



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 24 June 2010

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Messrs Gareth Davies Jones; W. Gwyn Jones; Tegwyn Jones; David Barker; Rhys Bebb Jones; R. Arwel Jones; W. Gwyn Williams; Dr Brynley F. Roberts; Mrs Ann Keane; Councillor Gwilym Fychan; Councillor A. D. Hampton; Councillor Chris Davies.

Staff: Messrs Elwyn Jones; Arwyn Roderick; Dafydd Charles Jones; Richard Owen; Sion Ilar; D. Philip Davies; Mrs Marian Beech Hughes; Miss Menna Lloyd Williams; Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf.

APOLOGIES: Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; Gwydion Hughes; Alun P. Thomas; Ioan Kidd; Dafydd John Pritchard; Leighton James; Alun Treharne; Steve Hardman; Alan Watkin; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Councillor Alwyn Gruffudd; Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer; Councillor Margaret E. Davies; Councillor Peter H. C. Davies; Mr Tom Ferris (Head of Sales and Marketing).

1 CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He thanked everyone for their kind messages during his recent illness and paid thanks to the Vice-chair for shouldering the responsibilities during his absence. He extended a special welcome to those who were attending their first meeting of the Executive Committee, namely Councillor Gwilym Fychan (Powys) and Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf, Head of Administration.
- 1.2 Mr Arwel Jones was congratulated on the birth of his son, and Mrs Ann Keane was congratulated on being appointed Her Majesty's Chief Inspector – Estyn.
- 1.3 Warm wishes were extended to Mrs Ann Davies, the Receptionist at Castell Brychan, who was receiving medical treatment.
- 1.4 Thanks were paid to Mr Roger Davies for a gift of £500 in memory of his late wife, Mrs Catrin Puw Davies, to be used as sponsorship towards the World Book Day lecture, delivered this year by Sir Deian Hopkin.
- 1.5 Reference was made to two members of staff who were retiring from the Council after twenty-one years' service, namely Dafydd Charles Jones, Manager of the Distribution Centre, and Miss Menna Lloyd Williams, Head of the Children's Books Department, who would be retiring at the end of November. Best wishes and sincere thanks were conveyed to Dafydd on his retirement.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 26 November 2009, were confirmed, with one amendment – to note that this was Elwyn Jones's first meeting as Director.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The Assembly Government: Remit Letter

The Chair presented the remit letter to the attention of members.

3.2 Support for the Welsh-language Press: Golwg 360

The Director reported that the on-line news service Golwg 360 had been well received, and was competing with the BBC as regards the speed of the service. It was noted that the elements *Lle Pawb* and *Y Maes* were now live; it is possible to send stories directly to mobile phones, and visits to the site are increasing month by month.

A marketing campaign was organised by the Company during the Urdd Eisteddfod; announcing the winners on the site attracted new readers. They are also gaining new readers by developing their sports coverage.

It was also reported that the Council had commissioned a review of the service, to be conducted by market research consultants Wavehill. In addition to interviewing staff at Golwg 360 and representatives of the Books Council, a questionnaire had been widely circulated to gather responses. Wavehill will also organise two focus groups to verify the findings of the questionnaire, and will present their report in July.

The current contract with Golwg 360 will terminate at the end of March 2011.

3.3 Additional Funds: Creative Editor Posts

Following the receipt of an additional sum of £300,000 from the Assembly Government towards Welsh-language publishing, the Director reported that a number of new creative editors had been appointed by the publishers. The Council was arranging training for them, with the first course being held in July. Mairwen Prys Jones, former Head of Publishing at Gomer, had been invited to co-ordinate the courses.

A discussion was held on the importance of working with other partners, such as Tŷ Newydd; it was hoped that this could eventually lead to the establishment of a qualification and career structure in the field.

3.4 The Publishing Industry Awards

The Head of Administration reported on this event, held in March in the presence of the Minister for Culture. It was an opportunity to celebrate the successes of the industry and to gain publicity. The award categories included several Bestseller categories, the Most Borrowed Library Book, and Design. Publicity for the evening was given on *Wedi 7*, and it was felt that the occasion had been very successful.

4 OPERATIONAL PLAN 2010/11

The Director presented the Operational Plan for 2010/11, noting that this document was in response to the Minister's remit letter, and he drew attention to some specific issues in order to underline the priorities.

Questions were raised about possible financial cuts this year, and the Director explained that factors such as staff retirements would be helpful when preparing the estimates.

