

Board of Trustees

1st May 2020
Virtual Meeting
10.00 – 1.00

OPEN SESSION: 10.30 – 1.00

Present:

Meri Huws (Interim President and Chair)	Lee Yale-Helms (Treasurer)
Eleri Twynog Humphries	Liz Siberry
Gwilym Dyfri Jones	Lord Aberdare
Steve Williams	Carl Williams
Mike Cavanagh	Gwenllian Lansdown Davies
Quentin Howard	Anwen Jones
Elin Royles	

Executive Team:

Pedr ap Llwyd	Chief Executive and Librarian
David Michael	Director and Deputy Chief Executive and Librarian (Corporate Resources)
Owain Roberts	(Director and Deputy Chief Executive and Librarian (Collections and Public Programmes))

Staff:

Carol Edwards	Governance Manager and Clerk to the Board of Trustees (Minutes)
Annwen Isaac	Human Resources Manager

Observers:

Steffan Roberts	CyMAAL
Catrin Hughes	CyMAAL
Nia Dafydd	Partnership Council
Doug Jones	Partnership Council

1.1 President's Welcome and Opening Remarks

The President welcomed everyone to the first virtual meeting of the Library's Board of Trustees, and extended a special welcome to Gwenllian Lansdown Davies, Anwen Jones and Elin Royles to their first formal meeting. This was a historic meeting, not only because it was the first virtual meeting, but possibly the first virtual meeting to be held bilingually. The President thanked Osian Rhys and Eiri Siôn for facilitating the simultaneous translation service on behalf of the Library.

A special welcome was also extended to Steffan Roberts who had recently been appointed interim Deputy Director of Welsh Government's Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism, and to Catrin Hughes in her new role as the Department's Head of Sponsorship.

Eleri Twynog Humphries was congratulated on becoming a parent lately and best wishes were conveyed to the whole family.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas' term as President came to an end on 31st March, and Meri Huws thanked him for his contribution to the Library during his period as President. There will be an opportunity for us to celebrate Rhodri's contribution at a future event. Meri Huws stated that she has agreed, at Welsh Government's request, to act as President for a period of 12 months, and she thanked Welsh Government for this opportunity. The President stated that she would not be claiming an allowance for this period.

1.2 Apologies for Absence

Hugh Thomas had tendered his apologies.

1.3 Declaration of Interests

Meri Huws declared that she is a member of the Council of the University of Aberystwyth, a Non-executive Director of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, a member of the VTCT Board, and a Board member for Shelter Cymru.

Gwilym Dyfri Jones declared that he is a member of staff at Trinity Saint David University and Non-executive Director of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

Steve Williams declared that he is a member of staff at Swansea University, Chair of WHELP and Trustee on the of CILIP Board.

Mike Cavanagh declared that he is Head of Cultural, Leisure, Tourism and Registration Services with Pembrokeshire County Council, and is working in partnership with the Library on the Riverside Gallery project, Haverfordwest.

David Michael declared that he is an independent member of the Heritage Lottery Fund Audit Committee.

Pedr ap Llwyd declared that he is a Non-Executive Director of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol.

1.4 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21st February 2020 and discuss matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st February were approved as a correct record of the matters discussed.

Matters arising from the minutes

Pension Scheme

2.1.1. Transferring from a final salary scheme to a CARE scheme

David Michael stated that this matter has now been referred back to the Financial Planning Committee for further consideration.

2.1.2. To appoint Trustees to the Pension Scheme Board

Following a request to appoint Trustees to the Pension Scheme Board, the Board approved the appointment of Quentin Howard and Carl Williams.

3. The Chief Executive and Librarian's Report

Tailored Review

It was stated that the Library had not yet received the final draft of the Review and that the Chief Executive and Librarian would once again ask the Public Appointments Unit for a copy for distribution amongst Board members.

It was agreed that a special meeting of the Board should be held on 4th June to discuss the Review's contents and prepare the Board's response to the recommendations.

The Hay Festival

Unfortunately, this year's Hay Festival had to be cancelled, but it is hoped that we will have an event in 2021. As a gesture of good will towards the organisers and to show support, the Chief Executive and Librarian has offered organisers the use of the Library building should they wish to hold events in the Aberystwyth area during the year. It was agreed that we need to foster a relationship with the Festival.

The President asked Trustees to contact the Clerk to the Board should they have any ideas for partnerships with other organisations that could be advantageous to the Library.

[MIKE CAVANAGH LEFT THE MEETING AT 10.30, AND RETURNED AT 11.00]

Capital Funding

Although Welsh Government stated some months ago that there was a strong possibility that there would be some capital funding available for the cultural sector in 2020/2021 to fund specific projects, the situation could well have changed in light of Covid-19. The Library will be discussing this shortly with the Government, as we have prepared some attractive plans ready for funding, should the funding become available.

