



Newport Unlimited

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

Present: Grant Watson (in the Chair), John Burrows, Nigel Campbell, Chris Freegard, Councillors Bob Bright and Erryl Heath, Gerry Keighley, Karen Thomas.

Apologies: Piers Bisson, David Bowler, Professor James Lusty, Don Wilkes and Nigel Campbell.

Also in

Attendance: David Ward, Andrew Dakin, Leigh Donovan, Kevin Dooley, Paul Tarling, Steven Slocombe and John Thomas.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 16 August 2006 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Footbridge Launch and Opening

The Chairman commented on the successful launch and opening of the new footbridge held on 12 September by Assembly Minister Andrew Davies and that linked into the event held by the City Council to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the Transporter Bridge.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to all concerned with the arrangements for the launch that had proceeded very well indeed.

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.

As to the key projects, the position was similar by enlarge to that reported to the August meeting.

Arising from the report:

Financial Targets 2006/07

Figures reflecting the half-year spend would be compiled and submitted to the next Board meeting.

City Centre Retail Scheme

Uskway/Kingsway Boulevarding

Works to the boulevard were progressing very well and on target. Objections from residents of Emlyn Street had subsided. Works were progressing to enable work to the car park to commence.

The need to provide improved signage within the regeneration area, to publicise the regeneration works was highlighted.

Queensway

Works to Queensway would not commence in advance of works to the railway station and Cambrian Road.

Kingsway Refurbishment and Car Park

The Board was pleased to note the exchange of contracts with UBS regarding Kingsway, on an unconditional basis, and regarding the Ramp site agreement.

Friars Walk

The CPO Inquiry was due to end today. Most objections had been withdrawn and it was hoped to allay those of Iceland shortly. It was therefore possible that the subsequent Highways Inquiry might not now be required as there were no remaining objectors to the proposed road closure.

Market Quarter

It was reported that the issue regarding the proposed demolition of the Old Green Slip Road would be discussed further at the next Officers Group. Resources was an issue and it was agreed that a solution was required to achieve the desired outcome. A meeting of Partners to decide how best to approach the matter was suggested.

Station District

Railway Station

Work to platform four were due to start in November 2006. A presentation by Railtrack to the Board in November/ December 2006 on the proposals for the station.

Cambrian Centre

A Planning application was anticipated this month, following the presentation made on the new designs. The scheme still contained a significant residential tower, although the shape had changed to make it more financially effective.

Issues remained regarding whether the scheme was financially viable, agreement with the Council regarding freeholder and appropriate servicing for the car park that obviated adverse affects on Queensway

Riverfront

University

Issues remained to be resolved with WAG regarding how Newport Unlimited could participate in this project. Doubts were expressed about dates for the scheme given the University planning process.

An all party discussion was required to make progress and Board will be updated on progress.

Land Acquisition at Uskway

Most of the land was in the Council's ownership and efforts were still being made to add the ATS site to complete the assembly.

Usk Footbridge

The Board were pleased to learn that WEFO had invited a retrospective application for the footbridge. This was being prepared for submission and it was possible that up to £1m could be received towards the cost of the bridge.

Art College

There had been limited feedback from the developer regarding weather and vandalproofing and the Council was contemplating legal action to ensure compliance.

The Board noted the opportunity to provide a Civic Square of significant quality and importance on the adjacent site.

George Street

Work to Usk House was complete and the first tenant secured.

The Red Cross building was one third complete and negotiations were ongoing with other developers.

Outline planning permission had been obtained for the magistrates building and further progress was awaited. Progress would be investigated with the Department for Constitutional Affairs.

WISP – Problems with legal issues had been resolved but Welsh Water's deadline to move the sewer pipe had slipped to at least to the end of November.

Old Town Dock

Following deferral of the scheme because of design concerns, the Council's Planning Committee were to visit a similar development in Cheltenham to hopefully allay concerns.

Jacks Pill

Negotiations were ongoing with Edward Ware Homes regarding possible development of the site.

Hospital Site

The Board remained concerned about the current proposal from the Gwent Healthcare trust to locate a new regional specialist and critical care unit for Gwent on a greenfield site east of Cwmbran. The suggested response was presented to the Board. The response supported the medical reasons for the restructure of services but continued to press the case for locating regional and local hospital services in Newport based in particular on healthcare, environmental and sustainability considerations. It was important to seek support from the public and politicians throughout the greater Gwent area, based on healthcare arguments.

The Board were made aware of correspondence between Gwent Healthcare Trust and Newport Unlimited regarding their proposals and the long term problem posed by the potential loss of thousands of jobs from the City Centre and the loss of a major 'once in a 100 year' economic and regeneration opportunity if the Royal Gwent Hospital loses its current regional role to Cwmbran.

