

WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: County Hall, Llandrindod

DATE: 2 December 2005

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chairman); Messrs W. Gwyn Jones; D. Geraint Lewis; W. Gwyn Williams; Gareth Davies Jones; Rhys Bebb Jones; Richard Houdmont; Gareth William Jones; Ioan Kidd; P. Mark Williams; Lawrence Rawsthorne; Mrs Catrin Puw Davies; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Mrs Siân E. Jones; Councillor John Meirion Davies; Councillor Jonathan Austin; Councillor J. W. Turner; Councillor John M. Griffiths.

Staff: Miss Gwerfyl Pierce Jones; Messrs Elwyn Jones; Elgan Davies; Dewi Morris Jones; D. Philip Davies; Arwyn Roderick; Miss Menna Lloyd Williams.

APOLOGIES: Messrs Milwyn Jarman, QC; Dr Huw Meirion Edwards; Iolo M. Ll. Walters; John Valentine Williams; Alun P. Thomas; Dafydd Charles Jones; Councillor Lynda G. Williams; Councillor Arwel Gwynn Jones.

1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and extended a special welcome to those attending their first meeting: Messrs Lawrence Rawsthorne, Ioan Kidd, Mrs Siân Jones and Councillor Jonathan Austin (Cardiff).
- 1.2 The Chairman referred to the death of Mr Alun Creunant Davies, former Director of the Welsh Books Council, and the enormous void left behind after him. A few minutes' silence was observed in his memory.
- 1.3 The Chairman referred to members of staff who had recently been absent from work because of illness: Mr Dafydd Charles Jones, Distribution Centre Manager, who had returned to work, but not as yet full-time; Adele Evans, Representative, who had been absent as a result of an accident and Heather Bastow, Marketing Department Secretary, who had recently undergone major surgery at Morriston Hospital. Best wishes were sent to all three.
- 1.4 The Chairman referred to the latest issue of *Welsh Book Studies*, which had just been published. The magazine is published by the Aberystwyth Centre for the Book and Dr Rhidian Griffiths was thanked for his editorial work.
- 1.5 Two members were congratulated on their recently published titles, namely Mr D. Geraint Lewis and Mr Gareth William Jones.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 June 2005 were confirmed with the following amendment:

- 11.2 Libraries Representation
Gill John, rather than Ffion Lloyd, to represent Newport.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Membership of the Court of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth
Gwerfyl Pierce Jones's name was confirmed as the Books Council's representative.

3.2 Charity Commission
The Chairman reported that the Charity Commission's report had been distributed with the papers. He further noted that the report praised the procedures and administration of the Books Council, of which members of the Executive Committee, as Trustees, could be proud. It was noted that the officers would address the specific matters raised, including consulting the Honorary Counsel regarding the charity's legal status.

The officers were expected to report back to the Charity Commission in a year's time.

4 PROBABLE FINANCIAL SITUATION FOR 2005/06 AND ESTIMATES FOR 2006/07

The Treasurer presented a report on the 2005/06 financial situation and reported that the Council would be able to operate within the budget.

It was highly likely that the grant for 2006/07 from the Assembly Government would be frozen, thereby causing the Council great difficulty due to an increase of 5.7% in salary costs. Details of the likely grant from the Assembly Government were included in the papers which had been distributed before hand.

Reference was made to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Chief Officers' Panel in which concern was expressed regarding the situation. It was reported that the Chairman had also written to the Minister for Culture expressing his concern and that the situation had been discussed in a meeting between the civil servants and the Council's staff.

It was noted that it was the Chief Officers' responsibility to prepare a balanced budget and a paper was presented noting the possible savings in order to achieve this end.

It was further noted that the estimates also included the efficiency savings that the Council had been asked to implement.

Before inviting any comments from members, the Chairman emphasised that the members' main responsibility was to ensure that the Council's core activities would be maintained and he expressed the hope that this crisis would only be a short-term one. Mr Mark Williams, the Assembly Government's representative, was invited to speak.

