

VIRGIN ACTIVE LEISURE CONTRACT PROGRESS REPORT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to receive the attached progress report from Virgin Active, on the progress and development of the leisure management contract (Appendix A). Tony Hine, the Operational Manager for Virgin Active, will be present at the meeting of this Committee to give further verbal presentation to back up this report and also to answer any questions that Members may have.
- 1.2 Whilst this report will mainly focus on the facilities within the Central Area, Virgin Active will provide an overview on the other facilities within the contract. Virgin Active will report into the Central Area, East Area and West Area Committees on a rolling basis, approximately three times per annum.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is proposed that the Committee receives the contents of the Virgin Active Progress Report in relation to the leisure management contract.

Jeremy Bourne

Head of Community Services

Background Papers:-

None

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**Virgin Active Health Clubs –
Rochford Contract Progress Report February 2008 Central Area Committee**

Introduction

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

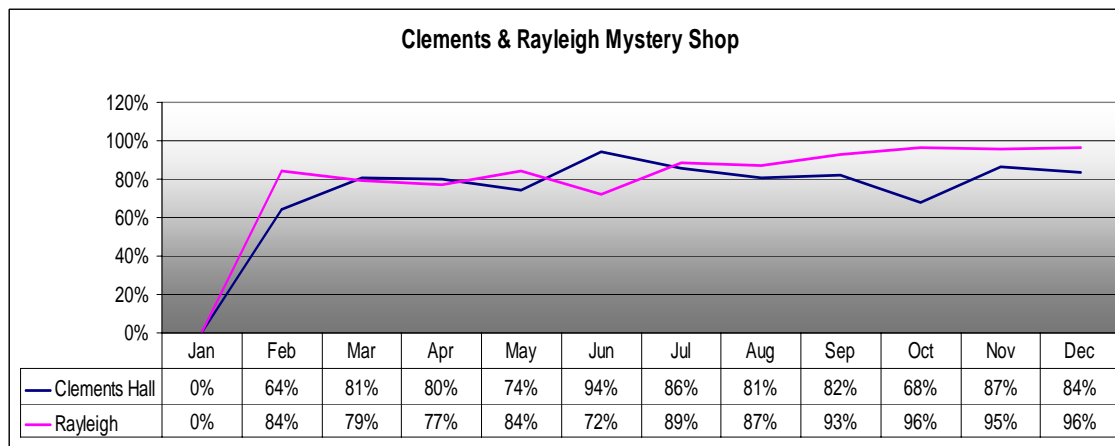
This report will mainly focus on the Central Committee Area Leisure facilities, these being Clements Hall, whilst also giving a brief overview of Great Wakering, Freight House, The Mill Arts & Events Centre, Castle Hall and Rayleigh Leisure Centre.

Contract Overview – Virgin Active Update / General Information

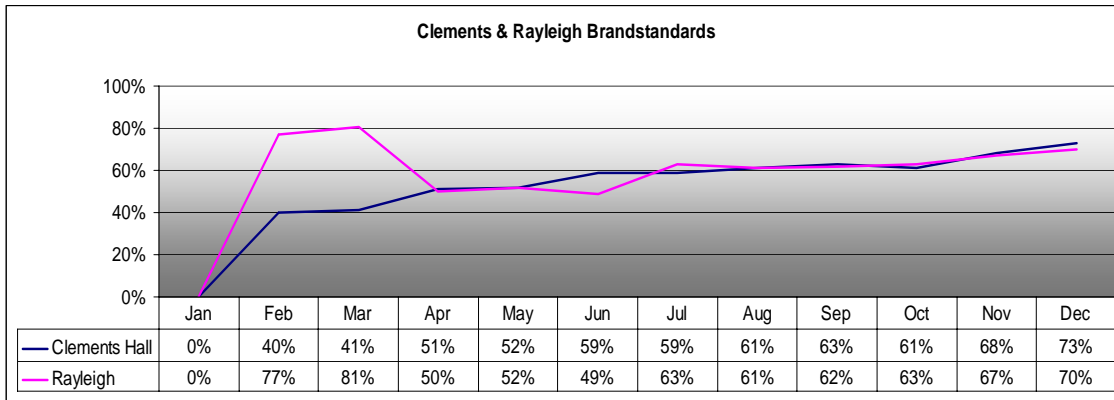
The integration of all sites since the acquisition of Holmes Place in November 2006 is now complete. The program to rebrand and refresh the centres where applicable has been completed with a painting program and installation of new signage. These have now been completed and are in the final stages of snagging. External and internal signage has been replaced removing all Holmes Place Branding and replacing this with Virgin Active branding.

