

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). Carl Bentley, 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**

To 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

For further information please contact Jeremy Bourne on:-

Tel:- 01702 318163

E-Mail:- jeremy.bourne@rochford.gov.uk

APPENDIX A

**Holmes Place Leisure Management – Rochford Contract Progress Report
September 2003–February 2004**

Introduction

The following reports the progress of the Rochford Contract and the key developments and activities within each of the sites during the period September 2003 and February 2004. In addition the marketing and communication effort is highlighted for each Centre and for the overall contract.

Clements Hall Leisure Centre

Staffing

- In order to improve the service for early morning customers we have extended the reception opening hours. A receptionist is now on duty from 6.45am Monday-Friday.
- 2 receptionists left to work at the Virgin Active Club in January and another gave in her notice. Four new members of the reception team have been recruited who are very customer friendly and pro-active.
- Reception staff shortages, earlier opening times, the transfer to the temporary reception and a new front desk computer system increased the pressure on the reception team and resulted in long working hours for some. They have coped with all of this remarkably well and deserve credit and thanks for the way they have undertaken all of these changes.
- Two new members of the fitness team have been recruited in preparation for the opening of the new gym in April.
- With the exception of the Café Supervisor, Dot Richardson, all of the café and bar staff had to be made redundant due to the refurbishment programme. We will re-employ prior to the new café bar opening.
- We currently have 1 full time vacancy for a leisure assistant.
- Training of staff has included monthly lifeguard refreshers sessions, quarterly workshops for studio instructors, fire training, food hygiene, health and safety, first aid and personal training for fitness instructors. Jenna Starr, Sales and Marketing Manager, recently completed a course in Effective Copywriting.

Activities and Events

- RADs, the District Scouts and the local Senior Schools Gala took place in January.
- We hosted a Charity Aerobathon for Fairhavens Hospice and helped increase their funds.
- Other events have included karate competitions, a children's pantomime with 200 tickets being sold, Swim School Christmas Party with 90 children attending, the finals tournament for our Sunday 5-a-side league as well as a Christmas Squash and Christmas Badminton Tournaments which both attracted maximum numbers.
- Personal Training was introduced into the gym in November giving customers the opportunity to work with an instructor on a one to one basis. To date 71 sessions have been booked. The results so far have been good and customers are booking further sessions.
- Table Tennis coaching is now available to youngsters on a weekly basis and the Southend and District Table Tennis Association now use Clements Hall as their training venue.
- BodyJam, the latest craze in Studio Workouts was introduced in January. It is a Hip-Hop dance routine which has proved to be very popular with a number of classes at capacity.

Maintenance

- Phase 1 of the Centre redevelopment is now complete with the opening of the poolside Spa, Sauna and Steam rooms, the new 'Serenity' beauty salon and alterations to the air flows in the pool hall.
- Phase 2 of the refurbishment programme is now well under way and is very exciting for the staff and customers. An intrusive asbestos survey of the Centre has meant that the project is approximately two weeks behind schedule. This survey could only be undertaken once the reception area was closed and free of public and staff. With so many tradesmen on site working in different areas there have been a few problems with the disconnection of power supplies, setting off alarms and a burst pipe that occurred just prior to the CPA inspection. However, our relationship with the builder, Total Construction, is very good and any minor issues are dealt with quickly.
- Subsidence has occurred on the astroturf close to the oak trees. A repair is being actioned but it will need monitoring as it has been a problem area in the past.

- The low poolside air temperature has finally been resolved and we are back to near 'tropical' temperatures again.
- The long-standing main pool leak has now been resolved with a total of four leaks being discovered in the scum channel ring main drainage system. These were rectified out of hours and did not result in pool closure.
- Young people continue to be a problem in and around the Centre. Three members of staff were assaulted by a group of youths as they attempted to steal a machine. We also had 3 fire alarms activated in 5 days that resulted in evacuating the Centre and the fire service attendance.

The Mill Arts and Events Centre

Staffing

- Heidi Wadsworth was appointed as Centre Manager.
- Marilyn Lundrigan has been appointed as Duty Manager replacing David Millman.

Activities and Events

- One of the objectives for The Mill is to create a live music venue as part of the arts agenda. So far we have attracted a number of local musicians/groups for, what have become, well attended Band Nights. We aim to have at least one band night per month.
- Rayleigh Operatic Dramatic Society (RODS) held their annual Christmas pantomime in December. As usual this was a huge success being a sell out every night.
- As part of our Special Events Programme (Essex on Tour) we hosted a production of Radio Days and TV Times, which was attended by over 100 people.
- The closure of the crèche took place in October and the room is now being used for meetings and conferences. The NHS has booked the Conference Room for their Halo group with block bookings of 10 weeks and Adult Education History classes are now based in that room.
- Squires the coffee shop has proved to be a great addition to the Mill. They are very busy at lunchtimes and provide an excellent service to our customers. They also open on Sundays and in evenings to accommodate functions that we have at The Mill.

