

Newport Unlimited

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 18 April 2007

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

Apologies: Councillor Bob Bright and Karen Thomas.

Also in

Attendance: Andrew Dakin, Leigh Donovan, Kevin Dooley, Paul Tarling, Phil Jardine, and Richard Jefferies

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 22 March 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 or events held since the last Board meeting.

Progress on key projects and target dates for the regeneration programme were reported.

The main issues arising were:

Government Department Relocations

The Chairman asked the executive to continue its efforts to secure any further potential relocation by Government Departments into Newport.

Retail Scheme

The lettings situation was discussed.

Former Art College

Councillor Mrs Heath informed the Board that she would be making a decision in the next week or so to enforce the resolution to carry out the essential works and seek to reclaim costs from the owners.

It was confirmed that a project team was being put together to consider a longer-term development brief for the long-term future for the building.

University City Centre Campus

Board discussed the issue of abnormal costs and of securing market value for the site.

Ebbw Valley Rail Link

IT WAS AGREED to receive a presentation to the Board on the Ebbw Valley Project. This would be organised via colleagues at the Assembly Government.

Pirelli Site

IT WAS AGREED that representatives of Newport Unlimited, Newport City Council and the Assembly Government would meet with representatives of the Transport Company to seek to make progress on outstanding issues.

Hospital District

Work on master planning was progressing. A planning application was expected from Network rail in respect of the Mon Bank site in the coming weeks. This could be critical in terms of securing the site for hospital or other regeneration use.

Residential Mix Planned for the City

IT WAS AGREED to request a report by the Chief Executive on the potential mix of residential properties being planned within the regeneration proposals.

3. Project Coordination Team

The minutes of the recent meeting of the Project Coordination Group were circulated and noted.

4. City Spires Project

Representatives of Modus made a presentation to the Board on the proposed City Spires Scheme.

The key elements within the scheme were explained, together with the potential mix of office, retail, car parking, hotels and residential facilities. The Board was also shown how the scheme linked into the railway station development proposals.

The use of materials for the various elements was described, along with the proposed public realm arrangements and sustainability measures.

Some 80,000 sq feet of retail and leisure had been out to the Market for about eight weeks and Modus was pleased with the level of interest expressed. There had been

strong interest from hoteliers and food and leisure operations. Discussions were being held with existing tenants about relocation or upsizing. There had been significant interest in the car park operation and an encouraging enquiry in relation to office accommodation.

The programme comprised enabling works commencing in October 2007 to be complete by January 2008 with completion dates for the offices, hotel and retail set at July 2009. The car park was to be complete by October 2009 and the residential by May 2010. Currently the project was going through the planning process and negotiations were being held for vacant possession/

Board members were also updated on marketing activity.

Board members welcomed the scheme and raised the following issues:

- A high quality hotel and conference facilities would be the best option for the location and Newport Unlimited would appreciate involvement at some stage
- Changes following a presentation to the Design Commission were discussed
- Durability of materials used would be key to aesthetics and quality of the tower feature
- A proposal from nightclub or wet trade operators would not be the Board's preferred way forward at any units
- It was important to aim at BREEAM excellent.

Members of the Board thanked Modus for their presentation and stated that the scheme would contribute significantly to the overall regeneration programme.

5. Marketing Activity Review

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 and requested a revised marketing strategy statement to the next Board.

6. Board Membership

Newport Unlimited's Board has 15 Members with a maximum of 7 from the public sector and 8 from the private sector and a private sector chairman.

Following resignations and with some vacancies already in place, there were vacancies for 5 members of the Board to be drawn from the private

The Board agreed to advertise vacancies on the Board, as requested by the Welsh Assembly Government and Newport City Council and at the same time to look for suitable expertise which would help the Board in its role to supplement the response to the advertisement. Advertisements appeared in the South Wales Argus and Western Mail on Thursday 8 February 2007.

The Sub Group set up by the Board for the purpose of nominating new Board Members met on 20 March 2007 to consider the response to the advertisement and further proposals for Board Membership. The Sub Group prioritised a list of up to 10 potential names and asked the Chief Executive to make contact with the first five on the list.

The Chief Executive had, to date, contacted 4 of the 5 recommended appointees and had heard back from 3 of them as was abroad. It had been explained to recommended appointees that whilst the Sub Group had asked the Chief Executive to contact them it would be for the Board to make the decision about new members. All were aware of the times and frequency of the meetings and the absence of remuneration, and affirmed or re-affirmed their willingness to serve.

IT WAS AGREED:

To offer appointment to the Board to the three individuals identified and recommended by the Board Appointments Sub Group.

7. Staffing Issues

All members of staff of Newport Unlimited, other than the Chief Executive, withdrew from the meeting at this point

Board members considered the reorganisation and staffing issues raised by the Chief Executive and agreed in principle to the post redesignation and additional payments proposed by the Chief Executive for appropriate posts, subject to the necessary approvals from the seconding bodies.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board is to be held on 24 May 2007.