In response to a question regarding the link with academic libraries and electronic ordering, the Head of Information reported that the Council was concentrating on public libraries at present, and on co-operation with the National Library. It was agreed that WHELP – the umbrella body for academic libraries – should be kept in mind.

5 SCHEMES TO PROMOTE READING

The Director reported that this important field has developed over the years, with various schemes interweaving to promote reading. The Council was also co-operating with the Assembly's Basic Skills Department on the Stori Sydyn/Quick Reads scheme to encourage reluctant readers.

6 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

6.1 DCELLS Funds

The Director reported that the Assembly Government's Education Department had earmarked £300 for every primary school in Wales, to enable them to purchase books and educational resources, and a further sum of £5,000 had been presented to the six Welsh Adult Learners Centres.

The Head of the Children's Books Department reported that the Council's Schools Officers had been extremely busy processing the orders before the end of the financial year; they had ensured that all schools in Wales, except one, had ordered through the scheme. They were warmly thanked for their work.

6.2 End-of-year Funding 2010

The Head of Administration reported that the Council had been given an opportunity to apply for additional funds at the end of the financial year; they had succeeded in obtaining a budget for several items, including a video conferencing system, an intranet system for improving internal communications, and new display materials.

6.3 Grants 2010/11

The Head of Finance, Business and Information Technology presented a paper outlining the grants situation for the current year.

6.4 Financial Situation 2011/12–2013/14

The Director reported that very little information was currently available on the pending financial situation, but it was likely that the funding would be cut. The Council had presented evidence to the Assembly regarding the effect of any cuts, emphasising the value for money element. He paid thanks to the civil servants for their co-operation.

The effect of the recession was already evident in the sales of books through the Distribution Centre, and there was concern that Local Government cutbacks may affect the pattern of stocking books in schools and libraries.

The importance of forward planning in preparation for possible financial cuts was discussed, together with ensuring a dialogue with staff and clients.

7 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

7.1 Sales and Marketing

Dafydd Charles Jones, Manager of the Distribution Centre, reported that the DCELLS funds had been a saving grace and a great help to the Centre, schools and bookshops. He noted that sales through bookshops were substantially lower than last year, and that they in turn were very dependent on schools and libraries.

The level of the Distribution Centre's debtors was 1.87%, compared with a target of 2%.

He mentioned particular activities and events that helped to boost sales, namely the Sale, the Urdd Eisteddfod, the Hay Festival, and the Wales Book of the Year Award; the summer catalogue of books *Llyfrau'r Haf*, had already been distributed.

He reported that the Sales and Marketing Department had focused on promoting sales through the tourist information centres.

7.2 Information Services

Phil Davies, Head of the Council's Information Services, reported that the gwales website had been further developed; he referred to the new interface and other additional elements, and said that he would be demonstrating these during the Half-Yearly meeting in the afternoon.

Among the improvements added were a list of readers' recommendations, and information about books bought by other people.

Reference was made to the fact that there had been an increase of £300,000 in the value of electronic orders. Phil also noted that it was encouraging that more and more counties were ordering electronically through the gwales/libraries website.

7.3 Children's Books

Menna Lloyd Williams, Head of the Children's Books Department, reported that there had been an increase of 17.42% in the sales of the Book Club during the year. Particular attention had been paid to providing packs of books, and the procedure for selecting titles had been changed, with the Department suggesting themes to the publishers to correspond with events organised by the schools.

The DCELLS orders had been an important part of the year's work together with activities such as the Tir Na n-Og awards and the books competitions. Menna thanked CILIP Cymru/Wales for sponsoring some of the awards, and also thanked Afan ab Alun, a member of the Books Council staff, who had presented an award in memory of his late wife, Anwen Tydu Jones.

8 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

- 8.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 12 May 2010
- 8.2 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 24/25 November 2009
- 8.3 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 10/11 March 2010
- 8.4 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 2/3 February 2010
- 8.5 World Book Day Steering Committee, 16 February 2010

9 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

A report was presented on new appointments made since the previous meeting:

- Dr Lucy Thomas – Publishing Grants Officer (English-language)
- Neville Evans – Manager of the Welsh Books Council's Distribution Centre

10 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HALF-YEARLY MEETING

The Head of Administration explained that refreshments were available in the reception area, with the Half-Yearly Meeting following at 2 pm.