Mr Williams noted that the present funding cycle had been very difficult for a number of reasons, but that the budget had by now been accepted. He added that the final budget would put further pressure on the culture portfolio which would, unfortunately, further affect the Council's budget.

A number of the Executive Committee members raised their deep concerns about the effect of the financial cutbacks on the Books Council's core activities and the effect on the development of the publishing industry in Wales.

Mr Mark Williams said that the discussions were ongoing and that he would inform the officers of any future developments.

The estimates were confirmed.

5 PURCHASING IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The Director referred to a minute in the previous meeting noting that the Council had received £80,000 from CyMAL in order to develop a special module of *gwales* for libraries. It was noted that this exciting development was proceeding well and that a full report would be presented by Phil Davies to the Council during the afternoon meeting.

6 REVIEW OF THE REPRESENTATION SERVICE

The Chairman noted that the Kewley/Richardson report on the Council's representation service had been distributed to members. The report was one of crucial importance to the book industry as a whole with implications for the Books Council and other sectors of the industry.

Because of the importance of the report, and the Chief Officers' belief that the Books Council itself should lead the process of change, it was considered essential to create a new post as a basis for the internal re-structuring. It was further noted that the post could be funded for one year from the reserve funds of the Distribution Centre.

Members welcomed the report and Richard Houdmont noted that in the near future there would be a need to discuss several practical points with the publishers.

The report and recommendations were confirmed, together with the intention of advertising the new post in the near future.

7 THE DISTRIBUTION CENTRE

Mr Arwyn Roderick, in the absence of the Manager, Mr Dafydd Charles Jones, presented a report on the work of the Distribution Centre.

Reference was made to the 12.28% increase in 2004/05 noting that 5% had been set as a target for 2005/06. The sales figures showed a current increase of 4.75%. It was further noted that November sales figures this year had showed an increase of 9.25% on the same month of the previous year which was in itself an increase of 36% on the previous year.

The Chairman thanked everyone who had contributed towards this success.

8 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and approved:

- 8.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 26 July 2005
- 8.2 Chief Officers' Panel, 16 November 2005

- 8.3 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 7/8 July 2005
- 8.4 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 8/9 September 2005
- 8.5 Children's Books Panel, 16 June 2005
- 8.6 Marketing Panel, 13 September 2005
- 8.7 Trade Representation Scheme: Steering Committee, 13 September 2005
- 8.8 Steering Committee: World Book Day, 14 June 2005

In relation to a matter arising from the minutes of 8.2 above, the Treasurer proposed that Llŷr James should be re-appointed to audit the accounts for 2005/06 and 2006/07.

9 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

The Chairman presented the list of members of the Council's committees and panels for the coming year. The list was commended to be presented to the Council in the afternoon meeting. It was noted that the officers would invite the Friends of the Books Council to nominate two representatives on the Executive Committee and Council.

The name of Mrs Catrin Pw Davies was proposed to serve on the Nominations Panel. The proposal was accepted.

10 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

The list of appointments made since the last meeting was presented and confirmed.

Emma Lloyd Davies – Administrative Officer
 Date appointed: 27 October 2005
 Starting date: 19 December 2005
 An initial two-year appointment.

Delyth Morgans – Administrative Officer
 Date appointed: 22 September 2005
 Starting date: 3 October 2005
 Short-term six-month contract.

Kasia Stefanowicz – Publishing Grants Officer (English-language)
 Date appointed: 10 November 2005
 Starting date: 1 December 2005
 Short-term six-month contract (maternity leave).

11 CONSIDERATION OF 2004/05 ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS

It was agreed that the reports be presented to the Council in the afternoon meeting.

12 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

Mr Elwyn Jones announced that lunch had been arranged for members at the invitation of Councillor Ann Holloway, Chairman of Powys County Council.