It was stated that the work on developing the Main Hall, funded from the Library's private funds, would go ahead once we can allow the builders to return to the Library.

1.5 Action points from the meeting held on 28th November

2.5 President's Remuneration

In line with the Board's decision, the President could from now on claim a day's allowance every week. However, the current President made a personal decision not to do so whilst acting as interim President.

Section 2 Matters for discussion and decision

2.1 Strategic Vision 2021 - 2026

The 2021 - 2026 Strategic Plan will come into effect on 1st April 2021. It was explained that this was a high-level Strategic Vision, presented in draft form for members based on discussions with the Board in December 2019, members' comments on a previous draft and discussions within the Executive Team.

A thorough discussion ensued on the Vision, and it was subsequently approved by members. The Chief Executive and Librarian will amend the draft according to the valuable suggestions and comments presented during the discussion.

The Chief Executive and Librarian explained that the next step would be to have the Vision professionally designed, released to the Unions and staff and then the public. There will be a period of public consultation commencing at the beginning of June and lasting six weeks. It is therefore hoped that the draft Strategic Plan, based on the Vision and feedback from the consultation process, will be presented to Board members in September. Following this, a detailed executive plan will be prepared.

It was stated that the Vision had been drafted relatively early on in the year, due to the substantial financial challenges the Library has had to face this year. We must identify savings in revenue expenditure. We need a clear vision and we need to create a relevant organisational structure to deliver the Strategy, and by doing so it is hoped that we will identify the necessary financial savings.

It was further stated that the results of the Tailored Review and its recommendations could influence the content of the new Strategic Plan to some extent when it is drafted for September's Board meeting.

2.2 The impact of Covid-19 on the Library's activities and events

Owain Roberts presented a paper outlining the impact of Covid-19 on the Library's activities and Trustees greatly welcomed this. It set out the activities that had been able to continue, those that could continue partially and those that had been suspended for now.

The present crisis offers opportunities as well as challenges e.g it gives curatorial staff more opportunities to develop content to promote and market the Library.

An increase of approximately 10%-15% was reported in traffic to the Library's websites since the beginning of April, compared to the same period last year, and was seen as a result of an increase in organic traffic (through search engines) and social media.

There have been discussions between the Museum, the Library and the unions regarding furloughing staff, and the Chief Executive and Librarian thanked David Michael and Annwen Isaac for their work in this respect. Those members of staff who are able to work from home have been given guidance and equipment to enable them to undertake their work, however we need to invest in more equipment to enable more staff to work from home.

It was stated that 4 members of staff had displayed Covid-19 symptoms, but that they had now all fully recovered.

It was confirmed that the Executive Team was meeting on a weekly basis to discuss the situation with the pandemic, and that managers were meeting with the Unions regularly.

The President stated that she was in regular contact with the Executive Team, on a weekly basis, and praised the excellent communication witnessed during this troubling period.

Trustees thanked the Chief Executive and Librarian for his weekly messages, that displayed sensitivity and concern towards staff; the role that the Library has played in supporting Hywel Dda Health Board locally was also praised.

It was requested that the Executive Team ensures that the document is kept up to date and is presented to the interim meeting on 4th June and the normal meeting on 24th July.

2.3 Building works – Covid-19 update

The work on the building came to a standstill on 26th March due to the closure of the building as a result of Covid-19. Discussions have commenced with RL Davies regarding recommencing the work on the building, and the Library is waiting for them to provide comprehensive risk assessments that will safeguard Library staff and the builders, and show how they can adhere to social distancing requirements. Having received assurance from RL Davies that it is practical to conform to Welsh Government guidelines and legal requirements, the Library could allow them to return to the Library to finish working on the building exterior.

The internal work was within a fortnight of completion when the building had to be closed, however this work could not be allowed to continue as it would pose a risk to the Library's security staff.

2.4 Trusted Digital Repository

Steve Williams declared an interest in the ensuing discussion on the Trusted Digital Repository.

It was stated that the Library, in partnership with Aberystwyth University and the Royal Commission, had presented further information to UKRI on the concept that is currently being developed by all three partners. It is not a bid, and therefore it was too early to discuss this issue in a lot of detail. If UKRI and its partners decide that funding could be provided to develop this concept, then the Library and its partners will have to compete for any funding that would be available, and this is when the Board will have to decide whether or not it would be appropriate to bid.

It was agreed that Quentin Howard would prepare an explanatory paper on the concept for the Board in due course.

