



## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 28 November 2014

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Messrs Gareth Davies Jones; W. Gwyn Jones; David Barker; T. Hywel James; W. Gwyn Williams; Dafydd John Pritchard; Mrs Rona Aldrich; Mrs Carol M. Edwards; Ms Marian Delyth; Councillor David W. M. Rees; Councillor B. Towyn Evans; Councillor Huw Thomas.

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

APOLOGIES: Messrs Alun P. Thomas; Gwydion Hughes; Chris Edwards; Mrs Susan Jenkins.

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

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Councillor Huw Thomas (Cardiff), who was attending for the first time. Councillor B. Towyn Evans was also welcomed back, following a period of ill-health.
- 1.2 Condolences were conveyed to Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf (Head of Human Resources) who had lost her mother in October, and also to the family of the late Emllyn Evans, formerly of Gwasg Gee, who had passed away the previous week.
- 1.3 Mr Ioan Kidd – a former member of the Executive Committee and the Council – was warmly congratulated on his success in winning the Book of the Year Award in July, for his novel *Dewis*.
- 1.4 Good wishes were conveyed to Siriol Jones, a member of the Distribution Centre staff, who had recently undergone surgery.
- 1.5 Warm wishes were conveyed to four members of staff who will be leaving or retiring before the end of the year, namely Moelwen Gwyndaf (Head of Human Resources), Arwyn Roderick (Head of Finance – following assisting during a period of maternity leave), Marian Beech Hughes (Head of the Editorial Department) and Emyr Wyn Evans (Caretaker at Castell Brychan). They were thanked for their notable contribution and their sterling work for the Books Council over many years.
- 1.6 Members were reminded of the need to declare an interest and to retire from the meeting as necessary. Their attention was also drawn to the declaration of interest forms to be completed by all members.

### **2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 27 June 2014, were confirmed.

### 3 MATTERS ARISING

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

Following the commissioning of a review of the field of Welsh-language books for children, as referred to in the previous meeting, the Chief Executive noted that Mairwen Prys Jones's report – which includes 18 recommendations – is now available on the Books Council's website. Mairwen was thanked for her excellent work.

It was noted that the Council's departments had considered the recommendations, and that the Friends of the Welsh Books Council had discussed the field of children's books at their October meeting. It was also reported that the Publishing Grants Department (Welsh-language) was already implementing the recommendation to hold meetings jointly between publishers and booksellers in order to discuss readers' requirements, the current provision, and opportunities for further development.

#### 3.2 Swansea's 'Reading City' Scheme

The Chief Executive reported that a meeting had been held in Swansea to discuss the proposed 'Reading City' scheme. Present at the meeting were representatives of Swansea University, the County Chief Librarian, and the Head of Education. The scheme was given an enthusiastic welcome, and reference was made to the opportunity to apply for lottery funding to secure administrative support for the scheme. It was noted that the Council was currently developing an application to be agreed upon between the main partners, following which there would be an opportunity to ensure wider local support for the scheme. The exact timing of the campaign would depend on the response to the application for financial backing.

#### 3.3 Bookshop Week

The Chief Executive reported that the 'Book of the Week' slot on Radio Cymru was now well established, and had been warmly welcomed by readers and booksellers. As a way of developing the relationship, the idea of a 'Bookshops Week' was discussed, with specific programmes being broadcast live from bookshops during a particular week. Booksellers had given the idea their support, and the Council had produced promotional material in support of the scheme. It is hoped to develop the scheme further during the forthcoming year.

It was noted that publishers of English books from Wales had also made every effort to gain publicity for their titles, in particular the frequent publicity given in the *Western Mail*, although reaching other media is more difficult. This matter was discussed with publishers at their annual appraisal meeting.

It was also reported that the Chair had recently held a meeting with a producer at Radio Wales, and that Lucy Thomas (Head of the Publishing Grants Department) had supplied him with information about publications from Wales.

Councillor Huw Thomas referred to the importance of utilising the social media to promote books, and it was noted that the Council, publishers and librarians made regular use of both Twitter and Facebook for this purpose.

### 4 THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

#### 4.1 Meeting with Ken Skates, Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism

In the wake of reorganising the Welsh Government's cabinet, it was noted that the Council is now accountable to Ken Skates, Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, as part of the portfolio of the Department of Business and the Economy.

It was reported that the Chair and the Chief Executive had met with Ken Skates at the beginning of October to discuss the Council's work and its role in promoting the book industry.

A further opportunity to meet him had arisen the following week, during an event held at Llandaff City School to launch new titles for children published by Firefly. It was an extremely successful event, and staff had an opportunity to draw attention to the work of the Council in promoting reading and literacy.

The Chief Executive also met with Ken Skates last Thursday 9 October, when there was a further opportunity to discuss the effects of the current financial cuts on the Council's services.

#### 4.2 Review of the Books Council's Work

Since the previous meeting, the Department of Culture had declared its intention of holding a review of the Council's work as part of its monitoring programme. Martin Rolph from Cardiff was appointed to undertake the task, and he visited the Council to meet members of staff. It is understood that he has also met with a number of publishers and booksellers as part of the process.

It was noted that a draft of the report had been presented to the Culture Department.