The Gwent Healthcare Trust were proceeding with public consultation on sites for the regional hospital with data that was very misleading and slanted against Newport. It was agreed to forward the views expressed at the meeting to the appropriate Officers at the Assembly.

6. Project Coordination Group

Recent minutes were circulated for information.

7. Rodney Parade Development

The Board received a presentation from Wimpey's regarding their proposals for development of the Rodney Parade site and square fronting the Art College.

480 apartments were proposed in a high density development incorporating a riverside walkway and flood defences to be completed by September 2008. The plans included provision for three new public spaces and included a proportion of affordable housing.

The development had a high degree of sustainability and would also provide 7250 sq ft of commercial space, although more was desirable.

Other areas covered related to design, procurement approach, timelines, construction, marketing and sales strategy and measures of success.

John Burrows suggested that the developer might benefit from undertaking works to make up the land levels at an early stage to obviate Environment Agency concerns and difficulties that might be posed from subsequent land classifications for the site.

A meeting was planned between the Chief Executive of Newport Unlimited and The Council's Managing Director with Wimpey's to resolve the matter.

8. Old Town Dock Hotel Development Site

The Board considered a report on expressions of interest received for the development of the hotel site proposing a shortlist.

It was agreed:

To approve the following list of developers to be invited to formally submit for the development of the hotel site in Old Town Dock:

- David Mclean with Marriot Courtyard 3*+
- Alfred McAlpine with Ramada Encore 3*+
- Bropar Ltd with Days Inn 3*
- Rightacres Property Co Ltd with MacDonald Hotels 3*+
- Whitbread Group Plc with Premier Travel Inn and Brewers Fayre Restaurant 2*
- Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries with Travel Lodge and Service That Suits Me Restaurant. 2*
- Durlston Services Ltd, no named operator, targeting 3*+ operator

9. Pirelli Industrial Units

The Board considered a report on the current situation regarding the Pirelli scheme which was intended to be a joint venture between the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and Newport and Gwent Enterprise (NGE), supported by European funding.

Planning permission had been obtained and WEFO had ring-fenced their grant contribution of £1.311 m which cleared the way for the scheme to proceed.

As construction costs had risen over the summer period, the current construction contract figure might rise. Cost consultants had advised to allow for a 7.75% increase in costs, an increase of £300,000 that would take the construction contract to £ 4.17 m.

Should this be the case, NGE was prepared to increase their financial contribution to the scheme and WEFO had stated that they would consider a revised application based on the cost of the construction contract so there was no reason for the scheme not to go

ahead if all parties are in agreement. At this level of cost increase there was no implication for the URC Business Plan financial projection.

A revised construction cost would now be obtained by the WAG project manager for the project and on confirmation of this, agreement could be obtained from all parties on funding levels.

It was agreed:

1. To agree that WAG and NGE enter into a joint venture to procure the development.
2. To agree that WAG and NGE now finalise the joint venture agreement, which will allow the scheme to proceed.
3. To agree as a contingency, that should for any reason the scheme not proceed, WAG will then tender the scheme and procure the development with a new development partner.

(Councillor Mrs Heath and Gerry Keighley declared an interest and abstained from the vote.)

10. Newport Unlimited Board Membership

The Board received a report indicating that the term of appointment for four Board Members expires in December 2006.

Board Members that are not appointees of the Founder Member organisations are appointed for a fixed term.

The Company's Memorandum & Articles of Association allowed for a maximum of 15 Directors on the Board. Whilst one of these places had never been filled a further vacancy had arisen through the resignation of Andrew Wilkinson late last year. Andrew Wilkinson was appointed as representative of local businesses and it was anticipated that this position would be filled through a similar appointment.

The possibility of the Members standing for a second term was discussed.

It was agreed:

To write to the Board Members concerned to assess their position regarding the possibility of standing for a second term of office and a report be submitted.

11. PR, Media and Marketing Report

A report was considered updating the Board on PR marketing and media issues.

Reference was made to the need to ensure that advertising and branding and road signage for the Ryder Cup in 2010 clearly carried the location for the event as being in Newport.

It was agreed:

To note the report on PR, Media and Marketing issues; and to support, in principle, Newport Unlimited representation at two international events in France for the shopping centres conference, MAPIC, in November 2006 and the general property conference, MIPIM, in March 2007, up to a cost of £10,000, subject to a full report on the cost being incurred.

12. Date for the Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 12 October 2006 at 9:30 am.