

Newport Unlimited

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 18 July 2007

Present: Mr Grant Watson (in the Chair): Mr P Bisson, Mr D Bowler, Mr J Burrows, Mr S Gibson, Mr G Keighley, Mr M Noor, Mr J Norvill, Mr D Roberts, Councillor K Critchley (for Councillor R C Bright), Mr G Price (for Mr C Freegard), and Mr E Bampton (for Mrs K Thomas).

Apologies: Councillor RC Bright, Mr CJ Freegard, Councillor Mrs E Heath, Mr G Jackson, Mrs K Thomas

Also in

Attendance: Mr P Jardine, Mr A Dakin, Mr L Donovan and Mr R Jefferies

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Mr S Gibson who was attending his first meeting since his appointment to the Board. The Chairman also welcomed Councillor K Critchley who was attending as substitute for Councillor R C Bright, Mr G Price, who was attending as substitute for Mr C Freegard and Mr E Bampton who was attending as substitute for Mrs K Thomas.

2. Minutes

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

3. Chief Executives Report

The Chief Executive updated the Board on the issues that had arisen and the meetings and events held since the last Board meeting. Progress on key projects and target dates for the regeneration programme were reported. Board members were also presented with information on the timetable for projects on site, shown by district and by sector.

It was very pleasing that most projects were progressing to programme with only two showing as 'red' in the adopted traffic-light system.

The main issues arising were:

ONS and Bank of England

Dennis Roberts updated the Board on the current position and the Board was pleased to note that he did not believe that the ongoing relocation was in jeopardy.

University Campus

The Board was pleased to note progress on this project. The Board endorsed the action of the Chief Executive in guaranteeing to share the risk of abortive design costs for the process to stage D. An agreed amount would remain in the budget in case the project should not proceed.

Newport Rugby Stadium

The Board was pleased to note that the Leader of the Council had been able to convene a meeting with owners of the rugby ground and the WRU to discuss a way forward on the possible redevelopment of Rodney Parade. Current proposals included hotel and student housing development but no major retail offer. The Board supported further discussions on this proposal.

Usk Way / Kingsway/ Queensway Highway works

The Board was disappointed that the Usk Way / Kingsway project was likely to suffer a delay whilst issues relating to a water connection outside the Riverfront were resolved. This also impacted on the timing of work which needs to be carried out by B.T. The completion date was now likely to slip to October / November 2007.

Retail Core Developments

The Board was concerned that the retail core developments in the city were completed in time for the Ryder Cup. The timescales were recognised as critical to the city and the executive was asked to work closely with the developers to ensure that the City Centre presented a positive image at such an important time for the city as a whole.

Ebbw Valley Rail Link

Members of the Board remain concerned about the prospects for the Newport link. Recognising the comments by Mr P Bisson that the case for prioritization was essentially an issue for the Council to raise with SEWTA, Board members considered that it was unlikely that SEWTA would change its priorities on transport grounds alone. It was considered important to continue to lobby for the Newport link as a regeneration issue.

Former Art College

The Board was concerned that, although there was evidence of scaffolding on site, there appeared to be little progress. It was important to keep pressing for information and for timings when the various stages of the projects would now proceed.

Jack's Pill

The Board was concerned about the potential cost of necessary works to the Pill and the impact on developments in the area.

Hospital District

Work on the master plan for the district was progressing but the Board remains concerned about the proposals to locate the Regional facility in Cwmbran.

It was considered that there was a continuing role for the City Council and local AMs to push the case for the location of the Specialist and Critical Care Centre in Newport as well as the local hospital.

The URC would continue to press the regeneration case because the role the URC has been given is job creation and this proposal by the Gwent Healthcare Trust will remove 2,500 jobs from the city. There are also strong environmental arguments.

Mr Kevin Dooley

The Board was informed that Mr Kevin Dooley, Marketing Executive, was to move to a new job. The Chairman and Board members thanked Kevin for the excellent work he had carried out on behalf of Newport Unlimited and wished him well in his new post.

The Chief Executive was asked to report to the next meeting of the Board on arrangements to fill the post. The Board also asked the Assembly Government and Newport City Council to give priority to filling the post.

4. URC Project Team

Minutes of the meetings of the Project Team held on 11 June and 9 July 2007 were circulated and noted.

5. Sustainability Presentation

The Chairman welcomed Mr Jeff Perren and Mr Ian Roberts from the Assembly Government, Mr Perren and Mr Roberts made a presentation on sustainable development – translating policy into delivery.

The Board was informed that following a Ministerial announcement in February, all building projects which involved the Assembly Government in any way were to be BREEAM Excellent or Ecohomes Excellent.

The Board was informed of the process for achieving BREEAM Excellent, including the role of independent assessors and the credit based system.

The Board was informed that anything starting on site after September 2007 would need to be BREEAM Excellent. The impact on existing projects would depend on the stage of development they were at. New builds, extensions, refurbishments, infrastructure, master plans and land disposals were all likely to be caught by the requirements.

For the future, the Assembly Government has aspirations to achieve carbon zero by 2011, some five years earlier than the rest of the UK.

The major issue for both BREEAM and carbon zero would be costs. It was explained that construction costs alone were increased by about 7% to meet BREEAM Excellent and a recent project to be certified as carbon zero had additional project costs of 40%.

The Board was concerned of the major impacts for Newport Unlimited and the City regeneration programme:

- This would be critical to the whole programme with many developments caught by these requirements with a consequent impact on costs.
- There was likely to be a significant impact on land values, particularly when these requirements are coupled with the move to create more affordable housing.
- There was likely to be a significant impact on the receipt-based programme.
- There was a significant impact on cost in terms of the aspiration for carbon zero developments.

IT WAS AGREED that a report would be brought back to the Board on the impact on the regeneration programme as it stands.

6. City Centre Developments

A presentation on City Centre development was postponed.

7. 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.

8. Business Plan – Revisions to the Spend Profile

The Board was reminded that the current spend profile for the Development Programme was approved as part of the Draft 2007/08 Business Plan. In the draft Business Plan funding had been set against the redevelopment of the Cambrian Centre. The Board was informed that it is highly unlikely that there will be any significant draw-down within the current financial year.

Ongoing commitments had been reviewed and the Board was presented with proposals to reallocate the funding set-aside for the Cambrian project this year to bring forward and / or support other projects within the Business Plan.

IT WAS AGREED to approve the revised spend profile for the development as presented to the Board.

9. Next Meeting

The next Board meeting was to be held on 22 August 2007 at 9.30 am.