 6.1 Sales and Marketing

Arwyn Roderick presented a report on behalf of the Sales and Marketing Department, noting that sales during the summer period had been disappointing again this year. According to the feedback from booksellers, the visitor numbers had been similar to previous years, but the sales figures had not been maintained. Sales for the first six months of the year showed a small increase of 0.49% on the previous year's figures.

He further noted that arrangements to promote the Christmas titles were well underway, with the books supplements – *Gwledd y Nadolig* and *Books From Wales* – already distributed, television advertisements being broadcast, and a number of advertisements appearing in local and national newspapers.

#### 6.2 Distribution

Neville Evans reported that the Distribution Centre was currently very busy in the run-up to Christmas, and he thanked the staff for their work. He also referred to the fact that, although several members of staff had been on sick leave, it had been possible to secure external support.

#### 6.3 Editorial / Design Services

Marian Beech Hughes presented a report on the activities of the Editorial Department, noting that work on the proofs of all the Christmas titles had been completed. She referred to the fact that the Department had experienced an extremely busy year, and paid thanks to the external editors and the publishers' editors for their valued cooperation.

#### 6.4 Reading Promotion Programme

The Chief Executive referred to a report on the reading promotion schemes for 2013/14, outlining the activities held during the year, copies of which had been distributed to members and presented to the Welsh Government. Arrangements for the current year are in hand, although the programme has been curtailed due to the financial cuts.

Hywel James asked the officers to pass on a message to the Reading Agency noting that public libraries would like to receive the promotional materials earlier next year.

### 7 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

- 7.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 6 November 2013
- 7.2 Nominations Panel, 19 November 2013
- 7.3 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 11/12 June 2013
- 7.4 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 11/12 November 2013 (oral report)
- 7.5 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 2/3 July 2013
- 7.6 Children's Books and Reading Promotion Panel, 13 November 2013

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

The Head of Human Resources, 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 2013.

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

## **9 RECENT APPOINTMENTS**

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

Medi Jones-Jackson – Children's Books and Reading Promotion Officer  
 Dr Lucy Thomas – Head of the Publishing Grants Department  
 Emma Davies – Head of the Finance Department

## **10 TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Following receipt of information from the Charities Commission, the Head of Human Resources presented a paper noting the responsibilities of the trustees.

## **11 TO CONSIDER THE ANNUAL REPORT AND THE FINANCIAL REPORT 2012/13**

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

## **12 PROJECTED FINANCIAL POSITION 2013/14 AND ESTIMATES FOR 2014/15**

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 absence of the Treasurer, it was recommended that Llŷr James's company should be reappointed for a further two-year period at a cost of £6,500 per annum. The recommendation was accepted.

## **14 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING**

Members were thanked for attending the meeting of the Executive Committee; it was noted that the Annual Meeting would follow at 2 pm.