

HOLMES PLACE PROGRESS REPORT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to receive the attached progress report from Holmes Place Leisure Management on the progress and development of the leisure management contract (Appendix A). Steve Brown, the new Operations Manager for Holmes Place will be present at the meeting to give a further verbal presentation to back up this report and also answer any questions that Members may have.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That Members consider the contents of the Holmes Place progress report in relation to the leisure management contract.

Roger Crofts

Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)

Background Papers:-

None

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APPENDIX A

**Holmes Place Leisure Management –
Rochford Contract Progress Report October 2005 – March 2006**

Introduction

The reports below are collated to further communicate the progress within the leisure management contract in Rochford and highlight the key areas of development and also the activities taking place.

Clements Hall Leisure Centre

Staffing:

- Over the above period we have continued to invest time and effort into the company focus on service, standards and sales. This is all designed to provide our staff and facilities with award winning service that demonstrates to the customer the superior level of service given by Holmes Place and in turn the advantages over other operators.
- After many years service, Wendy Edwards has moved on from Clements Hall as General Manager. Wendy has chosen to retire and we wish her well for the future.
- Tracey Lengden has been promoted to the role of Deputy Centre Manager from November 2005 and is developing into the role superbly well.
- Stephen Brown has now joined Holmes Place as Contract Manager and will replace Carl Bentley, overseeing all sites within the contract. Stephen brings with him vast experience of both private and public facilities, most recently as a Regional Manager for Leisure Connection for the last 12 months.
- Robert Beavis has joined the team as Duty Manager and has joined us from the Blackwater Leisure Centre in Maldon. Rob brings with him some excellent experience and he will be responsible for overseeing centre activities, including both adult and junior programmes.
- Simon Perham has been promoted to the role of Gym Manager from November 2005.
- Staff continue to take part in Health & Safety training now conducted by Tracey Lengden.
- Appraisals are due in March 2006, creating focus for staff over the forthcoming 12 months.

- 3 senior managers have successfully renewed their First Aid At Work certificates.

Activities & Events:

- The GP referral scheme continues to grow and has been implemented well, following its inception as reported in the last progress document.
- Scuba diving in the main pool continues to run well.
- We continue to host martial arts tournaments at all levels.
- The children's half term programme went well, run by the ACE team on site and catering for over 125 children between the ages of 5-11. These days also included lunch boxes and feedback from parents was excellent.
- Half term crash courses in swimming also took place successfully.
- The 5-a-side league taking place on Sunday evenings, in association with Essex FA, is still a huge success with many teams taking part.

Maintenance:

- Vandalism does continue at the centre, although through very close working with our local Police team, the issues are starting to reduce. Instances continuing include graffiti, 4 broken windows in the gym and youths gathering around the Astro turf pitch whilst customers play. In addition, problems continue around damage to ceilings and doors in the toilet areas.

The reduction in issues has been largely helped by the excellent support of the Police team and the installation of an excellent new CCTV system at the site, which covers all outdoor areas as well as some key areas internally.

- The new lift is now fully installed and operational.
- The new carpet has been laid on the stairs to the projectile room, following supplier delays from the original order.
- Plans are being finalised for the refurbishment of the health and beauty stairwell and gym corridor. This will include new ceiling tiles, carpet, wall hangings and light fittings. In addition, paintwork will be refreshed and the result will undoubtedly lift and lighten the whole area. Proposed investment will be around £35k.
- A new PA/Music system has been installed in Studio 2, providing much improved facilities to the classes taking place in that room.

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- Many areas of the centre have been redecorated, with works reaching their conclusion by end March 2006. This has caused minimum disruption to users and around 60% of works have been completed out of hours.

The Mill Arts & Events Centre

Staffing:

- At the present time we are again building a new team. We now have three duty Managers in place, two of which have been with the company for approximately three months and are beginning to develop in their roles, working towards customer satisfaction and a community spirit.
- Phil West, our former Senior Duty Manager is now with the Rochford Police Force and finishes his training in two weeks' time. He will be based in Canvey for the time being. Matt Cope who has been with the team at The Mill for just over a year, is replacing Phil as the senior duty manager and has been enjoying his new role for the past 3 weeks.
- Donna Eadie has now been with us for over a year and a half. Her progress is excellent and she is still the face of The Mill Arts & Events Centre, adding that inviting, open element, for customers coming through the door. Donna has worked hard on building strong relationships with many of the local community groups, making her a great friend to many.
- Our two new Managers to the team are Stephen West, who is in charge of Health and Safety in the Building and Mike Harris who is in charge of Maintenance. Stephen has joined us from Royal Bank of Scotland as a Customer Service Operator and Mike has joined us from the Sports shop in Rayleigh High Street, where he was the Deputy Manager. Both bring with them a wealth of experience and enthusiasm, which should help to move our team in the right direction.
- All the team will be taking part in a new training scheme in Essex called Team Leader Skills Level 2. This will help create better communication skills for the team when they are dealing with each other and the general public. It will also help in developing them within their roles and increasing job satisfaction.

