

Culture Committee CC-14-02(min)

MINUTES

Date: Thursday 3 July 2002

Time: 9.30am-12.15pm

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly

Attendance:

Rhodri Glyn Thomas (Plaid Cymru, Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, Chair)

Jenny Randerson (Liberal Democrat, Cardiff Central, Assembly Minister)

Owen John Thomas (Plaid Cymru, South Wales Central)

Lorraine Barrett (Labour, Cardiff South and Penarth)

Glyn Davies (Conservative, Mid and West Wales)

Delyth Evans (Labour, Mid & West Wales)

Alison Halford (Labour, Delyn)

Apologies: Rosemary Butler (Labour, Newport West), Dafydd Wigley (Plaid Cymru, Caernarfon)

Substitutions

Elin Jones (Plaid Cymru, Ceredigion)

Officials

Julia Annand (Committee Clerk)

Margaret Evans (Arts, Lottery and Sport Division)

Russell Thomas (Culture and Welsh Language Division)

Prys Davies (Culture and Welsh Language Division)

Declarations of interest:

- Rhodri Glyn Thomas - member of the shadow board for Cardiff's bid for European Capital of Culture 2008.

Item 1: Discussion on Budget Priorities– Paper: CC-12-02(p2)

The Chair said that the Committee needed to conclude its consideration of budget priorities in order for him to respond to the Minister by the 5 July deadline.

Responding to queries from Members, the Minister said:

- The only commitment to the Cardiff Capital of Culture project was match funding for the cost of the bid.
- Regional breakdowns of expenditure could be provided by the Arts and Sports Councils. The Minister disputed that there was a lack of arts funding outside Cardiff citing as examples resources for the Welsh language, Creative Future, which includes regional commitments, the Events Strategy and Resource.
- She would be working closely with the Minister for Economic Development on the events strategy because of the strong economic interest.
- The Institute of International Theatre would be located within the University of Glamorgan in Pontypridd.

As far as budget priorities were concerned, members supported those identified in paragraph 6.1 of the paper. They also wished to see priority given to:

- National Botanic Gardens, with particular support for its science base.
- A cultural subsidy to help reduce the cost of admission charges to schools visiting private enterprises.
- Increased opportunities in culture and support for communities, particularly in deprived areas, and for young people.
- Greater collaboration with Local Authorities.
- Support for the provision of community commemorative projects.

- Even regional distribution of resources throughout Wales.

Members also suggested that the Minister should further investigate the possibility of establishing a cultural subsidy with her fellow Ministers. It was also proposed that consideration should be given to centralising the activities of the five Lottery distributors into a single source.

Finally, Members wished to record their appreciation for the additional resources which the Welsh Assembly Government had already made available for the arts and culture in Wales.

Item 2: Discussion on Forward Look

In introducing this item, the Chair said that there were only five meetings scheduled next term; Members should therefore consider agenda items up to May 2003. He reminded Committee that it had already agreed to:

- A review of sport.
- A discussion with the National Museums & Galleries of Wales on their plans for the display of art.
- To the meeting with the Council of Museums which had been postponed to make way for discussion on the Communications Bill.
- To meet further with the Arts Council and in particular to consider the regional distribution of funds.

The Chair said that the Committee would also need to consider how it should co-ordinate the work of other Committees on progressing the recommendations in 'Our Language: Its Future.' There was some discussion about when this should next be considered by the Committee. It was suggested that the first meeting of the coming term would be too soon for the Minister to give a progress report on her response to the recommendations. The Committee felt however, that there was no reason why discussion with the Chairs of other Committees, which had been assigned lead on recommendations, should be delayed. The Culture Committee should be driving this cross-cutting issue forwards.

Other areas for consideration by the Committee were proposed:

- The establishment of the Fforwm Iaith and its relationship with the Committee.
- Consideration of arts and culture provision in the community, within schools and young people's clubs.
- Regional distribution of resources within Wales with particular reference to the additional £2 million earmarked for 2004/05.

- Support for the Millennium Stadium and consideration of its role in the promotion of Wales throughout the world.
- The Quinquennial review of the Sports Council for Wales.
- The Quinquennial review of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments.
- Scrutiny of ASPBs.
- The impact of the UK Government's review of the Lottery.
- Consideration of the contribution of arts and culture to economic and to community development in Wales. Discussion with the Economic Development Minister and Arts and Business were proposed.
- Further discussions with Artworks Wales about their aspirations for the future, whilst bearing in mind (Sue Essex's) interests.
- A discussion with the WDA and the Arts Council about Wales Arts International and the possibility of establishing an Industrial Arts Forum.