A summary of changes is listed below:

- In March 2007 Stephen Brown, the Rochford Contract Manager, was promoted to Regional General Manager for the Virgin Active midlands region which includes the Rochford Contract.
- In mid May 2007 Tony Hine was appointed as Stephen Brown’s replacement and became Contract Manager. This appointment allowed for the Contract Manager position to fall in-line with the contract requirements of a fulltime contract manager, with no responsibility for centre management, and all centres now have a dedicated General Manager.
- Our mystery shopper programme is now well established at Rayleigh Leisure Centre (RLC) and Clements Hall (CH). Both sites have delivered good results in this area, with Rayleigh Leisure Centre achieving the top score for 5 consecutive months within the region and top of the company for November and December 2007.



- The Virgin Active facility audit 'Brandstandards' has also been implemented across most of the RDC sites. This process has been fully integrated within Rayleigh Leisure Centre and Clements Hall and in its final stages for implementation in the other sites. Again, good results have been achieved, showing a full understanding and maintaining a focus on the standards within the leisure facilities.



- There have been some changes to the structure within the contract Marketing. Marketing support is no longer provided locally and has been integrated in to the VA business. The Virgin Active Marketing team are now providing a high level of support to deliver the appropriate collaterals to support all sites, whether membership based or community based. This has allowed us to utilise the economies of scale a large organisation such as Virgin Active can provide.
- The Rochford Leisure website has under gone a re-branding exercise and has now been updated, reflecting the RDC and Virgin Active partnership.



- There has also been a restructuring of the contract maintenance team. Two new maintenance managers have now been appointed, with each manager responsible for three sites each: Rayleigh Leisure Centre, Mill Hall and Castle Hall will fall under the maintenance manager based at RLC, while Clements Hall, Freight House and Great Waking will fall under the maintenance manager and his team based at Clements Hall. It is felt this will provide better support to the contract in relation to maintenance, and with the introduction of Virgin Active procedures, will allow any issues to be resolved in a more appropriate time frame, while maintaining a higher facility standard.

Contract Overview - General

There has been good growth at all the centres across the contract, with Rayleigh Leisure Centre performing well and delivering a good community service to the residents of Rochford.

All site managers and staff have adapted well to the Virgin Active integration and seen the benefits to their businesses. There have also been some changes to the management structure at the sites.

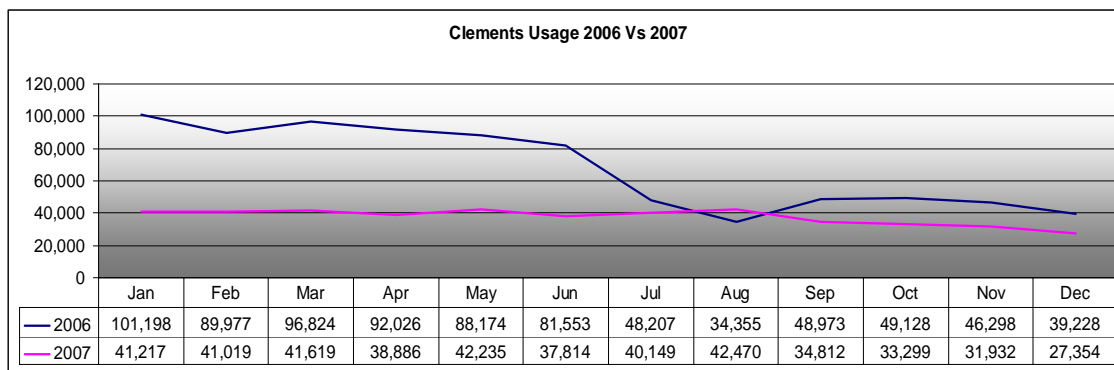
- Liz Hughes formerly General Manager at the Mill Arts and Events Centre has taken up the position of general manager at Rayleigh Leisure Centre.
- Tony Hudson, moved from Rayleigh Leisure Centre to Clements Hall as general manager.
- Martin Downes, formerly manager at the Freight House is now General Manager at The Mill Arts & Events Centre.
- Ricky Turner is the new general manager at the Freight House.
- Matthew Griffiths has taken up the position of Operations Manager at Great Wakering.

Clements Hall

Usage

Usage has shown a slight decline but this is down to new procedures in recording usage and the transition for usage from Clements to Rayleigh Leisure Centre. While there has been a decrease the centre still remains busy. Swimming lessons in the last quarter were fully booked, and course and events are well attended.

Contract bookings are still going strong and remain a good revenue stream for the centre.