Activities and Events:

- We will again be taking part in Essex on Tour this year and will try to hold a minimum of two events to push the performing arts in this area. The two we ran last year, Cellorythmics and Sheena Davis were both successful, but the number of paying customers coming to the performances was still very low. We are hoping, through increased work with the Arts Development Officer, that we can push these numbers up higher, increasing the money we make

from running these events and also servicing the community in the arts more readily.

- The Mill is again hosting the Essex Book Festival with Kate Adie being our key speaker. We are very proud to be the hosts of this large, publicised event and feel honoured that we did so well last year that they have chosen us as the venue to hold a similar event this year. The show has already sold out and we expect it to be as much of a success as the 2005 Book Festival with Michael Burke last year.
- Swing and Sinatra has been a huge success. The Mill has booked them in for another three Shows this year. The response from the local community is great, as we are trying hard to listen to what they require and give them the shows that they are asking for. Swing and Sinatra is generally aimed at the older generation, but the show we ran and the dance both sold out and the feedback we got was fantastic.
- We are getting in more community groups through added promotion and awareness of The Mill. We now host an extra Slimming Class, a Yoga Class, Performing Arts Seminars, the Foundation Church Group and another Art Club that now meets every Thursdays. We are also looking into a new Card Making class and Salsa classes.
- The Mill has had a variety of new innovative artists showing with us over the last 6 months. Sales have come from these pieces and there has been some local press attention. The interest in The Mill as an art gallery has increased dramatically, so much so we are actually putting artists onto a waiting file, as the Main Gallery space is booked up until February 2007. Squires Coffee Shop is also being used as a gallery for artists that have not necessarily exhibited before, to trial their work in an open and friendly environment. Over the two to three month period, the artist can change the work they display and people purchasing certain pieces of work, can take the art work away with them, unlike the Main Gallery Space where the work is hung for the full 6 weeks and nothing can be taken down or changed until after the exhibition. Squires Coffee Shop art space is also booked up until February 2007.
- Ergo Bibimus band night was a huge success in November last year, where The Mill not only got to host the large Sunday Festival band event, but also enabled the organizers to raise large sums of money for their local charity.
- Band Nights for all age groups, (14-30s and 25-60) are becoming a more regular event and The Mill is using a booking/promotion company called Baker Events. We are now hosting a minimum of two band nights a month, helping give the local youth in the area somewhere to go and listen to great music and increasing our community activities amongst the younger age groups.

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- The Mill, alongside Baker Events, will also be running another Battle of the Bands in August over a 5-week period. This will be a competition amongst local bands and musicians, all leading to a final event for a cash prize. The Mill is hoping to achieve the similar amount of success that we had last year with the smaller competition.
 - The Mill, alongside Baker Events, will be hosting a 5-Day Dance Competition in the Main Hall. We hope if it is successful, to make this an annual event bringing the dance community to the Mill to help promote more of the arts to the local community and to get more people involved. If it is successful we will consider opening up to a larger age range.
 - The Mill is working with Caroline Coates with regards to the Cinema. It has been decided to try and get one of the Film Societies involved in using the venue to promote the film idea. We are also thinking of running theme nights like Star Wars Marathon etc. All of this is being talked about with the Arts Development Officer, to try and make the Cinema at The Mill successful this time.
 - The Mill is working with Essex Police to put on a Fashion Show for the local youths in support of Crime Prevention. The idea is to engage the local youths in constructive partnerships with the local authority and to help build relationships between the police and local youths.
 - The Mill is still working towards establishing itself within the local multicultural society, by playing host to a variety of cultural events. In recent months The Mill has hosted bookings from Indian, African, Italian and Caribbean weddings, gatherings and special events.

Catering:

- Catering by John Waller are still The Mill's main suppliers of catering. The service and food from the caterers varies and The Mill will be looking into other sources and set ups for the catering needs for the venue at the end of 2006-2007.

Maintenance:

- We are still experiencing problems with vandalism, including damage to the front doors, splattering of toilet paper on the outside of the building, burning of the toilets, kicking out the bottoms of the toilets so the cubical collapses, breaking of the locks and water balloons, rocks and toilet paper being thrown at our front doors and display windows. There is also graffiti on the white walls that Duty Managers regularly have to clean off and the air vents are repeatedly damaged.

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- Youths around the Centre are a continual problem, most recently when two groups of opposing schools decided to start bullying each other and we had one group sheltering in The Mill, while the other sat in the centre by the flag chasing the other group and throwing stones and sticks at the youths. The police were called and took over 45 minutes to respond and The Mill sheltered the young people until the police arrived and moved on the other youths. Luckily no one was injured.
 - The Terrace Garden in the back has now had the floor stones relayed and can be open again to our events and community groups.
 - We are now networked and can start to use email as a way of corresponding. All staff have their own email address and this should dramatically improve both internal and external communication.

The Freight House

Staffing:

At the time of the last report my new Duty Manager, Mandip Heer, was two months into his probationary period. Mandip has now completed this three month period and was formally offered the position some months ago.

