

Newport Unlimited

Minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 24 May 2007

Present: Grant Watson (in the Chair), Councillor Bob Bright, John Burrows, Chris Freegard, Councillor Erryl Heath, Grenville Jackson, Mabs Noor, James Norvill, Dennis Roberts and Karen Thomas.

Apologies: David Bowler, Piers Bisson, Gerry Keighley and Simon Gibson

Also in

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

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Mabs Noor, James Norvill and Dennis Roberts to their first meeting of the Board.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 18 April 2007, and the Confidential Minutes of the Staffing Item, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following:

Friars Walk Retail Scheme

It was agreed that the draft minute be amended to record that the lettings situation had been discussed.

Staffing

It was agreed that the draft minute be amended to show that it had been recognised that there is a need to review the progress of the company and its future role and responsibilities after 5 years.

3. 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:

New members

IT WAS AGREED that a session would be held for new Board members to provide information and updates on the regeneration programme and the various projects.

Sustainability Issues

It was recognised that there was a significant growth in the need for consideration of sustainability issues, such as BREEAM and Eco-Efficient homes, within new development projects.

IT WAS AGREED: to ask the project leader on sustainability for the Assembly Government to make a presentation to the Board.

Friar's Walk

It was expected that an announcement would be made by the second anchor store in June.

Market Quarter / Old Green Slip Road

It was considered by the Leader of the Council that there was a need to closely monitor the impact of the experimental arrangements for closing the slip road before any long – term decision is taken. An alternative solution should also be considered and worked up.

Railway District

It was considered that discussions needed to continue with the developers about the provision of adequate parking in the scheme.

Former Art College

The Board was updated by the Cabinet Member for Development and Employment on the current position with the potential developers. Pressure would be kept on the developers but if there was no progress by autumn, the Repairs Notice would be implemented and the Council would do the work. Crindau

IT WAS AGREED that there would be a presentation to the Board on all of the elements within the project for the Crindau area.

Old Town Dock – Jack's Pill

Problems with the Pill had been identified and options such as strengthening works via rock armour or filling the pill need to be examined.

IT WAS AGREED that an appraisal of the options would be presented to the Board.

Hospital District

The Board considered that the sustainability argument for providing both a local hospital and a regional hospital on the same site in Newport was a strong one.

Karen Thomas considered that comments as to the ability to achieve BREEAM Excellence for potential hospital developments elsewhere, contained within the Chief Executive's report needed further consideration.

Flood Defence Strategy

IT WAS AGREED that the Founding Partners needed to further consider the issue of funding of flood defence works in the Town Bridge/ Railway Bridge area.

Regeneration Programme

The Board agreed with Grenville Jackson's suggestion that a paper was required on the impact and outcomes of the regeneration programme, including information on benefits such as the increase in job opportunities, increased shopping opportunities and the growth in residents. This would allow a focus on benefits and outcomes of the programme as a whole whilst at the same time driving forward progress on the individual schemes.

IT WAS AGREED that a paper be prepared on the impact and outcomes of the regeneration programme.

ONS

Dennis Roberts brought the Board up to date on the relocation programme for the ONS and stated that it was intended to transfer two high profile statistics sets to Newport in the current financial year. Further accounts would then follow.

Staff

The Leader of the Council reported that HR issues submitted by Newport Unlimited to the City Council were still under consideration.

Visit by the University of South California

The Leader of the Council was concerned and disappointed that the programme for the University of South California visit had been organised without reference to, or consultation with the City Council. He was also disappointed that the Chief Executive could give no reassurance that similar issues may not arise in future.

It was explained that the programme was not confirmed and could be amended. The Chairman stated that the Company regretted that the Council had not been consulted and asked for every effort to be made to achieve proper communication between the Company and the founding partners.

4. Project Coordination Group

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

5. Ebbw Valley Rail Link Presentation

Members welcomed Mr Richard Crook who made a presentation on the Ebbw Valley Rail Link Scheme.

The project was a partnership of local authorities working with the Assembly Government, SEWTA and Network Rail. Mr Crook explained the partnership arrangements and the role of SEWTA.

The Board was presented with a summary of the ongoing works and the background to the proposals.

Mr Crook explained that the project was planned to provide connectivity in the region and was driven by the Five Counties Study and the regeneration proposals for Ebbw Vale and Newport.

In 2002 an announcement was made that the railway would link Ebbw Vale, Newport and Cardiff. Shortly after, Network Rail announced that the Newport link would not be available until further works were carried out and the project would proceed on providing the link to Cardiff but the entire infrastructure for the Newport link so that it could be achieved when the other necessary works were complete.

In 2004, however, owing to increasing cost, the scope of the scheme was reduced and it no longer included the infrastructure work to Newport.

It was explained that the link to Newport was currently at priority 3 out of 6 within the SEWTA strategy document, with some large schemes in front of it in Priority 1 and 2.

Re- signaling and access to the main line appears to be the main issue with the Newport Link. The Board considered that if the Ebbw Valley line through Newport was a through train to other destinations, it could be seen as a more viable transport proposition. It was also considered the link was important to the City's role in regenerating the region

IT WAS AGREED that Newport Unlimited should continue to pursue the Ebbw Valley Rail Link to Newport with SEWTA, and with WAG, to try to move the link forward as it plays such an important role in the regeneration of the region and Newport's part in it.

6. 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.

IT WAS AGREED to receive a report showing baseline perceptions of Newport as this could be helpful in planning and targeting activity.

7. Marketing Strategy

The Board was presented with the first draft of a marketing strategy which focussed of the promotional activity on the following:

1. Promoting the City of Newport – Promoting Newport as a destination for investment, business, living
2. National Coverage – Targeting national (UK and Wales) business and investment contacts
3. 2010 Ryder Cup – Promoting Newport as the host City for the event
4. Regeneration – Promoting the activities to the local, regional and national general public
5. Inward Investment – Promoting the opportunities available in the City and sustainable development

Specific marketing opportunities were discussed and the plan was split into activities via the website and internationally; in Wales and the UK; in Newport and other promotional work

The Board considered that the strategy needed to focus more on activities to be targeted at those who would potentially invest in Newport. The strategy also needed to address how to communicate benefits to potential investors, residents, visitors and other target audiences.

The importance of the website was stressed.

The role of the Assembly Government in promoting Wales also needed to be recognised when devising a strategy for Newport.

IT WAS AGREED that a further draft should be presented to Board, drawing out strengths and benefits to potential investors, residents and visitors.

8. Residential Development

A significant part of the regeneration programme for Central and East Newport is driven by housing developments. In particular, the redevelopment of some of the most prominent City Centre sites is based on there being a market for City Centre apartments and furthermore the projected land sale receipts for the Company is based on some of these sites being developed for that purpose. The Board had discussed the likely strength of the apartment market in Newport and sought more information on the totality of the housing proposals for Newport.

The Board noted proposed housing developments in Newport grouped according to the City Centre Master plan sub areas and those outside the URC area.

IT WAS AGREED to note the housing completion estimates for Newport for 2004 to 2011 and discuss the implications for regeneration, and to commission a further report from specialist housing consultants on the strength of the market for the housing

proposals, and in particular the future apartments market, in Newport.

9. End of Year Spend

Members were advised of spend from the Development Programme budget and Revenue Programme budget for the 2006/07 operational year.

IT WAS AGREED to note the contents of the report, together with the financial table.

10. Newport City Footbridge

As a matter of Any Other Business, Karen Thomas was pleased to report that the Newport City Footbridge had recently received three separate awards from the Welsh Property Awards, the Institute of Civil Engineers and RICS Wales.

11. Next Meeting

Thursday, 21 June 2007.