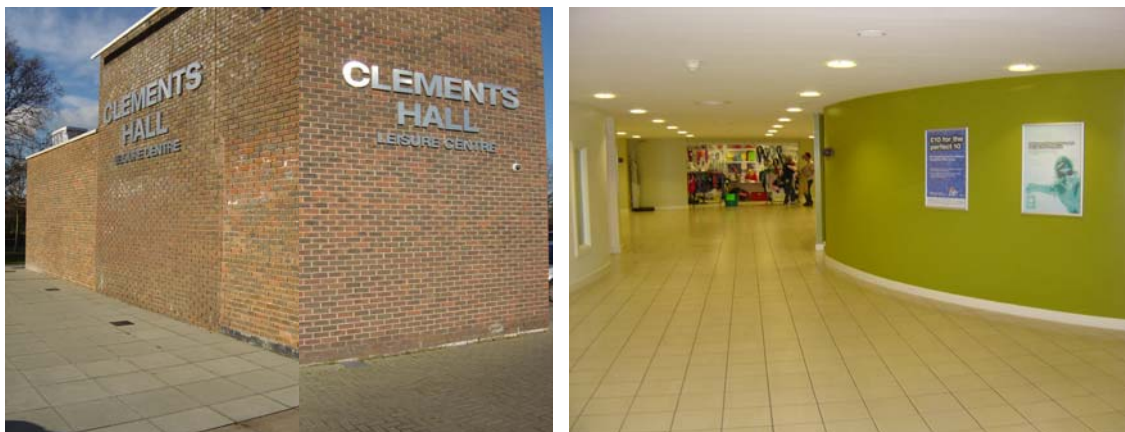
Rebranding of Clements.

Clements has recently undergone a rebrand of all internal and external signage. This has incorporated removal of all old external signage which has been replaced with signage more indicative of the Virgin branding,

The major areas within the centre have also had a decorative works carried out: the reception, gym, cafe and creche areas have been painted with colours from the VA colour palette.

The ceilings in the wet side changing rooms have also been painted to make this area brighter and the maintenance team are in the process of removing and replacing the existing lighting.

The rebranding process has removed all reference to Holmes Place.



Activities & Events:

- October half term was a joint venture between Clements Hall's Ace programme and days segregated for the Extended Schools programme for families to participate in. This is continuing into 2008 with February's half term.
- Sports festival planned for February 2008 with a host of different sporting activities. A range of sporting events have been organised and bookings are going well.
- Swim school enrolment has finally proved to be a success using the new telephone system and we have also introduced a drop box at reception for any enquiries. Bookings are up on the previous enrolment.
- Holiday leisure programmes will be held in conjunction with extended schools. These are to be promoted jointly in future, to provide better communication to residents and improve attendance.

Maintenance:

- Improvements to the back of house and plant rooms have been completed.
- All lighting to the Main Hall and Projectile room has been completed.
- Paint work has been completed around the centre and gives it a fresh new look.
- The current spectator seating for the main pool is due to be replaced and this will be refitted with benches, which can be maintained and replaced more easily.

Rayleigh Leisure Centre

Marketing:

- Advertisements in the Evening Echo with monthly offer.
- Flyers distribution with monthly offer, plus leaflets for sports courses.
- Internal posters with monthly offer and activities that are offered.

Activities and Events:

Bowls

- Bowls committee meetings take place the first week of every month. These are attended by the General Manager of RLC to help answer any centre queries.
- The bowls club is moving into the competition time of year, filling the centre with bowls enthusiasts.
- New prices for the Bowls Memberships have been confirmed with the Bowls Committee for September 2008 and will commence at the renewal period in August-September 2008.

Activities Programme:

- The new activities programme that started in January seems to be well attended, s are both the adult and junior courses.
- We are working closely with the Extended Schools co-ordinators to bring in activities for children and parents to enjoy together. We are starting to run Dads and Lads football in February.
- The centre has a range of community based blocked bookings, covering a range of activities including football coaching, junior gym, judo, karate, a slimming group and a disabled group.

Crèche:

- The creche is running successfully under the direction the new Crèche Manager, with one of our crèche customers winning the junior Christmas Card competition for Virgin Active and having her Card as the annual Christmas card for all the Virgin sites.
- The feedback from the themes and arts and crafts sessions has been very positive and numbers are increasing and we have also started to open on a Monday afternoon for 1.5 hours on a 10 week trial basis to encourage more customers to use the facilities in quieter times.

Maintenance and other issues:

- The Paintwork refresh programme has been completed and has been well received.
- The roof leak in January caused some damage to the centre and closed resulting in the centre closing for a total of 5 hours. The centre re-opened the following day at 07.00am and the roof leak was fixed in-house by the VA maintenance team.
- Issues continue with the Skate Park and increased youth anti-social behaviour has been reported. A meeting is being planned with the local police community support team and RDC Leisure Team to see what we can be put in place to help combat this.

The Freight House

Activities and events

- November's annual Beer Festival was the largest yet, producing excellent attendance levels for this historic event. The whole week ran very smoothly with no issues reported.
- All the Christmas Parties were fully booked, with early reports showing that we are up on income compared to 2006.
- The next big event will be The Schools Music Festival on 4, 6 11,12,13th March.

