

Newport Unlimited

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 22 February 2007.

Present: Grant Watson (in the Chair), Piers Bisson, John Burrows, David Bowler, Chris Freegard, Councillor Erryl Heath, Gerry Keighley, and Ed Bampton (for Karen Thomas).

Apologies: Councillor Bob Bright, Grenville Jackson and Karen Thomas.

Also in

Attendance: David Ward; Andrew Dakin, Leigh Donovan, Kevin Dooley, Phil Jardine, Steve Slocombe, Paul Tarling, and Richard Jefferies

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 24 January 2007 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Chief Executive's Progress Report

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

Progress on key projects and target dates for the regeneration programme were reported. Generally there was positive progress on the majority of projects. Of the 30 principal projects in the Key Targets schedule, the only ones on 'red' were: the Former Art College, Ebbw Valley railway link, West Newport, and the remaining two sections of the Flood Defence Strategy for the East Bank. It was noted that whilst the Hospital District project had been moved off 'red' because work was progressing on bringing forward the site, the serious threat to the future of regional hospital services staying in Newport still remained.

The main issues arising were:

Former Art College

It was reported that, following the decision made by Cabinet, the owners of the former Art College have started on site and it was understood that they are making arrangements to employ a scaffolding contractor. If progress is not made on weather proofing, the Council still has in place the resolution to serve Notice.

Work on a development feasibility study was being undertaken by officials of the City Council and Newport Unlimited intended to map out a potential future for the building.

Newport West

Details of the proposed manufacturing expansion were now known. Master Planning could now progress but would need to take account of the uncertainty about the Hynix site. The potential for central government offices being relocated to Newport West had been expressed in recent publications and this was being explored. It was confirmed that once a development brief had been agreed, the remaining land would be offered to the market.

Flood Defence Works

The Chief Executive brought the Board up to date on the progress in flood defence works and on plans to address any potential gaps. The work was crucial to the marketing of the Pirelli site.

The Board asked to be kept up to date on progress with early notice of any potential delays. The progress on flood defence work would be monitored through the key tasks information presented to the Board at each meeting.

Queensway

Officials of the City Council and Newport Unlimited were discussing the plans and timing of the boulevarding and progress would be reported back to the next meeting.

Modus – Friars Walk

Current predictions were for a start on site in October 2007. Discussions were progressing with potential tenants.

Modus – City Spires

This had potential to be on site in tandem with the Friars Walk scheme. Contingency arrangements for car parking needed to be in place.

IT WAS AGREED to invite the developers to make a presentation to the Board on current plans. The Board considers the quality of finishes is important, particularly for the tower development.

Crindau

A feasibility report on the marina project was expected by the end of March. Potential developers were still considering a residential scheme and the possibility of a scheme involving Sainsbury was now apparently more likely.

This was an important gateway project and design of any buildings would be important.

It was hoped the big lottery bid for canal development would be successful as this could potentially assist the basin proposal.

Old Town Dock

Student Accommodation

Opal had received planning consent for the student accommodation proposals.

Hotel development

The Board was updated on the potential hotel development and that following discussions with the proposed developers and operators, officials were recommending that the scheme now be awarded to the reserve developer.

IT WAS AGREED

That that the scheme proceeds with the reserve developer to provide a three – star operation with conference facilities.

East Newport SPG

The City Council's Cabinet had endorsed the SPG. It was now to be formally signed off by the Cabinet Member for Development and Employment.

David Ward, Director of Planning and Strategy – Leaving

The Chief Executive reported that David Ward, Director of Planning and Strategy since 2002, had been appointed as Head of Urban Development at Arup and would be leaving the Company in April 2007. David had made an enormous contribution to establishing the Company, the Masterplans for the City Centre, East Newport and West Newport and had led the implementation of so many of the key projects which are now on site or about to go on site, particularly the Newport City Footbridge, the Railway Station and the development of Old Town Dock, and would be a major loss to the Company. Board Members would have an opportunity to say farewell to David at the next Board meeting.

New Board Members

It was noted that advertisements had published in the Western Mail and South Wales Argus on 8 February 2007 for new Board Members for the Company to replace those Board Members whose term of office had come to an end. A separate meeting of the Founder Members had been organised for late March to consider and advise on new Board Members to be recommended to the Board.

3. Project Coordination Group

Minutes were circulated for information and noted.

