



First Minister's Reading Challenge Advisory Group

Minutes

25 April 2016

10.00am – 1.00pm

Scottish Book Trust, Sandeman House, Trunk's Close, 55 High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1SR

Present:

Hugh Andrew – Birlinn Ltd

Madelaine Baker – Education Scotland (attending in place of Helen Fairlie)

Caitlyn Bannatyne – Graphic Novelist

Lindsey Barley – Community reading projects/Musselburgh Burgh Primary School

Kevin Brack – Brunstane Primary School

Derek Brown – Association of Directors of Education

Antonia Clark – Scottish Book Trust (note-taker)

Angie Crawford – Waterstones

John Doherty – Larbert High School

Laura Dougan - Scottish Book Trust

Moira Findlay – Scottish Book Trust (observer)

Lucy Jukes – Chair

Margaret Leitch – National Parent Forum of Scotland

Catriona MacKenzie - Scottish Government

James Robertson – Writer

Amina Shah - Scottish Book Trust

Pamela Tulloch – Scottish Library and Information Council

Apologies:

Lindsey Fraser – Fraser Ross Associates

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, gave an overview of the First Minister's Reading Challenge and invited group members to introduce themselves. She emphasised

that members of the Advisory Group had been invited to contribute due to their unique sets of skills and experience.

2. Group aims and responsibilities

The Group discussed the aims and responsibilities as outlined in Papers 1, 2 and 3. A brainstorm of key words to describe the aims of the Challenge included:

- Inclusion
- Pleasure
- Fun
- Access
- Personal
- Interactive
- Diversity
- Curiosity
- Fluid
- Flexible
- Encouraging
- Not patronising
- Workable
- Enthusiastic
- Measurable
- Practical
- Empowering
- Inspiring
- Innovative
- Successful
- Connected
- Sustainable/long-term
- Family
- Health

3. Achieving the aims of the Challenge

The Group agreed that collaboration and use of networks is key to the success of the Challenge.

4. Challenge prizes

The Group considered Paper 4 which outlined proposals for the prize elements of the Challenge. The proposals reflected the views of the First Minister when she launched the project in March and used the available flexibility to design an inclusive and accessible project.

Concerns were raised regarding the prizes for the number of books read by schools and individual pupils. Group members felt there was a real risk that this would not encourage participation and would not support equality.

The Group recommended that if possible these elements of the Challenge be removed or, should it be important to maintain them, then the primary focus of the Challenge should be on the elements which promote development of a reading culture and reading for pleasure as well as being sustainable and supporting efforts to close the attainment gap. The Group felt strongly that this focus will be critical to the success and impact of the Challenge.

The Group advised that, in order to keep administration and validation requirements for teachers manageable, taking part in the Challenge should be straightforward. They also advised that the Reading Passports and the website be simple and flexible.

The Group highlighted the opportunity for developing closer links between schools and public libraries, building on the Every Child a Library Member scheme, which is funded by Scottish Government's Public Library Improvement Fund across all 32 Local Authorities. They also underlined the importance of the Challenge being aligned with the National Improvement Framework and Curriculum for Excellence.

Some members queried the role of the Group itself in term of decision-making and independence. They were assured that the Group is expected to offer independent advice to Scottish Government on the best approaches for this Challenge. That advice will be considered by Ministers.

5. Participation

Group members shared their thoughts on how they could use their networks to advocate for, support, develop and evaluate the Challenge. The Chair concluded that the Group members and their associated networks will be a huge strength and asked all members to make full use of their contacts during the project.

6. Book list development

Proposals for the development of a book list to support the Challenge were discussed. The Group was reassured to hear that this will be a consultative process, seeking opinions from a range of stakeholders including young people, teachers, librarians and booksellers, and advised that community reading ambassadors be invited to contribute. They were also reassured to hear that the list will be presented as a range of suggestions to inspire children, parents, teachers and librarians and will not be mandatory in any way.

The list itself will include a broad range of titles, including fiction and non-fiction, and will be categorised by genre to help participants explore the titles and develop their own reading journeys. It will be made available on the Reading Challenge website, where additional recommendations will be added to expand the list. It will also be provided in print and made available in bookshops, libraries and other venues.

The Group advised that individuals and groups should also be encouraged to create and share their own lists.

It was also agreed that the availability of books was a key factor in terms of equality of participation and that Scottish Book Trust should work closely with libraries and Scottish Government should consider options for funding for books for those children in the most deprived communities.

7. Programme risks

The Group discussed potential programme risks. It was recognised that being aware of the local context is essential, as is strong communication and the sharing of best practice across the country. Participation, access to books and equality of opportunity were all identified as key risks that the Group should be aware of and monitor over the course of the meeting schedule.

8. AOB

A request has been made for the Group to include Gaelic representation. This will be considered by Scottish Government and Scottish Book Trust.

The next meeting will be on Monday 23rd May at 10 am at Scottish Book Trust's offices at High Street, Edinburgh.