Finally, it was agreed to ask the Centre for Research into the English Literature and Language of Wales (CREW) for further details about their proposal that the Committee should consider the English language and culture of Wales.

Item 3: Presentation from the Welsh Books Council - Paper 14-02 (p1)

Presenters: Gwerfyl Pierce Jones, Director

Dr Lionel Madden, Chair

The Chair took the opportunity to record the Committee's appreciation of Eirian Dyer and the Translation Unit's contribution to the production of the Welsh language version of 'Our Language: It's Future'.

Introducing the Council's paper, its Chair said that there had been important developments during the year since it had last appeared before the Committee. Both he and the Director expressed warm words of appreciation for Delyth Evan's chairing of the Task and Finish Group on publishing, and for the Minister's decision to consolidate core funding for the Council direct from the National Assembly from April 2002.

The Director felt that there were a number of key recommendations from the Task and Finish Group report:

- Publishers to have greater freedom on the award of grants.
- Strengthening the infrastructure of the main publishing houses.
- The need for additional resources for writers.

- The need for additional resources for marketing.

The Director said that frequent marketing strategies were required for each category in the industry. She also said that the recommendations from the Arts Council report 'Funding Literature: A Structural Review', that responsibility for literature be transferred from itself to the Welsh Books Council and the Academy offered the opportunity to develop the publishing industry in its entirety and in a structured and strategic way. The Council's Executive Committee had agreed to the proposals.

The Director further commented that:

- The Council had commissioned key reports on the future of distribution centres and the potential of ICT in marketing and distribution.
- They were aware of the importance of overseas book sales and were developing a background paper on the topic. Suggestions had already been made regarding an overseas sales office.
- The Gwalia.com web site was a success with over 600 reviews being contributed on it over the past year. The Task and Finish Group commented that customers found it troublesome to order books through book shops rather than direct from the site. This raised objections from smaller bookshops who felt they could be undermined if sales switched to the net.
- The Books Council had been actively looking for new sales points. They have reached an agreement with Tesco, who now stock Welsh language books.
- The concentration on sales may have sidelined the long term work of promoting interest in reading. The National Reading Year in 1998-99 was a success. Since then, WOED have funded a National Books Day which involves a number of partners from the voluntary and private sector. The Council will look to see how this can be developed in future.

The following points were made in discussion:

Online marketing is very important. The rights.com report stresses the importance of partnerships with wholesalers in selling on the net. The information available has to be continually updated, especially on key sites such as Whittackers.

The size of the market is so small, less than 1100, for Welsh language books that often the authors make no profit at all. This often means that not enough books are produced to meet the market needs.

Publishers should have more independence in deciding what books are produced. The panel of readers to vet the books being funded by the Council will not continue.

The Arts Council for Wales sees the publishing industry as providing literature in Welsh, rather than as an industry. The publishing industry has to be looked at from the standpoint of economic development.

Many books in Welsh are translated into English. The Books Council has an official dedicated to the promotion of Anglo Welsh books.

The Task and Finish Group identified a problem in meeting the demand for Welsh language books. From now on there will be a report on the market each year. Currently there is a high demand for children's books and books for learners. The Council has plans to foster a longer term interest in reading, such as the Taro Deg campaign. The Council agrees that there is scope to collaborate with community newspapers.

Item 4: Task and Finish Group on Publishing

Members discussed the inter-action of Ministerial Task and Finish groups with Committees. Although the issue had been raised in the context of the Task and Finish group on publishing, where the final report had not been presented to the Committee, it was the general principle which Members wished to address, rather than that specific group.

Members felt that where a Task and Finish group was considering matters of importance to a Committee, then its report should be submitted to it. Members felt that their scrutiny role justified this. It was also felt that the process surrounding these groups should be more open and transparent.

The Minister commented that there are a number of ways to inform decision making, this one was more cost effective than hiring consultants. The Ministerial decision had been brought before the Committee on 17 April 2002 and the Committee had received copies of the report.

The Chair agreed to bring the matter to the attention of Business Committee and the Panel of Chairs.

Item 5: Minutes of the last meeting - Papers CC 12-02 (min) & CC 13-02 (min)

The minutes were ratified with one change:

In paper CC 13-02 (min), 'to act as a direct provider' to be replaced with resources will be channelled via others such as ASPBs, Local Authorities and directly.

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Committee Secretariat July 2002