

Newport Unlimited

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 14 April 2005

Present: Grant Watson (Chairman)
David Bowler, Nigel Campbell, Chris Freegard, Gerry Keighley, Graham Moore, Andrew Wilkinson and Ed Bampton as an Alternate Director for Karen Thomas

Apologies: Councillor Bob Bright, Councillor Ken Critchley, Professor James Lusty, Bob Macey, Nic Neal, Karen Thomas and Don Wilkes

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 16 March 2005 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

David Bowler's name was added to the list of attendees. Andrew Wilkinson's name was removed from the list of attendees and added to the list of those submitting apologies.

Gerry Keighley had declared an interest in the item relating to the University merger and the item relating to the Pirelli site.

2. Chief Executive's Report

Retail Scheme

The Chief Executive explained that following Board consideration of the retail scheme, the Chairman together with officers of Newport Unlimited would attend a briefing meeting with the City Council's Cabinet, following which the Cabinet, meeting separately, would give formal consideration to the submissions.

Staff

The budget had made provision for the appointment of an additional professional member of staff in order to assist with the implementation of development schemes. A potential secondee from the private sector had been identified and discussions were being concluded for commencement in May.

West Newport

Following editorial difficulties a final draft report for circulation was awaited for further consideration by the Steering Group. A report would be brought to the Board in May outlining the key recommendations and proposed actions. Board members considered that if there were any significant problems with this draft, the position of the consultants would need to be considered carefully in view of the unsatisfactory performance so far.

In parallel, work has been commissioned by the City Council looking at the implications for strategic access serving West Newport following the announcement of the M4 Relief Road. This work will specifically look at the traffic and economic regeneration benefits of a range of infrastructure options including a new motorway junction, construction of the Duffryn Link and improvements to junction 28 of the existing M4. The report is scheduled to be completed by early July.

Railway Station

It was reported that Network Rail was in discussions with the Assembly Government about the possibility of Network Rail leading the overall project. Network Rail is keen to look at options for a new station facility at the western end of the existing platforms along with refurbishment of existing buildings and structures. The Assembly Government has agreed to give Network Rail three months to look at these options in detail and to prepare a detailed implementation plan. If the proposals are not acceptable, the Assembly Government would proceed with discussions on the project as previously set out in the City Centre Masterplan.

Network Rail would like to arrange a presentation for NCC Members and the Board in June to outline their proposals.

Usk Footbridge

The footbridge scheme is currently proceeding according to programme. Planning consent has been granted. It is intended that a report outlining the detailed target cost and other contract matters will be presented to the Board in May along with a presentation for Board members outlining the options for the proposed lighting scheme.

Green Dragon

Following formal audit Newport Unlimited has been accredited to Level 2 of the National Assembly for Wales sponsored Green Dragon

Environmental Standard. This recognises commitment to environmental management and understanding of relevant environmental legal obligations.

The next stage is to seek accreditation to Level 3 of the Standard. This will demonstrate that the company understands our impact on the environment and takes action to improve those impacts. The further two levels to the Standard, however, may not be appropriate considering the size and nature of the organisation

Pirelli

Andrew Wilkinson and Gerry Keighley declared an interest in this item

Progress continues to be made on the appointment of a preferred contractor for the construction project to develop the industrial units. The joint venture between the WDA and Newport and Gwent Chamber of Commerce Enterprise and Industry is being progressed and the Objective 2 Application for European funding assistance is currently being appraised by the Regional Partnership Board. The project remains on schedule to start construction in September 2005.

The Environment Agency's view on the Flood Risk Assessment for the Pirelli site was still an issue but it was likely that an application for planning permission could be supported with one of the planning conditions being a commitment to undertake off site flood prevention works.

It was agreed that a report be presented to the Board updating members on flood prevention issues.

Cambrian Centre

Members were updated on progress on the Cambrian Centre. A formal report would be presented to the Board when the position is clearer.

The formal grant application is now being assessed by external advisors. The WDA had given approval in principle for the scheme to proceed. The developer is now actively exploring funding opportunities in the market.

As the recent budget removed stamp duty relief on commercial properties in disadvantaged areas, a request had been received from the developer for additional grant support to cover the consequential impact on their appraisal. This is now being evaluated by the advisors and a decision will need to be made whether to increase the grant

offer to reflect this change of circumstances. Board members felt, however, that the developer also had responsibilities for addressing such increases.

Key Targets

Progress on key targets was noted. An explanation was provided where there had been any change in circumstances.

3. Old Town Dock Phase 1

Nigel Campbell declared an interest in this item.

The Board had approved the marketing of the Phase 1 development opportunity in December 2004. Following consultation with Council Officers expressions of interest were sought. Eight expressions of interest were received.

The expressions of interest have been assessed on the basis of quality of submissions, track record and financial standing of the companies and the quality of the proposed technical team. A shortlist was recommended.

It was agreed

To endorse the following shortlist of six developers for Phase 1 Old Town Dock:

- Edwardware Homes/Atlantic Properties
- Westmark Developments
- Castlemore Properties
- Earthquake
- Crest Nicholson
- Westbury

4. Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Publication Scheme

The Board has confirmed that notwithstanding that the Company is not statutorily bound by the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 the Company should comply with the spirit of the Act. In this context it was appropriate to publicise the intention of the Company to publicly provide information and appropriate access to documents.

Members were presented with a final draft document, which showed how the Company would deal with publication and requests relating to:

- Board Member Details
- Financial Data
- Master plans
- Minutes/Papers of Board Meetings
- Press Releases
- Staff Policies
- Stakeholder Protocols
- Team Member Details

The Board agreed to endorse the final draft of the Publication Scheme as the Company's formal response to the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

5. URC Project Group Minutes

Members noted the minutes of the meeting of the Coordination Group.

6. City Centre Retail Scheme

The Board received a presentation by King Sturge, the City Council's appointed consultants. The presentation provided details and an analysis of the five shortlisted bids received from prospective developers of the City Centre retail regeneration scheme.

Board members were informed of the evaluation process used during the analysis of the bids. The project team had adopted a scoring matrix which was explained to members.

Members also considered how the submitted schemes fitted in with the Master planning process and the strategic objectives of the City Council and Newport Unlimited.

The various elements of each bid were considered very carefully. This included the planning, design, transport, financial, legal and sustainable development aspects which needed to be balanced against one another.

Board members were determined that the chosen scheme would provide a sustainable legacy for the city and a development to be proud of in the years to come. 'Deliverability' was felt to be a critical factor.

It was agreed

That the Board should recommend to the Council that two specific schemes should be eliminated from the selection process and further information be sought and further analysis made of the remaining three bids at a further special meeting of the Board.

7. Next meeting

13 May 2005 at 2:00 pm.