



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 27 June 2014

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

Staff: Messrs. Elwyn Jones; Arwyn Roderick; Arwel Evans; D. Philip Davies; Sion Ilar; Dr Lucy Thomas; Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf; Ms Helena O'Sullivan; Mrs Marian Beech Hughes.

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

1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed 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), Ms Helena O'Sullivan (Head of the Sales and Marketing Department) and Mr Arwel Evans (Head of the Distribution Centre). The Chair said that he was very glad 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 had 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 in a ceremony held on 10 July 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 a 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, 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 which was 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 previous meeting, held on 29 November 2013, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Commissioning English-language Books for Children

The Chief Executive referred to point 3.1 in the minutes of the previous meeting, noting that the books commissioned under the scheme had now been published. Atebol had published factual books for children aged 9–11, with Firefly publishing fiction for children aged 7–9. Both companies were congratulated on their work, and for the very successful launches held at the Hay Festival.

The Council also appreciated the support given to the scheme by the Welsh Government, and copies of the books will be sent to John Griffiths, the Minister for Culture, and to Huw Lewis, the Minister for Education.

3.2 Review of Welsh-language Books for Children

The Chief Executive noted that Mairwen Jones's report on Welsh-language books for children, commissioned by the Council, had been presented recently for the attention of the Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language). The report is now being translated, and it will be placed on the Books Council's website.

The aim of the report was to offer an overview of the field, obtaining information from various sectors of the industry, including publishers, booksellers, authors, librarians and teachers. There are five strands to the report, namely responses to the standard of the output, the challenges to the grants system, the need for further investment in marketing, the influence of the Literacy Framework, and digital developments.

The report concludes with 18 recommendations, and these will be discussed by the Council over the next few months.

3.3 Library of Wales Series

Lucy Thomas referred to the success of the Library of Wales series. The first volumes were launched in 2006 and to date there are 38 titles available, with the total sales being 60,000.

In March 2013 two volumes of short stories, edited by Professor Dai Smith, were launched; the contents included the work of authors spanning the whole of the twentieth century. The next volume to be launched will be *A Time to Laugh*, Rhys Davies, supported by sponsorship from the Rhys Davies Trust.

3.4 Publicity for Books on S4C/Radio Cymru

The Chief Executive reported that the Council was very pleased with the publicity recently given to books in the Welsh media. In March, in support of the Book Day activities, S4C broadcast several programmes pertaining to books, and on Radio Cymru a series based on the popular programme *Book of the Week* was launched, with adaptations of Welsh books being read every morning.

3.5 Report prepared by Baroness Kay Andrews

The Chief Executive, referring to point 4.2 in the minutes of the previous meeting, noted that the report on the contribution of the cultural sector to reducing child poverty had been launched at a meeting in Swansea. The Council was very pleased that its work had been mentioned in the report, and that it had received confirmation that several of its schemes in this field dovetailed successfully with the Welsh Government's policies.

4 WELSH GOVERNMENT

4.1 Financial Award Letter

It was noted that the Department for Culture had sent the Council a Financial Award Letter for the current year, setting out the main targets for the year and outlining the way in which funds have been allocated.

4.2 Operational Plan 2014/15

The Chief Executive reported that the Council had presented a copy of the Operational Plan for the attention of the Minister for Culture, and that it had been approved. The Plan can now be viewed on the Books Council's website.

4.3 DfES: Scheme to Purchase Books

The Chief Executive referred to point 4.1 in the minutes of the previous meeting, and reported that the Council had collected orders for books from every primary school in Wales – a total of 1,442 schools. After the Schools Officers had collected the orders, they were transferred to the Distribution Centre for processing. Thanks were paid to all the Books Council's departments for their help in this onerous task.

A meeting to review the scheme will be held in the near future with the Department of Education in the hope of agreeing a similar scheme for the secondary sector.

5 GRANTS 2014/15

The Director of Finance and Business presented a paper noting the grants received in respect of the current financial year. He noted that the Council had suffered a cut of £200,000 in its funding this year, and a further cut of £100,000 will be made next year. He reported that these cuts had been shared between the core funding and the publishing grant. As a result of staff changes, and by curtailing some activities, the Council will be able to operate within the budget.

It was noted that the Council is currently preparing the accounts for the 2013/14 financial year; they will be presented for the attention of the Annual Meeting, as is the usual practice.

