

Newport Unlimited

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 13 January 2006

Present: Grant Watson (Chairman)
Councillor Bob Bright, Nigel Campbell, Councillor Ken Critchley, Chris Freegard, Gerry Keighley, Professor James Lusty, Bob Macey, Don Wilkes

Apologies: David Bowler, Karen Thomas and Philip Jardine

Also in Attendance: *Observers:* Councillor Mrs E Heath, Jeff Perren

John Burrows, Siân Curley, Leigh Donovan, Gareth Prosser, Steven Slocombe, Paul Tarling and David Ward.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2005 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

University

Professor Lusty informed members that the University was currently undertaking 'Project 4000' which involved the provision of an extra 4000 square metres of teaching space; 800 square metres of which would be completed by September 2006. This additional space would be necessary to accommodate the increasing numbers of students choosing to study at UWN.

Members were informed that with regard to merger discussions with UWIC and the University of Glamorgan the Board of Governors had tentatively approved the next Strategic Plan which states that UWN wishes to remain independent for the next 5 years.

Professor Lusty confirmed that due to the increase in student numbers it would be necessary to commission the city centre campus by April or a decision would have to be made to further develop the current campus. UWN would put up £10 million from cash reserves for the first phase of the city centre campus and a request was made for matched funding from Newport Unlimited and the City Council.



IT WAS AGREED that further discussion would need to take place regarding the funding.

Housing Demand and Site Development

David Ward informed Members that they would be presented with a report on the strategy at the next meeting of the Board.

2. Chief Executive's Progress Report

Leader's Meeting with First Minister, Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM

Councillor Bob Bright was thanked for facilitating a meeting with the First Minister regarding Newport Unlimited's finances following the WDA merger with WAG. The First Minister had agreed to visit Newport in the next few weeks to receive a presentation and to further discuss the case for Newport Unlimited receiving two contributions from WAG after the merger.

Meeting with Economic Development and Transport Minister, Andrew Davies AM on West Newport

Members were informed that a successful meeting had taken place to discuss the potential of West Newport Business Parks and the future of the Hynix Building, although there was no financial commitment. Further work was needed on the options for future development.

MIPIM – Development Conference and Exhibition

Members were informed that the MIPIM conference and exhibition would be taking place in France in March 2006 and would be a useful opportunity for the promotion of development in Newport.

IT WAS AGREED that John Burrows and David Ward would attend the MIPIM Development Conference and Exhibition.

Key Tasks and Targets

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

Arising from the report:

Retail Centre - Modus

Members were informed that signing of the agreement had been deferred from 9 December 2005 to 9 February 2006.

Kingsway Refurbishment

Newport City Council had given planning permission this week to UBS for the retail works and new car park.

Railway Station

Members were informed that the telecommunications work had been completed. Work was due to commence at Alexandra Dock in February for the redirection of the Godfrey Road sidings and on Platform 4 in May.

Rodney Parade

IT WAS AGREED that Newport Unlimited would write to the WDA on behalf of the Board stating its concerns regarding the tender process on Rodney Parade.

Old Town Dock

Members were informed that the planning application for Phase 1 of Old Town Dock was being held up by discussions regarding issues such as adoption and maintenance of the park. David Ward commented that he hoped to set up a forum with the Leisure Department in order to resolve these matters at an early stage.

Pirelli Industrial Units

Newport City Council had this week granted planning permission for the industrial units on the former Pirelli site..

2. Position of Chief Executive

Chris Freegard explained the recruitment process to the Board and stated that copies of each application had been circulated to the Founder Members. Members received an analysis of how each of the candidates best met the job requirements.

IT WAS AGREED to inform candidates of whether they had been selected for the interview stage of the recruitment process and provide those who were unsuccessful with the opportunity to discuss their application.

(The Officers left the room during consideration of this matter)

4. Newport Joint Venture – Acquisitions and Disposals

Board Members were informed of a number of transactions in the pipeline involving the two joint ventures known as The Land South of George Street and The River Usk Riverfront.

The Board noted the progress made in relation to both joint ventures -and noted the transactions identified.

IT WAS AGREED that the Board would recommend that Newport City Council and WDA now proceed to complete the Joint Venture transactions in line with their respective standing orders and compliance procedures.

5. Corporate Governance

The Board was informed of the observations and recommendations highlighted in the Corporate Governance audit report. Overall the auditors commented that “Newport Unlimited has sound corporate governance arrangements in place”.

Members considered the action plan which had been produced to provide remedial action where appropriate.

Number of Directors

Chris Freegard stated that compliance regarding Council membership had been investigated at an early stage, however, the Chairman requested that it be confirmed by Newport City Council’s lawyers.

WAG Annual Remit Letter to WDA

With the merger of the WDA into WAG there would be no remit letter to the WDA in which Newport Unlimited’s plans could be identified as a priority. John Burrows stated that he would speak to Bob Macey’s successor to request a commitment that the URC’s development plan remains a priority in the post merger plans of WAG. Members recommended that the letter from the Finance Minister of 26 September 2002 should be included in the correspondence.

Board Member Induction Plan

John Burrows requested that Members retain the Audit Report as it would be a valuable document for training. The Induction Plan would be reviewed when there is a new Board Member.

IT WAS AGREED to note the findings of the auditor and to accept the management response and action plan

6. Legal Position of NU following WDA merger into WAG

Advice had been received from Morgan Cole Solicitors regarding the implications of the merger and was provided for consideration by Board members.

Members considered it vital to ensure that the number of Founder Members being reduced from three to two would not result in a reduction in the contributions.

IT WAS AGREED

- (i)** to note the Statutory Instrument approved by the National Assembly for Wales which abolishes the WDA and transfers its functions to the Welsh Assembly Government.
- (ii)** to note the advice received from Morgan Cole Solicitors on the implications of the merger for Newport Unlimited's Memorandum and Articles of Association.
- (iii)** To request that Morgan Cole Solicitors undertake the necessary work related to the merger.

7. Financial Implications for NU following WDA merger into WAG

John Burrows explained the draft development programme for the next seven years; the document would form the bid that would be submitted to WAG

Professor Lusty requested that the contribution from the University be included.

Board members noted the position in relation to future revenue funding and discussed funding implications for the future development programme for Newport.

IT WAS AGREED to redraft the document to include receipts and leverage in order to better demonstrate the achievements of Newport Unlimited.

8. Usk Footbridge

A discussion took place regarding the opening of the footbridge. Chris Freegard informed members that there would be a centenary celebration for Newport Transporter Bridge this year and suggested that there could be a joint event. Discussions had taken place with the Lord Lieutenant and he had been requested to investigate the possibility of a member of the royal family attending to open the bridge.

Members considered the involvement of the public important in naming the footbridge.

IT WAS AGREED that the South Wales Argus would ask the public for proposals for a name for the bridge in March and that the final decision would be made by Newport Unlimited stakeholders.

9. Schedule of Meetings

John Burrows would e-mail all Members with the schedule of meeting for 2006.

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 8 February 2006 at 9.30 am at Gold Tops.