2.5 Service Performance Indicators 2019 -2020

It was reported that not only has the Library succeeded in achieving the targets for the main achievement indicators, but it has also excelled in a number of them. The two failures were attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic as we were unable to hold events at the building.

2.6 Trustee Appointments

The Public Appointments Unit has advised the Library that it is freezing all public appointment campaigns until 31st December 2020. It has therefore requested that the Library considers extending the terms of those Trustees who are Library appointments, namely Hugh Thomas and Gwilym Dyfri Jones, whose terms will end before 31st March 2021. Welsh Government intends to do the same for Government appointments, Liz Siberry, Steve Williams, and Lord Aberdare. All Trustees affected had been consulted beforehand, and all were happy to continue until the end of March 2021. It was therefore agreed that the Trustees' terms would be extended. The Trustees involved were thanked for their willingness to continue as this will offer the Board stability in uncertain and challenging times.

Section 3 Chief Executive and Librarian's Report

The Chief Executive and Librarian presented his report, and Trustees had no questions or comments pertaining to the report.

The Chief Executive and Librarian took the opportunity to thank staff for their work during this difficult time, and for the constant communication that is happening with Welsh Government, The Board, and the President.

The Chief Executive and Librarian was asked to convey the Board's well wishes and gratitude to staff for their work.

Section 4 Conformance and Risk

4.1 Risk Register

David Michael highlighted the following risks;

R1 – Insufficient WG grant in relation to operational costs, which are mainly staff costs, results in budget cuts which affect existing services and development of new services.

R4 – Disruptive event prevents the Library from continuing with its work. A business continuity event, such as terrorism, zika virus, avian flu, coronavirus, fire, flood, equipment malfunction etc.

Trustees asked the Executive Team to include more information on Covid-19 as it has now been escalated to a pandemic.

Section 5 Financial Matters

5.1 Management Accounts until the end of March 2020

These were presented to the Financial Planning Committee on 21st April, and were approved for presentation to the Board.

In response to a question about the Library's investments, David Michael stated that the Library has an Investment Policy for the Library's private funds. Currently there is approximately £12m in reserves, however approximately £10m has been allocated to specific projects.

The statutory accounts are currently being prepared and Emyr Phillips and the staff of the Finance Department were thanked for working on their preparation.

ELERI TWYNOG HUMPHRIES LEFT THE MEETING AT 11.30

5.2 Income Generation Report

The Chief Executive and Librarian presented the report and drew Trustees' attention to the fact that they were currently working on a legacy campaign, and that it would have been completed by the next Board meeting in July.

It was requested that a list of the sources of funding open to the Library and those that the Library had applied to in the past, is provided. The Chief Executive and Librarian agreed to provide a background report outlining grants received in the past as well as current bids. The report will also include the projects funded with the Library's private funds. The Chief Executive and Librarian also agreed to provide a short presentation on income generation at the next Board meeting on 24th July.

It was agreed that a meeting of the Income Generation Committee should be held in order to discuss strategic issues pertaining to income generation.

Section 6 Committee Reports

6.1 Minutes of the Financial Planning Committee held on 21.04.20 - verbal report

The minutes were presented verbally by the Chair, Lee Yale-Helms, and the following issues were highlighted;

Pension Scheme - the Committee has requested that the Executive Team prepares an options paper for the next Committee meeting on 12th June, setting out all options available to the Library with regard to transferring from the current scheme to another pension scheme.

Challenging Times - the Committee considered the document and discussed the criteria for evaluating the options set out in the document; the Treasurer and President will work with the Executive Team to further develop the criteria.

The Library will procure the consultancy services of Nia Bennett from Effectus HR to assist the Chief Executive and Librarian with the process of organisational restructuring and offer support with human resources.

National Broadcast Archive

The President stated and applauded the Chief Executive and Librarian's decision to seek opportunities for undertaking the work at reduced costs and for reducing the Board's financial contribution to the project. In light of the Library's financial position, and especially in the context of Covid-19, where it is possible that we will see the Government reviewing our finance for this year, it is essential that we review our financial commitments and research opportunities for delivering a project such as this one in a cheaper, alternative way, without

having a detrimental impact on the project's key aims and objectives. Members agreed that it would be prudent to discuss options with the Lottery Fund.

Section 7 Any Other Business

7.1 Business Cycle 2020

The Business Cycle will be updated to reflect the changes imposed as a result of Covid-19 and circulated electronically to Trustees.

8. Any Other Business

The President thanked Osian and Eiri from Nico for providing the simultaneous translation service, that had been very successful.

An interim meeting will be held via Zoom in early June to discuss the Tailored Review, and then the next formal meeting on 24th July, again via Zoom.

**** END OF MEETING ****