

Newport Unlimited

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 14 June 2006

Present: Grant Watson (Chairman)
Piers Bisson, David Bowler, John Burrows, Chris Freegard,
Councillor Erryl Heath, Gerry Keighley, Professor James Lusty,
Karen Thomas, Don Wilkes and Chris Munday (Welsh Assembly
Government – as an observer);

Apologies: Councillor Bob Bright, Nigel Campbell, Grenville Jackson

Also in

Attendance: David Ward, Steven Slocombe, Paul Tarling, Leigh Donovan and
Richard Jefferies.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2006 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Business Plan

The Board was informed that the proposed exhibition to show the proposed developments on the east bank of the river was being planned.

Footbridge

The footbridge construction programme was progressing well. The Board was now concerned that officials should work on the organization of a single event in August or September to officially open the bridge and to investigate the possibility of inviting a celebrity to open the bridge.

2. Chief Executive's Progress Report

The Chief Executive updated the Board on the issues and meetings that had arisen since the last Board meeting.

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.

The forecast 'start on site' and completion dates for the principal projects were shown in the Key Tasks and Targets schedule.

Matters Arising

Friar's Walk Retail Centre

Board members were pleased to note that the planning application had not been called in and that planning permission had been granted.

UBS

The Board was informed that work was being done to resolve the ramp site agreement in June.

University

Profesor Lusty confirmed the University's commitment to the riverfront campus. He described the work being undertaken and stated that discussions were progressing on heads of terms with the Council which would hopefully be signed by the end of July.

As to student residencies, discussions were being held with two potential providers. A nomination agreement was being sought with an aim to provide the residencies within the city centre.

Rodney Parade

The Board was informed of progress on discussions with the prospective developers on Rodney Parade. Work was being done to ensure high quality design and on timing. An offer had been made to come to the Board to present proposals. A steering group had been established involving Newport Unlimited, the City Council, the Assembly Government and the Developers. A start on earthworks early in the New Year was critical.

Old Town Dock

It was agreed that initial discussions could be held with a potential developer of part of the Old Town Dock site to work alongside the residency scheme being discussed with the University.

It was also agreed that expressions of interest on the proposed hotel site could be invited.

3. Project Coordination Group

The most recent minutes of the Coordination Group were circulated for information.

4. Regional Health Plan for South East Wales.

The Board was informed by the Chief Executive that the Regional Health Plan for South East Wales had been published and contained an alarming proposal from the Gwent Healthcare Trust to down-grade the Royal Gwent Hospital in Newport to a local general hospital with the consequence of moving a very large number of 'beds' and jobs and investment - the regional specialist and critical care services - to a site on the rural edge of Cwmbran which could have a very serious impact on the regeneration programme and future economic strength and vitality of the City of Newport. Furthermore, the proposed location of the new facilities did not meet the sustainability requirements of the Wales Spatial Plan and compared with the current Newport location was a poor location on sustainability grounds irrespective of its other shortcomings. The proposal would be subject to two consultation exercises. The first, as part of the Regional Plan, required a response by 25 June 2006 and the second consultation, of greater significance, would be that to be carried out by the Gwent Healthcare Trust in September.

Members noted that the proposal currently from the Gwent Healthcare trust was to locate a new regional specialist and critical care unit for Gwent on a greenfield site east of Cwmbran rather than on to a major inner city brownfield site directly opposite the Royal Gwent Hospital which was big enough to take such a large scale development along with other mixed uses and housing development and was partly owned by the Welsh Assembly Government in order to ensure a comprehensive regeneration of the whole site which could include, among other uses, health uses as set out in the URC's original Masterplan.

The Board considered that the medical reasons for the restructure of hospital services were based on sound arguments. Whilst the proposal to locate a new local general hospital in Newport was welcomed, the arguments for locating the regional facility in Cwmbran, rather than in Newport were not supported and should be subject to further serious consideration based essentially on environmental and sustainability arguments.

The Trust's current proposal is for the new facility to be constructed on a greenfield site with access problems for the volume of traffic foreseen. Newport's proposed site would allow for the development of a brownfield site with excellent

communications and access by private or public transport or by emergency vehicles. Whilst drive times from some parts of Gwent might be marginally less to the proposed site, the time saving was not substantial enough to outweigh the wider disbenefits.

The development of a brownfield site in an inner city area with good communications aligned much more closely with Welsh Assembly Government policies and priorities. The Newport site would also provide easier access from the existing and the new M4. With public ownership at the site, the proposal to provide regional and local hospital services is achievable.

It was agreed

The Board should respond to this document by:

- Recognising that the medical reasons for the restructure of services were based on sound arguments and that the retention of regional services in Newport would not undermine the principles of the Gwent Healthcare Trust's proposed reorganization of hospital services.
- Welcoming the proposal to retain the local general hospital services in central Newport.
- Recognising the potentially serious and long term sustainability implications of any 'down-grading' of the role and size of the Royal Gwent Hospital in inner Newport and the relocation of its regional services to the rural edge of Cwmbran.
- Pressing the case for retaining and locating the regional and local hospital services at Newport based on the arguments set out above and, in particular, in relation to the environmental and sustainability issues.

5. Gateway Improvement Strategy

The Board considered the way forward and priorities in relation to a gateway improvement strategy.

It was agreed that:

- A working group be established , comprising representatives of the City Council, the Assembly Government and Newport Unlimited to bring forward a strategy for consideration by the Board

- The priority sites for initial consideration in the strategy should be: Rail and Bus accesses: Junction 24: Junction 28; and Heidenheim Way.

6. Marketing Activity

Members were brought up to date on current and planned marketing activity for Newport Unlimited.

It was agreed

To endorse the current marketing activities and to support the planned activity, set out in the report on the agenda subject to details and expenditure being agreed by the Board.

7. Revenue and Capital Budgets

The Board noted the expenditure on revenue and capital programme budgets at the end of the 2005 – 2006 operational year.

8. Annual General Meeting

The arrangements and agenda for the Annual General Meeting were agreed. The AGM will be held on 12 July 2006 at 9.30am.

9. Date for the Next Meeting

The next Board meeting would be held on 12 July 2006 at 9.30am at the conclusion of the AGM.