



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 28 June 2013

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; Gareth Davies Jones; David Barker; T. Hywel James; W. Gwyn Williams; Tegwyn Jones; Mrs Rona Aldrich; Mrs Carol M. Edwards; Councillor Ioan Thomas; Councillor Stuart Egan.

Staff: Messrs Elwyn Jones; Arwyn Roderick; Neville Evans; Richard Owen; Sion Ilar; D. Philip Davies; Miss Angharad Tomos; Mrs Moelwen Gwyndaf.

APOLOGIES: Messrs Alun P. Thomas; W. Gwyn Jones; R. Arwel Jones; Dafydd John Pritchard; Gwydion Hughes; Ioan Kidd; Ms Marian Delyth; Mrs Mererid Morgan; Councillors Chris Bithell; Graham Davies; Mrs Marian Beech Hughes.

1 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to those who were attending for the first time, namely Councillor Ioan Thomas (Gwynedd) and Councillor Stuart Egan (Vale of Glamorgan).
- 1.2 Condolences were conveyed to Councillor Alun Lenny who had lost his father, Dafydd John Pritchard who had lost his brother, and Glenys Jenkins, Office Manager at the Distribution Centre, who had lost her father.
- 1.3 Congratulations were extended to the following: Mr D. Geraint Lewis on the launch of the website *Gweiadur* in April; Mr Tegwyn Jones on the publication of his latest book, *Ambell Air ac Ati*, and also for his work as editor of the volume *Bro a Bywyd Hywel Teifi* to be published in July; Councillor Graham Davies, who recently took up his post as Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil, and the Chair, Professor M. Wynn Thomas, on the publication of his latest title, *R. S. Thomas – Serial Obsessive*.
- 1.4 Mwynwen Mai Jones (South-west Wales Representative) and Huw Jones were congratulated on the recent birth of their daughter.
- 1.5 Good wishes were conveyed to two members of staff at the Distribution Centre who had recently undergone surgery, or were awaiting treatment.
- 1.6 Sincere thanks were expressed to Mr Roger Davies for his gift of £500 in memory of his late wife, Mrs Catrin Puw Davies, to sponsor the World Book Day lecture which was delivered this year by Mr Trevor Fishlock.
- 1.7 Members were reminded of the need to declare an interest and to retire from the meeting as appropriate. Members were also reminded of the declaration of interest forms they were all required to complete.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 30 November 2012, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Review of English-language Magazines from Wales

The Chief Executive referred to paragraph 3.4 in the minutes of the previous meeting, and noted that the independent panel, chaired by Dr Tony Bianchi, had presented their report to the Council. The report, together with Wavehill's report on the market research conducted amongst readers, will be discussed in the meeting of the Publication Grants Panel (English-language) to be held next week.

Following the Panel's decision, Council officers will draw up a timetable for implementing the recommendations, and the reports will be available on the Council's website.

3.2 Commissioning English-language Books for Children

The Chief Executive noted that the Council had presented a paper – prepared by Dr Lucy Thomas, the Council's English-language Publications Grants Officer – to the Welsh Government on the opportunities for developing the field of English-language publishing in Wales. The Council was delighted to announce that the Heritage Minister at the time, Huw Lewis, had confirmed funding of £50,000 to commission two series of books for children.

Applications were invited, and interviews were held with several companies before the end of the financial year; the commission for factual books was awarded to Atebol, and the commission for fiction was awarded to Firefly, a new company. It was reported that the work is now underway with both publishers, and we look forward to seeing the publication of the new titles next year. A letter was sent by the Council to Huw Lewis, reporting on the latest developments and thanking him for his support.

3.3 Beaufort Research: Survey into Buying and Reading Welsh-language Books 2012

The Chief Executive presented a short report noting that Richard Owen, Head of the Publishing Grants Department, would give a presentation during the Council meeting in the afternoon. The Council welcomed the increase in the number of people reading Welsh-language books compared with the results of previous reviews held in 2003 and 2006, noting that this was proof of the Council's success in providing a range of appealing titles. It was noted that the report would be placed on the Council's website and a press statement released noting the main points of the review.

Geraint Lewis added that the Books Council's Design Panel had also noted the diversity in the provision of English- and Welsh-language books now being published with the design element being carefully developed in order to target various audiences.

4 WELSH GOVERNMENT

4.1 Remit Letter

It was noted that the Council had received the Culture Minister's Remit Letter for the financial year 2013/14.

4.2 Operational Plan 2013/14

The Chief Executive noted that the Council had prepared the annual Operational Plan in response to the Minister's letter, and copies had been distributed to members. He said that he would be presenting the Plan during the afternoon meeting.

4.3 Meeting with the Minister for Culture and Sport

It was reported that the Chair and the Chief Executive had recently met with John Griffiths, the Minister for Culture and Sport, and had been given an opportunity to present information about the Council and its role in developing the publishing industry in Wales in both languages. A further meeting will be arranged with the Minister in July.

It was also confirmed that the Culture Minister would visit the Council in October.

5 GRANTS AND FINANCIAL MATTERS

5.1 Grants 2013/14

The Director of Finance and Business presented a paper noting the grants received for 2013/14, and commented on the reduction in the grant for the Reading Promotion Schemes.

5.1 Financial Position 2014/15

The Director of Finance and Business referred to the further reduction in the Reading Promotions Schemes grant for the year, when responsibility for the Reading Communities scheme will be transferred to the Local Authorities. Council officials and representatives of the Local Authorities expressed their concern regarding the development.

6 REPORTS OF DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

6.1 Sales and Marketing/Distribution

Neville Evans, Distribution Centre Manager, reported that staffing changes in the Sales and Marketing Department had provided an opportunity to strengthen the connection between the Department and the Distribution Centre. He was looking forward to a new period of cooperation which will benefit the provision the Council is able to offer to publishers and booksellers.

He said that preparations for the Royal Welsh Show at Builth Wells and the National Eisteddfod at Denbigh were in hand; the work of collecting and packing books for the Show was almost complete, and similar work in preparation for the Eisteddfod was well underway.

He referred to the benchmarking statistics for the previous year, when 99.99% of the orders were packed and distributed on the day they were received. Debtors were confined to 1.2% over the year, compared with 1.27% the previous year.

He referred to the building work undertaken at the Centre over the past few months, including repairs to the roof.

He wished a speedy recovery to staff members currently on sick leave, and referred to three temporary members of staff currently working at the Centre. He welcomed Glenys Jenkins back to work following a period of ill-health.

Neville Evans thanked the staff of the Distribution Centre for their commitment and enthusiasm whilst undertaking their various tasks.

7 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and confirmed:

7.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 20 May 2013

7.2 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 19/20 November 2012

7.3 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 11/12 March 2013

7.4 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 5/6 February 2013

7.5 Children's Books and Reading Promotion Panel, 10 June 2013

8 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

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

Lowri Davies – Administrative Assistant, Department of Sales and Marketing

Rhidian Jones – Sales Representative in the South-west Wales area to cover maternity leave

9 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HALF YEARLY MEETING

The Director of Administration and Services noted that refreshments had been prepared for members and that the Half Yearly Meeting would follow at 2.00 pm.