



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

VENUE: Arfon Chamber, Gwynedd County Council, Caernarfon

DATE: 27 November 2008

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chair); Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; W. Gwyn Jones; Gareth Davies Jones; Gwydion Hughes; Tegwyn Jones; David Barker; R. Arwel Jones; Alan Watkin; Dr Brynley F. Roberts; Councillor Paul Williams.

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

APOLOGIES: Messrs Steve Hardman; Huw Onllwyn Jones; Alun Treharne; Rhys Bebb Jones; Ioan Kidd; W. Gwyn Williams; Alun P. Thomas; Mrs Ann Keane; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Councillor Eurfryn G. Davies; Councillor B. Towyn Evans; Councillor David W. M. Rees; Councillor Ron Page; Ms Helgard Krause.

1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed the members to the meeting. He extended a particular welcome to Councillor Paul Williams (Torfaen) and Mr Alan Watkin, Chief Officer for Leisure, Libraries and Culture, Wrexham, both of whom were attending their first meeting of the Executive Committee.
- 1.2 A special welcome was extended to Mr Gwydion Hughes, Honorary Counsel to the Council, and he was thanked for his valuable advice at all times.
- 1.3 The Executive Committee extended its deepest sympathy to the family of Anwen Jones, Secretary in the Information Services Department, who had died following a brave battle against her illness.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 27 June 2008, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Welsh Assembly Government
It was noted that Dr Huw Onllwyn Jones had been appointed Head of Welsh Language and Media Policy Unit; some posts remained to be filled.
- 3.2 National Year of Reading
With the Year of Reading drawing to its close, Elwyn Jones reported that the Books Council had invited Professor Hywel Roberts to prepare a report on the Year's activities,

and that the recommendations of the report would be presented at an end-of-year conference to be held in February.

He further reported that an external review of the Year of Reading had been commissioned by the Assembly Government, and that this report would be available before the end of March.

Elwyn Jones added that a report on the activities would be presented during the Annual Meeting in the afternoon.

3.3 Support for the Welsh-language Press

The Director reported that an agreement had been signed between the Books Council and Golwg Newydd, and that the scheme was progressing according to the agreed timetable. A chief executive had been appointed, and several other posts had been advertised. Richard Owen was attending Board meetings of the new company on behalf of the Council. The intention was to launch the new service in the spring.

3.4 Gwynedd Museum and Gallery

Elwyn Jones referred to an item in the minutes of the previous meeting, namely a request made by the Curator of Gwynedd Museum and Gallery for the loan of Islwyn Ffowc Elis's chair, to be used in an exhibition as part of the celebrations of Liverpool as European Capital of Culture. It was reported that the exhibition had been a great success, and that the Curator was grateful for the Council's willing co-operation. The chair had now been safely returned.

4 GRANTS 2009/10

A paper had been tabled outlining the grants position for 2009/10. The Director reported that there had been an increase of 4.2% in core funding, which was sufficient to meet inflation costs and salary increases. However, the fact that the Publishing Grants had been frozen was disappointing.

5 SALES AND MARKETING / DISTRIBUTION

Dafydd Charles Jones, Manager of the Distribution Centre, reported on the Centre's activities and said that it was particularly busy at the moment, with a number of new Christmas titles arriving daily.

He referred to the huge increase of 25% in sales over the past two years, stressing that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to maintain this level of increase in the present economic climate.

With a view to promoting this year's Christmas titles, he stated that the Council had once again produced two colourful supplements, namely *Gwledd y Nadolig* and *Books from Wales*, and that both had been warmly received by booksellers and the public. Dafydd was in complete agreement with Mr Alan Watkin when he remarked that alternative means of promoting books, including electronic means, should be considered in order to bring books from Wales to the attention of readers.

The publishers were thanked for their work in providing a wide variety of books for the Christmas market.

6 INFORMATION SERVICES

Phil Davies referred to a number of recent developments in the Information Services Department.

He noted that changes had been made to the front page of gwales.com, creating space for news items from the publishers, and for cover images. Changes had also been made to security levels for customers choosing to purchase on-line.

He added that the changes made to the sales representatives' notebooks had facilitated their work by enabling them to place orders electronically – orders to the value of £774,616 had reached the Centre during the first seven months of the year. The Schools Officers were also able to send orders electronically to the Distribution Centre.

He further stated that there had been an increase in the orders received through gwales/libraries and gwales/shop during the year.

Phil Davies reported that Gwilym and Eleri Huws had succeeded Dr Tony Bianchi as editors of the Welsh Book Trade Info website, and that details of over 160 reading groups had recently been added.

He also referred to the intention to share information with the National Library. The arrangement would enable the Library to benefit from the information available on gwales, and the WBC to receive information about Dewey Codes and authors.

7 PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the following Panels were presented and approved:

- 7.1 Chief Officers' Panel, 13 October 2008
- 7.2 Nominations Panel, 17 November 2008
- 7.3 Information Systems Sub-Panel, 30 September 2008
- 7.4 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 12/13 June 2008
- 7.5 Publishing Grants Panel (Welsh-language), 18/19 November 2008

The minutes were considered in detail, and particular attention was drawn to the decisions taken in respect of Welsh-language magazines.

It was agreed that the task of awarding franchises to Welsh-language magazines had been particularly difficult this year, due to the strong competition and the fact that the budget had been frozen.

The minutes were approved.

- 7.6 Publishing Grants Panel (English-language), 7/8 July 2008
- 7.7 Children's Books Panel, 30 June 2008

8 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND THE PANELS

Elwyn Jones presented a list of members of the Council's committees and panels for the forthcoming year. He stated that local authorities were represented in rotation on the Executive Committee and thanked those members who were nearing the end of their tenure.

He added that the list of panel members had been updated following a meeting of the Nominations Panel.

The Chair recommended Dr Bryn Roberts's name to fill the vacancy on the Nominations Panel. The decision was approved.

Each list was approved for presentation to the Council during the afternoon meeting.

9 RECENT APPOINTMENTS

The appointments made since the previous meeting were as follows:

Delyth G. Morgans – Information Officer
Elin Prysor Williams – Representative for the north Wales area

Reference was also made to the recent retirement of Robert Dobson, following 35 years' service to the Council. The staff had presented him with a gift at a dinner to mark the occasion.

10 CONSIDERATION OF THE ANNUAL AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2007/08

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

11 PROBABLE FINANCIAL POSITION 2008/09 AND ESTIMATES 2009/10

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

12 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

It was announced that lunch was available for members at the invitation of the Chair of Gwynedd Council, and that the Annual Meeting would follow at 2.00 pm.