Catering

- Perfect Banqueting have proven themselves to be very popular with our customers and any minor issues have been quickly resolved. We are in the process of reviewing and updating the menu range.

Maintenance

- There has been some minor external damage to the building caused by vandalism, with the situation being monitored by both the police and members of staff. The Pullman Suite flooring needs to be repaired as it can no longer be re-varnished. This has been requested on capital expenditure and we are awaiting a response.
- All external wooden fittings have been painted and all the signage has been updated.

Mill Arts & Events Centre

Activities and Events

- Martin Downs is working with RDC Arts Development Officer to better promote Essex on Tour. A Jazz performer, Sophie Garner has been booked for 16th March 2008.
- Extensive work has been done to the website including, updating all relevant information and giving the site a new look incorporating the Virgin Active brand and the new RDC logo.
- After the successful application by RDC to licence The Windmill for civil ceremonies, we are working closely with Council Officers regarding the provision facilities at the centre for the wedding breakfast and evening reception.
- The Mill has now had a complete re-paint of all internal areas except for the main hall. This has vastly improved the overall look of the venue and given it a much brighter feel. This will be requested in the main Hall in the future.
- The back offices are in the process of being modernised, having been re-painted and refurbished. A new carpet is required for office areas and the meeting room.
- Quotations have been authorised for added CCTV behind both licensed bars. This works on two levels in providing security against theft and also protection for staff.
- Authorisation has been given for a complete upgrade of the fire alarm system. Although the current system is adequate, extra measures are being taken to bring the system up to Virgin Active's high standards.

Catering

- Our working relationship with Perfect Banqueting remains strong and we are still extremely happy with the service they are providing.

Maintenance

- We are still suffering from vandalism in the gent's and ladies toilets with toilet seats and locks continually being broken. I am aware that complaints have been received and we are doing everything we can to maintain the situation.

Castle Hall

Staffing

- The staff at The Mill Arts & Events Centre regularly check Castle Hall. There have also been a number of visits by head office staff from the Virgin Active maintenance team, who have introduced a system of Health and Safety and general facility checks.

Activities and Events

- Bookings are continuing covering a range of activities that includes yoga and daytime children's parties.

Maintenance

- Castle Hall is due for a refresh of the paint work and this will be carried out shortly by the Virgin Active refresh team.

- A request has been put in for capital expenditure for a new heating system for 2008.

Great Waking Sports Centre

Activities And Events

- In the winter holidays Great Waking ran a number of activities that were successful and encouraged good attendance. This included mini tennis, which was a great hit for the under 10's and was very successful in encouraging the younger centre users to get involved in sporting activities.
- The Rochford District sports festival will be commencing in February. Great Waking, along with the other Rochford leisure sites, have been working closely with RDC to put a programme of activities together. This programme will include sporting events for young people between the ages of 8-16 and will include, trampolining, dodge ball, football and mini tennis.
- Bookings for children's birthday parties at Great Waking are still strong and this continues to be a popular location for these events.
- Our evening bookings continue to be popular, with the main hall fully booked from 4pm till 10pm with badminton and football. We are trying to encourage bookings for our daytime slots as these are currently under utilised.
- Hyper Activities, run by the STAR Partnership continues to be very popular with good and consistent attendance and the morning fitness classes still prove to be very popular.
- The community youth disco nights run by RDC at Great Waking were unfortunately poorly attended and this resulted in the last event having to be cancelled.

Maintenance:

- In quarter 4 of 2007 works were carried out to repair the roofing and staircase to the rear fire exit, which had been damaged by strong winds and some minor vandalism.
- The fencing to the hard court area was also repaired, the main hall lights have been re-tubed and are now fully operational and some other minor electrical works have also been carried out.
- A number of complaints have been received due to light pollution from the floodlighting used to illuminate the hard court surface. A meeting was held with contractors and RDC on site, to devise a solution to resolve this issue and it is proposed to repair all the lights backing on to the houses at the rear of the court. These would then be the only lights used to illuminate the court, which would be facing away from the housing. Unfortunately this cannot be carried out until the ground becomes firmer, allowing a cherry picker in to carry out the high level works. Attempting these works now, would result in the grass areas being damaged by the heavy machinery required.
- Vandalism is currently low and there have been very few incidents of graffiti.

Service and Standards

- Whilst Great Waking is not part of the overall mystery shopper programme which is undertaken at the other leisure sites, 5 audit calls are carried out on a monthly basis to monitor service, product and facility knowledge.
- Great Waking is however part of the Virgin Active brand standards programme which is carried out on a monthly basis to monitor facility standards. This is being fully implemented as of January 2008.