



HALF-YEARLY MEETING

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth
DATE: 27 June 2014
PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair)

Local Authorities

Councillor Chris Bithell (Flintshire)
Councillor Hugh Jones (Wrexham)
Councillor David W. M. Rees (Pembrokeshire)

Welsh Government

Dr Hywel Owen – observer only

Welsh County Librarians

Mr Chris Edwards (Vale of Glamorgan)

CILIP Cymru/Wales

Mrs Carol M. Edwards

The Welsh Academy

Mr Dafydd John Pritchard

WJEC

Mrs Susan Jenkins

The Council's Panels

Mr David Barker

Vice-Chair

Mr Gareth Davies Jones

Honorary Secretary

Mr D. Geraint Lewis

Honorary Counsellor

Mr Gwydion Hughes

Co-opted Members

Mr W. Gwyn Williams
Mrs Rona Aldrich

Staff

Mr Elwyn Jones (Chief Executive)
Mr Arwyn Roderick (Head of the Finance Department)
Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf (Head of Human Resources)
Mr Arwel Evans (Head of the Distribution Centre)
Mr Phil Davies (Director of Information and Promotion)

Dr Lucy Thomas (Head of the Grants Department)
 Ms Helena O'Sullivan (Head of the Sales and Marketing Department)
 Mrs Marian Beech Hughes (Head of the Editorial Department)
 Mr Sion Ilar (Head of the Design Department)
 Mrs Delyth G. M. Phillips
 Mr Owain Thomas
 Mr R. Arwel Jones

APOLOGIES: Councillors Ioan Thomas; Graham Davies; B. Towyn Evans; Anita Hobbs;
 Messrs. W. Gwyn Jones; Alun P. Thomas; Hywel James; Dyfrig Ellis;
 Tegwyn Jones; Professor Aled Gruffydd Jones; Ms Marian Delyth.

1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the members to the meeting, and extended a special welcome to those who were attending their first meeting, namely Mrs Susan Jenkins (WJEC), Councillor Hugh Jones (Wrexham), Mr Arwel Evans (Head of the Distribution Centre) and Mr R. Arwel Jones (Welsh-language Grants Officer). The Chair said that he was very pleased to see that Mr Gwydion Hughes, the Honorary Counsellor, was present.
- 1.2 Condolences were extended to Mr Elwyn Jones, who had lost his father, and to the family of the late Mr Merfyn Davies (former caretaker at Castell Brychan) who died in December.
- 1.3 Three of the Council members – Professor M. Wynn Thomas, Dafydd John Pritchard and Ioan Kidd – were congratulated as their books had been shortlisted for the Wales Book of the Year Award 2014. The result will be announced on 10 July in a ceremony held at Galeri, Caernarfon; Mr D. Geraint Lewis was congratulated on being honoured by the Gorsedd of Bards at the Llanelli National Eisteddfod, and on the publication of two new dictionaries – *Geiriadur Pinc a Glas Gomer* and *Geiriadur Mor, Mwy, Mwyaf Gomer*.
- 1.4 Emma Davies (Head of the Finance Department) was congratulated on the birth of her son in January, and Glenys Jenkins (Office Manager at the Distribution Centre) was congratulated on the birth of her grandchild.
- 1.5 Good wishes were conveyed to Tegwyn Jones, Councillor B. Towyn Evans (Ceredigion) and Councillor Graham Davies (Merthyr Tydfil) who had been unwell recently.
- 1.6 Best wishes for a speedy recovery were conveyed to two members of the Distribution Centre staff who had recently undergone surgery, and to Moelwen Gwyndaf's husband who had undergone major surgery at the end of the year.
- 1.7 Angharad and Mererid, the daughters of the late Roger and Catrin Puw Davies, were warmly thanked for their gift in memory of their parents, given as sponsorship towards the Book Day Lecture, delivered this year by Mairwen Jones.
- 1.8 Members were reminded of the need to declare an interest, and to retire from the meeting as necessary.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Meeting, held on 29 November 2013, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Operational Plan 2014/15

The Chief Executive reported that the Council had prepared an Operational Plan for the current year, in response to the Welsh Government's Financial Award Letter. He explained that the Minister had approved the Plan, and that it was now available on the Council's website. He thanked the civil servants for their support and their prompt response.

He referred particularly to a note in the Introduction that explained the role of the Council as a facilitator helping to support an industry which is both exciting and dynamic, but also fragile in the current financial climate.

Elwyn Jones noted that this duality is evident in the work of each of the Books Council's departments as they strive to develop the industry in areas such as digitisation, expanding the market, and promoting reading schemes, but at the same time facing financial cutbacks which have a considerable effect on the activities, and place increasing pressure on the staff.

3.2 Friends of the Books Council

The Chief Executive noted that Tegwyn Jones had apologised for his absence, as he had undergone treatment recently. He also noted that Marian Delyth, who also represents the Friends on the Council, had apologised because of work commitments.

It was noted that the Friends' latest pack had recently been distributed to members; it contained information about the publishing industry, and a copy of the latest newsletter *The Friend/Y Cyfaill*, which is now produced in full colour. Emma Evans was thanked for her work in preparing the newsletter.

