



Newport Unlimited Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 24 October 2007

Present: Mr G Watson (in the Chair): Mr P Bisson, Mr D Bowler, Mr J Burrows, Mr C Freegard, Mr G. Keighley, Mr M Noor, Mr J Norvill, and Mr E Bampton (representing Mrs K Thomas).

Apologies: Councillor R Bright, Mr S Gibson, Councillor E Heath, Mr G Jackson, Mr D Roberts and Ms K Thomas.

Also in

Attendance: Mr A Dakin, Mr L Donovan, Ms K Evans, Mr P Jardine, Mr P Tarling and Mr R Jefferies

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Ms Kirsten Evans who had recently been appointed to the staff of Newport Unlimited as temporary Marketing Executive and who was attending her first meeting of the Board.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman declared an interest in the items relating to Crindau, Mr Keighley declared an interest in items relating to the University and Newport Gwent enterprise, Mr Noor declared an interest in any discussions relating to land in the area of the Rising Sun public house and Mr Norvill declared an interest in land subject to CPO.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

4. 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. Board members were also presented with information on the timetable for projects on site, shown by district and by sector. Currently two projects were on 'red' (not progressing). They being the Ebbw Valley Railway link and the location of the Regional and Specialist Hospital.

Assessment of Achievements

The Chairman asked for a presentation on the successes of the URC in terms of homes built, jobs created, inward investment etc to provide an overall assessment of achievements. The Board was told that work was being done on an evaluation report which would be presented in the near future.

University Campus

Good progress was reported. A positive report would be presented to the next meeting of the University Board. Enabling works were scheduled for January 2008 with a full start on site planned for summer 2008. It was planned that the new facilities would be available for students in September 2010.

Friars Walk

Some preliminary work would be undertaken in December with a start on site planned for January 2008. The project was on target to go unconditional by the end of the month.

Hospital Development

Board members continue to be very concerned about the proposals to locate the critical care and regional facility outside of Newport. Recent high profile press articles had drawn out the issues of job losses and relocation of local facilities. The Leader of the Council had secured a meeting with the Health Minister. She had instructed an independent review of the travel data used by the Trust (RKW) and Newport (Arup), and had requested further information from the Trust on employment implications of the proposals and sustainability implications. The MD stated he had written to ascertain what was being done to progress the review. The MD was of the view that the Health Minister would make an announcement in a matter of weeks

The Chairman stated that arrangements had not yet been made in relation to a proposed meeting with relevant ministers at the Assembly to discuss matters relating to the hospital development. The loss of jobs was in direct conflict of the job creation role of the URC.

It was important that the ongoing debate was balanced, drawing out on transport, sustainability and health grounds, together with the employment issues

IT WAS AGREED that the best way forward was for official approaches to be made by the City Council and that any approach by Newport Unlimited should complement the work being carried out by the City Council. It was agreed that any formal approach by the Board would be discussed between the Managing Director of the City Council and the Chief Executive of the URC. It was agreed also that Piers Bisson, would advise on liaison with the Economy and Transport Ministerial team.

Ebbw Valley rail link

It was considered that this had a direct link with the hospital development. Whilst there would be no rail link whatsoever at the current preferred site, a coordinated approach to providing the Regional hospital facilities in Newport, together with a rail link from the

Ebbw valley would feed into the Assembly Government's desire to develop sustainable transport for the region. Transport consultants were looking at the issue of the Ebbw Valley link to Newport.

It was agreed that the consultants be asked to make a presentation to the Board.

Staffing Issues

The Board was updated on the staffing issues which had been the subject of discussions at previous meetings.

Five – Year Review

Initial discussions had commenced. There had been some concerns raised about timescales. External consultants were likely to be appointed to carry out the study.

IT WAS AGREED that prior to the commencement of the review, representatives of the URC and the Stakeholders should meet to discuss the terms of reference and format of the review.

Programme 2010-2015

The Board was made aware of a list of projects, potential projects, ongoing projects and aspirations for the period 2010- 2015. The Board would be given the opportunity to discuss the list prior to submission to the stakeholders. Some initial thoughts were provided, suggesting the list ought to help identify themes (such as food and regeneration) and that the shopping and leisure offer in the city centre should be added.

IT WAS AGREED that the list would be included in the agenda for the next meeting of the Board. Board members were asked to consider amendments, additions, deletions or emerging themes to be added to the programme.

Green City

Newport had been identified as the 'Greenest City in the UK' by a study examining each city's carbon footprint and taking account of such things as recycling and use of public transport. It was considered this was an opportunity for marketing activity.

Former Art College

Members remain concern that the weatherproofing work at the Art College was progressing slowly and that winter was quickly approaching. It was reported that the owners had submitted a Building Regulations application and that they were working with the Scaffolders to provide a solution to weatherproofing the roof.

IT WAS AGREED that the Managing Director of the City Council would be asked to seek information on funding arrangements from the owners and also to consider setting a deadline for the weatherproofing work to be completed to the roof, before the Council's Repair Notice was served and implemented.

Rugby Stadium

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.

Crindau

It was confirmed that Sainsbury would be making a presentation to the Board at a future meeting. Unfortunately the Big Lottery bid for the canal project had been unsuccessful. Phase 1 would proceed without the Big Lottery funding. Proposals were emerging for the area around the Rising Sun pub and surrounding environs.

Gateway Features Strategy

It was confirmed that the baseline work had been completed. A report would be prepared for the Board, probably in December 2007.

5. URC Project Coordination Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October would be circulated to members of the Board at the next meeting.

6. Marketing Activity

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

7. River Defences

The Board was updated on progress on the river defences. It was pleasing to note all flood defences on the east bank were now secured. The Environment Agency had confirmed to the City Council that it was content with the flood defence strategy.

8. Receipts Profile

The Board was updated on the likely receipts profile over the coming years. Members were provided with the projection for receipts from land disposals and land holdings and the projects against which receipts were to be allocated.

Members noted the report and the financial tables presented.

9. Revenue Expenditure

Members were presented with a report which set out spend against budget for the first half of the financial year. The main issue was the under spend owing to staff vacancies. This had led to an under spend in marketing. It was agreed that, despite the savings, the URC should remain prudent but should recognise the potential upward pressure on the marketing budget in coming years as projects proceed and major events, such as the Ryder Cup, come to fruition.

Members approved the proposed virement between budget lines and noted that the current predicted end of year spend was well within budget provision.

10. Programme Expenditure

A revised development programme had been agreed by the Board in July. Board members were provided with information on spending against budget and a projection of spend to the end of the year. It was noted that this was now predicted to be less than originally anticipated.

11. Board dates

Board dates for 2008 were agreed.