6 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITY

6.1 Sales and Marketing

Helena O'Sullivan, Head of Sales and Marketing, noted that sales at the end of the last financial year showed an increase of 5.08% on the previous year – a most encouraging result in a difficult period. The Welsh Government's Book Purchasing Scheme, which has already been referred to, had made a valuable contribution to the total sales figure.

It was also reported that the Council had won the tender to supply all the Cadw outlets, with the contract coming into force on 1 April. The Council had also been an intrinsic part of bookstalls at the Urdd National Eisteddfod, Bala, and at the Hay Festival.

It was noted that the Department was currently busy preparing leaflets to promote new books, and *Llyfrau'r Haf* had recently been distributed. The *Summer Reads* leaflet, and a catalogue of materials for Welsh learners, will be distributed shortly. The Council is also

currently designing a leaflet to celebrate the centenary of Dylan Thomas's birth, in cooperation with the Society of Chief Librarians.

6.2 Distribution

Arwel Evans reported that the Distribution Centre was currently very busy, and had recently distributed stocks of books to the Urdd Eisteddfod, the Hay Festival, and Gŵyl Dinefwr, Llandeilo. The Centre was now beginning the task of collecting books for the Council's stand at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show and the National Eisteddfod.

It was reported that the number of accounts failing to keep to their terms and conditions had been confined to 1.06% at the end of the financial year, compared with 1.2% the previous year. He thanked the booksellers for their cooperation in this matter.

6.3 Editorial and Design Services

Marian Beech Hughes presented a report on the work of the Editorial Department, noting that there were two main strands to their responsibilities, namely providing an editorial service to the Council's own departments, and also a copy-editing and proofreading service to publishers in Wales, through the medium of both Welsh and English.

She further noted that the Department, which works in close cooperation with the editors in the various publishing houses, had dealt with over 100 typescripts since the beginning of January. She emphasised the need to maintain high standards, and the work of the Editorial Department is a vital part of that process.

7 **READING PROMOTION SCHEMES**

Phil Davies, Director of Information and Reading Promotion, presented a report on the reading promotion schemes currently being supported by the Welsh Government's Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

A budget of £200K was confirmed by DfES for 2014/15 in respect of the Reading Promotion Schemes. This budget will encompass three project strands, namely Book Day, Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn, and the Summer Reading Challenge.

Before referring to the points below, he thanked the staff of the Department, particularly Angharad Tomos – Manager of the reading promotion schemes – on achieving a great deal during the year, albeit in a period of cutbacks.

Book Day – Book Day was a great success, and once again this year extensive publicity was gained in the press and media in Wales; Radio Cymru were particularly cooperative, and wide publicity was gained on S4C as a result of launching the hashtag *#dathludarllyn* on Twitter.

CyMAL – An additional grant of £20K was distributed by CyMAL to enable the library services to hold author sessions to celebrate Book Day, and to promote library membership amongst primary school pupils.

Quick Reads – Eight new titles in the Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn series were launched in the Senedd building on 10 February by the Minister, Huw Lewis. A number of the series' authors and readers were present, and the response to this year's range of titles has been very positive.

Reading Communities – The period of the pilot Reading Communities project ended on 31 March 2014; unfortunately, it was confirmed that funding was no longer available to develop the project further.

Summer Reading Challenge – It was reported that an additional sum of £60K will be available to enable the Council to recruit one part-time officer to help with developing the Challenge on a strategic level in Wales.

8 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

- 8.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 10 June 2014
- 8.2 Publication Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 11/12 November 2013
- 8.3 Publication Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 10/11 March 2014
- 8.4 Publication Grants Panel (English-language), 18/19 February 2014
- 8.5 Children's Books and Reading Promotion Panel, 13 June 2014

8 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

The following appointments had been made since the previous meeting:

- E. Vera Bowen – Clerical Administrator (Part-time and temporary)
- Arwel Evans – Head of the Distribution Centre
- R. Arwel Jones – Grants Officer (Welsh-language)

9 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL

9.1 Co-opted membership of the Executive Committee and the Council

It was agreed to recommend the re-election of Mr W. Gwyn Williams to serve on the Council and the Executive Committee for a further term of three years.

Following the nomination of Rona Aldrich as Honorary Secretary, it was agreed that the Chief Officers should consider some new names, and recommend them to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

9.2 Representing the Chief Librarians

The Society of Chief Librarians presented two names to represent them on the Executive Committee and the Council, namely:

- Gwynedd – T. Hywel James
- Vale of Glamorgan – Chris Edwards

10 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HALF-YEARLY MEETING

Members were thanked for attending the meeting of the Executive Committee, and informed that the Annual Meeting would follow at 2 pm.