



Newport Unlimited

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 20 September 2007

Present: Mr G Watson (in the Chair); Mr P Bisson, Mr J Burrows, Mr S Gibson, Mr G Jackson, Mr M Noor, Mr J Norvill, Mr C Munday (for Mrs K Thomas), and Mr S Wild (for Mr C Freegard) .

Apologies: Mr D Bowler, Councillor R Bright, Councillor Mrs E Heath, Mr C Freegard, Mr G. Keighley, Mr D Roberts and Ms K Thomas.

Also in

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

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2007 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

2. Chief Executive's Progress Report and Key Targets

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. 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 of the 35 main projects scheduled for a start on site before 2010, only 2 projects were on 'red' (not progressing).

The main issues arising were:

University City Centre Campus

Board members were pleased to hear progress was being made and were shown some images of initial models for the scheme. Current information was that the aim was for the scheme to be completed in the summer of 2010 for occupation by students in September 2010.

IT WAS AGREED to ask for a presentation on the scheme to be made to the next Board meeting.

Hospital Site

Board members continued to be extremely concerned about the proposals to locate the Specialist and Critical Care Centre and regional health facilities outside of Newport.

Figures were presented to the Board which had been prepared by the Gwent Healthcare Trust which showed that 5,638 hospital staff were employed in Newport, of which 3077 lived in Newport. The Trust was planning to reduce the jobs based at Newport to 671 – a reduction of 5,000 jobs in Central Newport. The figures presented to the Board showed the massive impact that this job reduction would have on the regeneration programme in Central Newport. The Chief Executive informed the Board that the employment creation potential of all the major regeneration projects in Central Newport put together was less than the total number of jobs that would be lost by this proposed move of hospital services from Newport if the Trust's proposals were accepted by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The figures also strengthen the argument for Newport as a location for the regional facility based on sustainability, given that there would now be a significant number of people who currently live and work in Newport who would have to travel to work outside of the City.

Board Members considered that there were still strong arguments for Newport on transport, sustainability and health grounds, together with the employment issues. There was a lengthy debate on how the case for Newport may be best taken forward.

IT WAS AGREED that the Chair of the Board, the Chief Executive of Newport Unlimited, the Leader and the Managing Director of the City Council should discuss the factual arguments for Newport and to determine arguments to be put forward. It was suggested that meetings should be sought at Ministerial level at the Assembly Government to ensure that the case for Newport is heard.

Rugby Stadium Proposal

The announcement had received strong support and good press coverage. Board members asked for further information on the project, including who would be funding the project, who would be the developers and who would be the owners.

Staffing Issues

The Chief Executive updated the Board of the current staffing difficulties arising from the departure of the Marketing Executive and the departure of the Office Manager/PA, and the consequential impact on the Company's work.

It appeared likely that one other person would soon be available to provide administrative support and that a temporary appointment to the post of marketing executive would be made in a month.

Arising from the discussions, members considered the structure of the URC and its position as a virtual company. It was considered that the structure of the URC should be considered during any review of the URC and also discussed at ministerial level.

Five Year Review

This matter was addressed in a report later in the meeting – see minute 5 below.

3. URC Project Coordination Group

The minutes of the most recent meetings of the URC project Coordination Group were circulated to members.

4. Promotion and Marketing

The Chief Executive reported on recent, current and planned short term marketing activity for Newport Unlimited. The Board noted the current and planned activities.

5. 5-Year Review of the URC

The Board considered arrangements for a 5 year review of the work of the Company. It is normal practice for the Assembly to have 'Quinquennial Reviews' of initiatives, and the Council requested such a review at a previous Board meeting and have indicated that the report should be considered by their scrutiny committee process.

During discussions (as mentioned in minute 2 above) members considered the structure of the URC and its position as a virtual company. It was considered that the structure of the URC should be considered during any review of the URC and also discussed at Ministerial level.

IT WAS AGREED

1. To suggest to the stakeholders that they commission a 5 year review of the work of Newport Unlimited Urban Regeneration Company.
2. To suggest to the stakeholders that the review should commence in October 2007 and conclude by March 2008 or sooner.
3. To suggest that a Sub Group is established to organise the review and to present the arrangements for the conduct of the review to the next Board.