Mandip and Lucy have successfully re-taken their first aid at work qualification and my third Duty Manager, Michelle Belton is in the process of completing her qualification. She has her final exam on 24th February.

As of 21st February 2006, Mandip has been on the Applicable Licensee training course so hopefully with a satisfactory pass Mandip, will be transferred on to the Freight House liquor licence.

Activities and Events:

In the last progress report, the introduction of a new regular booking was discussed, by way of Mr Mark Stacey a local antiques dealer. This booking has now progressed into a more positive booking, whereby he is going to use us as his auction house every five to six weeks. The total period of each booking will be from Sunday afternoon through to Tuesday evening and will be very profitable for us, as well as adding additional attraction to the venue.

Price increases will be introduced from April. These will mainly affect all of our delegate packages and the total hall hire rate for all social functions.

The main emphasis of our marketing effort this year will be on gaining added delegate customers. We have already tried three new lines of attack this year, with advertisements taking place in an Essex guide produced by the Essex Chamber of Commerce, an internet advert and a link to our own website through The Buyers

Guide and also a publication called Pharmafocus, which goes out to all major pharmaceutical companies nationwide (of which we have five in our locality).

Catering:

We survived an extremely busy December, with all Christmas social functions and Party nights being a roaring success. No complaints were received which is fantastic as this was our busiest December in the last 3 years (four Christmases).

Price increases are to follow in May for certain aspects of catering, but discussions have been had with our catering contractors to ensure these are reasonable increases and maintain our position in the market place.

Maintenance:

We now have access to the contract maintenance engineer, Trevor, and his new assistant to carry out minor works on a day to day basis.

Great Wakering Sports Centre

Staffing:

- Michael Waite left the company to go into the Royal Marines just before Christmas and we are still looking for a replacement duty manager. Two new staff were employed in November for reception work, Hazel Phillips and Charlie Snell.

Activities And Events:

- Hyper Activities success just keeps on growing and this year it is going better than ever, with a new activities list organized by the leisure team at Rochford District Council and Great Wakering. There are seven days of different activities, free of charge, for children between the ages of 5-16 yrs and on average, 50 people attending each day. These new sports include Trampolining, indoor hockey, quick cricket, volleyball etc.
- We have been in talks with the Council to arrange another fun and exciting trip for the summer, for the youngsters to enjoy another great day out.
- Roller hockey has been a new theme at the sports centre which started in September last year and by the start of the year, they had actually managed to start a team and are now playing in a roller hockey league each week.

Maintenance:

- It is good to note that we have not had to report any vandalism in the last six and we have also had some building work commencing in the last six months. In conjunction with Southend Probation office, it has been organised for

people who are on Community Service, to do work at our sports centre, including some maintenance in our tennis courts, internal and external painting and cleaning. We have also had brand new front doors fitted which are a great improvement.

Rayleigh Leisure Centre

Staffing:

- Tony Hudson, the new Centre Manager, has now started with us and will be based at Clements Hall until the building handover, carrying out the recruitment, sales and operational functions for the new building.
- Holmes Place Human Resource team have been activated to support the recruitment and staff training for the site and this will also ensure the high company standards are integrated from day one.
- The new staff training plan is also nearing completion and will consist of cover work at Clements Hall as well as on site training.
- Michelle Ralph has been given the role of dual site Sales Manager, covering both Clements and Rayleigh.

Construction Update:

- The work is ever nearing completion and, at the time of writing, runs three weeks ahead of schedule, with a target opening date of 13 May 2006.
- Holmes Place IT department are in full swing and will now attend all site meetings to ensure the systems are up and running as needed.

Operational Planning:

- Equipment is being ordered and finalised and lead in times have been considered, to ensure all facilities are catered for.
- Holmes Place are having contracts drawn up for “Squires” to take on the food and beverage facilities in the centre, running to the same high standards as at The Mill Arts & Events Centre.
- A further meeting will soon take place with interested parties for the bowls clubs, to discuss the clubs initial set up and structure.
- Tony Hudson will be contacting other organisations to promote the centre facilities for block hire and contract bookings.

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- The studio timetable is being planned to open with around 25 classes per week.

Contract Marketing

General Communication:

- Weekly press releases are still being prepared for local papers with some good coverage
- The updated designs for Clements Hall literature are now being used and will be mirrored for Rayleigh Leisure Centre, using a blue colourway instead of red.
- Production and distribution of Rochford District Matters continues, with the last run again distributing 32,000 copies.
- Fresh approach to marketing design at Clements Hall has proved successful, with careful use of imagery and wording.
- New Year offer has been well received, with Clements Hall achieving its target. This has provided an excellent new supply of centre users and we will now encourage them to use for the longer term, in order to reap the benefits.
- Combative campaigns to protect Clements Hall from the newly opened David Lloyd centre were well received and whilst there is no doubt any new competitor will have an effect, we are content with our performance over their opening period. Indeed some members have already chosen to return to Clements Hall.