

## Newport Unlimited

### Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 10 November 2005

**Present:** Grant Watson (Chairman)  
David Bowler, Councillor Ken Critchley, Chris Freegard, Gerry Keighley,  
Bob Macey, Karen Thomas and Don Wilkes

**Apologies:** Councillor Bob Bright, Nigel Campbell, Professor James  
Lusty and Nic Neal

**Also in attendance:** Councillor Mrs Erryl Heath, John Burrows, Leigh Donovan,  
Richard Jefferies, Steven Slocombe, David Ward and Philip  
Jardine;

**Declarations of Interest:** Bob Macey advised the Board that he has taken up post as  
Chief Executive of WEFO

#### 1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2005 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

##### Flood Prevention

It was agreed that a note would be prepared for the Board on the current position relating to the discussions with the Environment Agency. It was hoped that through negotiation a Newport – wide opinion could be achieved, rather than relying on the Agency's response to each individual application.

##### University Merger

*(Gerry Keighley declared an interest in this item)*

The Board was informed that, because the Assembly Government had not agreed the proposals relating to increased student numbers, the University was now proposing a smaller first phase of the planned riverside development. The University was seeking contributions from the City Council and Newport Unlimited. These figures had been included in the future aspirations for Newport Unlimited.

The plan was to be on site in 2007 although it was recognised that the funding issue was the major concern. A new business plan would be prepared by the end of the year.

#### Footbridge Opening

Chris Freegard and John Burrows would work on arrangements for and securing an appropriate VIP for the opening ceremony.

#### Citywide Branding and Marketing

The Chairman considered that some thought should be given to the potential to enhance the entrance routes into the City at relatively low cost, through signage and other relatively inexpensive means. It was important to get across the fact that things were happening and there was potential to use the City's role in hosting the Ryder Cup.

## 2. **Chief Executive's Report**

#### Chief Executive's Post

it was reported that Chris Freegard and Karen Thomas were working on arrangements for filling the Chief Executive post and a Job Description had been prepared. The City Council would manage the appointment process. It was stressed that the approach being taken was still one of seeking a secondment.

Mention was made of the pivotal role of Graham Moore in the Ryder Cup Company and it was **AGREED** that it would be prudent for Newport Unlimited to retain Mr Moore on a part-time consultancy basis for a few days a month and for Mr Moore to remain on the Ryder Cup Company Board.

#### UBS

The Board was pleased to note that the Council had signed the Development Agreement with UBS for the demolition and redevelopment of the derelict car park on Kingsway, opposite the Leisure Centre, and the refurbishment of the Kingsway Retail Centre. The agreement for the Ramp site is still to be signed but the Council has secured the right to buy the site as part of the car park agreement which has been signed.

Work on demolishing the car park should start early in the New Year and will herald the start of the retail transformation of Newport which

will continue through to 2009. There are, however, one or two issues with service diversions and road stopping up orders which might delay a start to demolition work, and there are some difficulties to overcome on the car park design before planning consent can be granted.

#### Modus Planning Application

The Board was informed of the submission of the Outline Planning Application by Modus for the redevelopment of John Frost Square. An exhibition on the planning application was to take place in the City Centre. It was hoped to sign the Modus Development Agreement by 30 November 2005.

#### George Street

The Board was pleased to note that the 35,000 sq ft office development by Bailey on the George Street site on Lower Dock Street went on site in October. Board Members considered this represents another milestone in the regeneration plans for Newport.

#### Media and Promotion of Newport

Members were informed that the team would give active consideration to the promotion of the regeneration work and of Newport's changing image. The best time to start a more pro-active promotion programme was considered to be after March 2006 when the huge frame of the footbridge will have been lifted and residents and visitors will start to see big changes. Hopefully, this will coincide with, or be followed shortly by, the demolition of the Kingsway car park. At this point residents and the external property market will see real changes in Newport and the Board agreed this would be the time when there would be much closer interest in what is going on and the market will be more receptive to the claims that Newport is changing.

#### Audit of the Company

Board members were pleased to note that the audit report on the Company's corporate governance arrangements had been received in draft. The report's conclusion is that "Newport Unlimited has sound governance arrangements in place".

Several observations and recommendations have been made to further enhance these arrangements. An implementation action plan

would be put to the Board at its December meeting, along with further information on the audit findings.

### Key Tasks and Targets

The Key Targets Schedule and progress on projects was noted. An explanation was provided where there had been any change in circumstances.

Arising from the report, Board members stated that, in terms of the developments on the East Bank, they would prefer to see the existing view of the Art College Building maintained by way of open space, if this was achievable.

Also arising from the report, it was reported that whilst the UDP Inspector had not supported the hospital proposal, the WDA Board had made a resolution to make a CPO on the former Corus site.

### **3. Development Programme 2006 to 2009 and later years**

The Board was asked to consider a draft Development Programme for future years and in particular the years 2006/7 to 2008/9 which updated the current programme in the light of recent project performance and spending up to the end of October 2005. The report put forward recommendations on spending and it was suggested that the Founder Members should be asked to consider the proposals as part of their forward programmes.

It was considered that Founding Members would welcome the opportunity to discuss the report and details of proposed expenditure with representatives of Newport Unlimited.

It was also considered that any subsequent reports to the Founding Members would need a comprehensive commentary to support the case being put forward by Newport Unlimited. It was noted that the case for most of the projects is set out in the City Centre Masterplan, the Transport Strategy and the Business Plan.

#### **It was agreed**

To recommend the Draft Development Programme for 2006/07 to 2008/09 and later years for consideration by the Founder Members as part of their forward business planning and budgeting process for 2006/07 and beyond.

#### 4. **Unitary Development Plan**

The independent inspector appointed by the Welsh Assembly Government had now delivered his report. The City Council now had to decide whether or not to accept each of the Inspector's recommendations.

The Board generally welcomed the report as being in the main very supportive of the Growth Strategy, the Eastern Expansion Area, the Brownfield Strategy, the housing numbers and most of the housing sites proposed, and none of the greenfield sites proposed by objectors.

There were three main areas of concern: these were his recommendation not to allocate the Whiteheads/ Monmouthshire Bank Sidings site for hospital use; the deletion of the Duffryn Link of the Southern Distributor Road; and to deletion of the Percoed Reen housing site.

Members noted the report and considered it likely that the Council would accept the Inspector's recommendations in full with a view to finding other ways of addressing the difficulty caused by the recommendations with regard to Whiteheads, Duffryn Link and Percoed Reen.

#### 5. **Budget – Mid Year outturn and forecast**

Members noted details of expenditure on the revenue and capital programme budgets at the mid year point and the forecast of spending to the end of the current financial year.

Arising from the report, **it was agreed** that a report would be prepared for the Board setting out a marketing plan and considering the implications of enhanced marketing on the budget.

#### 6. **Forecast Revenue Budget Requirement for 2006-7**

Members noted that the Founder Member organisations are being requested to fund equal shares of Newport Unlimited's running costs for 2006-07 according to the figures provided in the report which would, in turn, replace Table 6a in the current Business Plan.

Any issues arising from the merger of the WDA with the Assembly Government would need to be considered by the Board at an early opportunity

**7. Next meeting**

The next meeting was to be 8 December 2005 at 9.30 am.