A meeting of the Friends' steering committee will be held next week, at which they will discuss arranging a reception on the National Eisteddfod field at Llanelli, and arrangements for the annual meeting in the autumn. New officers will also be elected.

3.3 Welsh Government

The Chief Executive explained that the Council received funding from two sources within the Welsh Government.

The reading promotion schemes are funded by the Education Department, and DfES had also funded the Book Purchasing Scheme administered by the Council. The Chief Executive noted that the Council would be meeting with Education Department officials within the week to review the purchasing scheme, in the hope of developing a similar scheme for the secondary sector.

The Culture Department is the Council's main source of income, as it contributes to the core funding, the publishing grants in both languages, and the capital funding. The Chief Executive noted that he and the Chair would be meeting with the Minister next week, when there would be an opportunity to discuss the Books Council's work and the financial position.

4 ELECTING THE COUNCIL'S CHIEF OFFICERS 2014–2017

4.1 Chair

Professor M. Wynn Thomas was re-elected.

4.2 Vice-Chair

Mr Gareth Davies Jones was re-elected.

- 4.3 Honorary Secretary
Mrs Rona Aldrich was elected.
- 4.4 Honorary Treasurer
Mr W. Gwyn Jones was re-elected.
- 4.5 Honorary Counsellor
Mr Gwydion Hughes was re-elected.
- 4.6 Honorary Solicitor
Mr Alun P. Thomas was re-elected.

The Chair and the Chief Executive paid warm thanks to Mr D. Geraint Lewis who had served the Council as Honorary Secretary for a very long period. It was noted that Geraint's contact with the Council will continue, as he is chair of the Design Group.

5 ELECTION OF PROTECTIVE TRUSTEES 2014–2017

The four persons listed below were elected as Protective Trustees for the period 2014–2017:

Professor M. Wynn Thomas
Mr Gareth Davies Jones
Mr W. Gwyn Jones
Mrs Rona Aldrich

6 REPORT ON MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- 6.1 Two Chief Librarians
With the agreement of the Society of Chief Librarians, it was agreed to re-elect Mr T. Hywel James (Gwynedd) and Mr Chris Edwards (Vale of Glamorgan) to serve on the Executive Committee.
- 6.2 Co-opted Members for the Council and the Executive Committee (up to 4)
It was agreed to re-elect Mr W. Gwyn Williams, and to ask the Chief Officers to consider other names to present to the attention of members at their next meeting.
- 6.3 Others
In accordance with the Constitution, the Chair noted that a comprehensive list of members of the Council, the Executive Committee and the sub-committees would be presented to the Annual Meeting.

7 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

- 7.1 Grants 2014/15
The Head of Finance presented a paper noting the grants received in respect of the current financial year, drawing attention to the fact that the Council had suffered a cut of £200,000 in its budget from the Welsh Government. He also noted that the Books Council will, next year, face a further cut of £100,000 per annum.

Due to staff retirement, and the curtailing of various schemes, the Head of Finance noted that it will be possible for the Council to operate within the allocated budget, but this will become increasingly difficult.

8 PRESENTATIONS

8.1 Technological Developments

Phil Davies, Director of Information and Promotion, presented a report on the latest technological developments, noting the investment made in strengthening the computer infrastructure. Currently, there are two purpose-built rooms housing the Council's servers – one in Castell Brychan and the other in the Distribution Centre. A new central computer had been placed in the Distribution Centre, with the intention also of strengthening the connection between both buildings.

He also noted that the Council would be adopting the *.cymru* and *.wales* domains for the corporate website, thus following the Welsh Government's lead in this matter.

He reported that there are 1,225 e-books currently available on the gwales website, with 132 of these being children's books.

Currently there are 25 titles also available on Ap Llyfrau Cymru and the Welsh Books App, with 12 of them being children's titles. The eight new Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn titles are also available there. The next step will be to create a Flash version of the Apps in order to be able to offer them on websites such as gwales.

In response to a request from some of the main publishers, a Magazines of Wales App/Ap Cylchgronau Cymru was developed, and to date 14 issues of various magazines have appeared.

In his closing remarks, Phil Davies thanked Geraint Lewis for the encouragement and leadership he had given over many years.

8.2 Designing Books

Sion Ilar, the Council's Head of Design, gave a presentation on the work of the Design Department and explained the processes involved in designing a book cover.

The first step is the publisher's request, which is accompanied by a fairly full synopsis of the contents of the book. From this information the designer will note some key words to convey the mood of the book, before preparing the first drafts which will be discussed with the publisher. Very often, the covers will be adapted at this stage until everyone concerned is satisfied. He noted that one of the most important elements is trying to ensure that the cover is visible in a bookshop, where the book will be vying for attention amongst hundreds of others.

He showed several examples of covers which had been designed by the Department, explaining the process in which the first draft developed over a period of time to produce the final version.

Sion Ilar emphasised the need to ensure work of a high standard which was suitable for each individual book, noting that the designer's skills were of equal importance to those of the author and the editor.

The Chair paid thanks to Phil Davies and Sion Ilar for their interesting presentations, both of which showed the wide variety of the Council's work and the specialist services provided to the publishing industry.