4. Railway Station – Presentation by Network Rail

The Board received a presentation from Network Rail on proposals for the main railway station.

A start on site was planned for the end of 2007 with the procurement process being undertaken throughout the summer. Work is already on site for the extension of Platform 4.

The Board was presented with details of the site and was told that Network Rail was working hard to integrate the proposals for the railway station into the overall city centre regeneration plan. To this end the plans were taking account of the proposed City Spires development.

The key components of the scheme were described and members questioned the rationale for the number of car parking spaces required for the proposed developments. The proposals for the new station and bus interchange and lay – up areas were detailed to the Board, together with current site plans.

Current plans comprised incorporating important features, such as the canopies on the platforms and the flagstones, into the new design. The Board was also pleased to note the proposals to move the pedestrian bridge, and therefore the closure of the subway, was now to be earlier in the scheme and should be closed in 2008, rather than 2009.

Board members stressed the need for high quality finishes and it was suggested that Network Rail might wish to consider more offices, rather than residential, at the northern end. Members also discussed the need for capacity for growth within the design.

Members of the Board thanked the Network Rail representatives for the presentation and asked to be kept updated on progress.

6. Promoting and Marketing Newport.

The Board considered a report from the Chief Executive on the marketing of the City and ideas for the City Marketing Partnership to consider. The report considered the issues of: the City's name and how to distinguish it from other 'Newports'; a clear and recognizable image and icon for the City in its new footbridge and the other bridges across the Usk in Newport; its locational advantages; the quality of future information and promotional material building on the very successful 'flyaround'; and the timing of different facets of the City's promotional campaign. The report concentrated on general 'place marketing' and 'awareness raising' of the City of Newport rather than specific campaigns for particular sectors or sites.

Board members considered that further discussions needed to be held as to how to distinguish our city from other Newport's in the UK and beyond. Work would need to be done to produce a library of high quality and informative promotional material.

Board members discussed various ideas and suggestions that could fit into promotional activity. It was considered that there needed to be a 'joined up' effort between partners and that audiences were identified and targeted. There was concern about the continuing perception of the City and recognition that evidence based information was needed to understand issues.

The Chairman said that it was important now to move the issue of promotion of the City of Newport 'up the agenda' and for the Board to spend more time on this important aspect of the URC's work.

IT WAS AGREED

To develop further the ideas for the promotion of the City of Newport;

To commission work on a survey of perceptions of Newport to assist with the shaping of a Newport marketing image and promotion campaign and to provide a baseline for measuring change.

To report back on the outcomes of the work

7. Draft Marketing Strategy

The Board was presented with a draft marketing strategy. The draft strategy recognises key communication aims and objectives and the need to identify target audiences.

It was important to adopt proactive strategies and to communicate key messages to help promote and market the city. The suggested strategy sets out marketing activity that can be monitored and evaluated and suggests outputs and measures.

Board Members discussed the issue and implications of a 'Visitor Centre' and the need to provide more information for people about what was taking place in their City.

Members were made aware of the budget available and of its proposed use. A 'Future of Newport' exhibition was suggested as a joint venture.

It was agreed to review the budget and opportunities as the strategy develops.

IT WAS AGREED

To pursue with the City Council the use of the ground floor of the Library in John Frost Square for the display of good quality exhibition material on the changes and future plans for the City.

8. Marketing Activity

The Board received details of the recent, current and planned short term marketing activity for Newport Unlimited.

The Board noted the current and planned activities and asked for regular updates on the activity and outcomes.

9. 2007-2008 Business Plan

The Board examined information which was to form the basis of the Business Plan for consideration by Founder members.

An overview of all projects was provided, together with the source of funding for each project. Information was also provided on predicted private sector funding and overall figures for total spend anticipated on each project.

Information was also provided as to when projects are likely to be on site. The documentation also gave details of how founder members' resources have/are being utilised.

Details of receipts and assets within the URC portfolio from which receipts can be realised and recycled were provided. The Board was also provided with data on anticipated cash flow for receipts and their use on a project by project basis.

IT WAS AGREED

That the information distributed:

- forms a suitable basis on which the company should take the development programme forward;
- should form the nucleus of the draft 2007/08 Business Plan; and
- Once incorporated the draft 2007/08 Business Plan should be submitted to the Founder Member organisations for approval.

10. Date for the Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 22 March 2007 at 9.30am.