## 5 GRANTS 2015/16

The Head of Finance presented a paper outlining the grants for the 2015/16 financial year, and he referred to the further cut of £100,000 in the Council's budget.

## 6 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITY

### 6.1 Sales and Marketing

Helena O'Sullivan, Head of the Sales and Marketing Department, noted that sales up to the end of October showed an increase of 0.55% on the previous year, and sales in November were also very encouraging.

In the period since the previous meeting, the Department had arranged a stall at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show and at the Carmarthenshire National Eisteddfod; it had also worked with Literature Wales in order to ensure that the Book of the Year titles were available in bookshops.

It was reported that leaflets promoting the Christmas titles – including Festive Reads, Gwledd y Nadolig, and a special leaflet for Waterstones shops in Wales – had been widely distributed. Several advertisements promoting Welsh books had been broadcast on S4C, and advertisements had appeared in the *Western Mail* and the *Daily Post* and in some local papers.

### 6.2 Distribution

Arwel Evans reported that the Distribution Centre had been extremely busy dealing with the Christmas titles, and he thanked the staff for their hard work. He noted that distributing c. 2,000 packages every month was a considerable challenge, and he paid thanks to both distribution companies used. Unfortunately, it had recently been announced that Crymych Couriers were closing the distribution element of their work and consequently all parcels will be distributed by Yodel.

He noted also that the Centre continued to benchmark the service monthly, with 98% of all the new books being counted and inputted into the computer system within 24 hours.

### 6.3 Editorial Services

Marian Beech Hughes explained that this would be her last presentation as Head of the Editorial Department, as she would be retiring at the end of December. She stated that recent weeks had been an extremely busy period for the Department, between the publishers' preparations for the Christmas market, and the Council's internal work.

Marian took advantage of the opportunity to thank the Chief Officers, Council staff and publishers for their support and cooperation; she paid special thanks to the two Editorial Officers – Karina Wyn Dafis, succeeded by Anwen Pierce – together with the external editors.

She noted that the seven years she had spent as Head of Department had been a very busy, challenging and varied period, and that it had been most satisfying to witness at first hand the exciting developments within the publishing industry.

### 6.4 Information Services and IT

Since the meeting of the Chief Officers on 7 November, the number of e-books available had increased to 1,358, with 249 of them being in Welsh. This compares with the 1,200+ printed books from Wales that are published every year – between 500 and 600 of them being Welsh-language titles. For each of those titles, the Information Department prepares a bibliographical entry and utilizes information provided by the publisher in order to add details useful to the sales team, the schools officers and the trade. This forms the basis for the detailed information on every book seen on the Gwales websites, where all the information for the general public, bookshops, schools and libraries is published.

This department is also responsible for the Council's presence on various social media sites. To date, Gwales has 947 followers on Facebook, and over 1,600 people follow our Twitter accounts. A programme of messages is arranged, and publishers in Wales are now regularly adding the tag @LlyfrauCymru or @WelshBooks to their own messages.

Recently, the Department has also been assisting the Distribution Centre to implement ways of operating electronically, thereby increasing staff efficiency and leading to financial savings.

In the period since the half-yearly meeting, network cables have been installed throughout Castell Brychan in order to take full advantage of the new, faster, connection installed at the beginning of November between Castell Brychan and the Distribution Centre. The new contract with BT will lead to savings to the Council of £20,000 over 5 years, and will provide a connection between the two sites which is 10 times faster than the current provision.

The developmental work is going ahead. During the next few months, the IT staff will focus on adopting the .cymru and .wales domain names. On the digital side, the work of creating Apps which will be downloadable from the Gwales website (rather than from Apple or Google) is progressing well. By the half-yearly meeting, it is hoped that it will be possible to display some of these developments on a large screen.

## 7 **PRESENTATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

### 7.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 7 November 2014

As an appendix to the minutes, the risk register was presented to the attention of members. Hywel James suggested adding to the list a clause pertaining to equality issues.

### 7.2 Nominations Panel, 13 November 2014

### 7.3 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 19/20 June 2014

### 7.4 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 13/14 November 2014

7.5 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 8/9 July 2014

7.6 Children's Books and Reading Promotion Panel, 12 November 2014

## **8 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL**

### **8.1 Co-opted membership of the Executive Committee and the Council**

The Chief Executive presented a list of the members of all the Council's committees and panels for the forthcoming year. He reported that representatives of the local authorities were members of the Executive Committee in rotation, and thanks were conveyed to those members whose period of office was coming to an end. He emphasised that the Council greatly appreciated the members' commitment and also the support of a host of volunteers.

The names were approved for presentation to the Council in the afternoon meeting.

As the result of changes made to the Executive Committee, members were invited to nominate up to three co-opted members and to present the names to the attention of the Chief Executive by the end of January 2015. The names will be discussed in a meeting of the Chief Officers, and a report will be presented to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

## **9 RECENT APPOINTMENTS**

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

Gwenllïan Williams – Development Officer for the Summer Reading Challenge (part-time and temporary).

Dr Huw Meirion Edwards – Head of the Editorial Department.

## **10 TO CONSIDER THE ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2013/14**

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

## **11 THE LIKELY FINANCIAL POSITION FOR 2014/15 AND ESTIMATES FOR 2015/16**

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

## **12 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING**

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