Art at The Mill

- Our programme of art exhibitions has now commenced which is proving to be very popular with a number of local artists, young and old, amateur and professional, exhibiting their artwork.
- In conjunction with the Council's Arts Development Officer we now have a Saturday morning art school for children.

Movies at The Mill

- We now have a large database of interested cinema goers and in January we distributed 600 promotional flyers. This has resulted in a much better response and attendance at the adult screenings. Depending on the film we have an average attendance of 25 people.

Catering

- John Waller Catering continue to provide excellent products and services for our customers and have been flexible in allowing customers to cater for their own Asian, Indian, Lebanese and Jewish specialised functions.

Maintenance

- We have created an additional fire exit from the main hall to comply with our Public Entertainment Licence.
- New Emergency lighting has been installed on the external decking area.
- New function chairs have been purchased and the old chairs sold to local organisations.
- We are experiencing problems with vandalism, resulting in the male toilets cubicles being seriously damaged, graffiti on the walls, broken lights and scratched mirrors. On many occasions we have called the police out for violence and abuse from teenage boys and girls.

The Freight House

Staffing

- We have a new Duty Manager, Anthony Rodd, who started in September 2003. He is being first aid trained and has completed a two day Health and Safety competent persons course.
- On site we have three first aid qualified staff and four Health and Safety competent persons.

Activities and Events

- We are still offering free hall hire on a Friday evening to registered charities and a number have taken advantage of this offer including the Lady Macadam Breast unit, and The Citizens Advice Bureau.
- A regular Tuesday evening drama class is now held within the Centre, together with holiday workshops.

Catering

- The catering service, provided by John Waller Catering, continues to be successful with complaints down by 97% on 2002.
- The improvement in the quality of food has helped towards the renewed interest in the Freight House as a venue of choice for business and social customers alike. Over the past four months we have had four of our old business customers return to the Freight House. These being, Essex Police, Great Eastern Railways, South East Foster Care and Customs and Excise. None of these had booked with us for approximately 12 months, but all have now become regular users again.
- We have also booked eight new businesses on to our delegate rate.

Maintenance

- Redecoration is still on going with three toilet areas to be completed and the Carriage room.
- New function chairs have been purchased for the Centre.
- We are still experiencing vandalism although the breaking of windows seems to have stopped. Recently all hanging baskets were knocked down and smashed. Perhaps more worrying is that we are becoming a regular dumping ground for cars that are then set on fire. We have had two recent incidents and another vehicle had all its windows smashed.

Great Wakering Sports Centre

Staffing

- A new team has been appointed at the Centre led by Dan Griffiths. John Stansfield has been appointed Duty Manager and Ben Hudson and Laura Appleyard work on reception and assist with general duties.

- A new trampoline coach, Donna Burke, and a new football coach, Avril Dedman, make up the new appointments at the Centre.
- Dan has attended Health and Safety Competent Person training and both he and John have gained a Public First Aid qualification.

Activities and Events

- The new team has reinvigorated the Centre and a number of new initiatives are underway including 5 a side football for adults and juniors, short tennis and additional trampoline classes.
- In conjunction with the Council's Sports and Arts Development Officers new sessions, particularly targeted at the youth market, have been organised for basketball, hockey, cricket, benchball, football, street dance, DJ and drama.

Maintenance

- A new sign has been installed to replace the Great Wakering Sports Centre sign attached to the building.
- Painting of the Centre has continued both internally and externally.
- With the appointment of a new manager and the introduction of youth activities, in conjunction with the Council, it is pleasing to report that vandalism around the Centre has ceased. Customers are no longer intimidated as they arrive and leave the Centre and we have even had stolen property returned.

Advertising and Marketing

General Communication

- Press releases to the key publications in the area.
- Production & distribution of Rochford District Matters (36,000 x 4).
- Production and distribution of Focus Newsletters (33,000 x 2).
- Up dating of contract-wide leaflets and presentation materials.
- New contract website now under construction.

Clements Hall

ACE (Activity, Care, Education)– Children's Activities

- Design and production of half term brochure –October.
- Design and production of half term brochure – February.
(Distributed to schools in the district).
- Presentation Board updated regularly

- Inclusion in RDM/Focus.
- Britvic sponsorship for ACE all ACE brochures and flyers.

O2 Health & Fitness

Internal challenges / promotions have included: -

Pole-to-Pole Gym Challenge
Launch of Personal Training

H2O Swim School

Promotional material has been created for the Clements swimming programmes including:

- Class Schedules
- Achievement Certificates
- Newsletters
- Swimming Gala
- Presentation Board updated regularly
- Inclusion in RDM/Focus

NEW – Teen Scene

- A new group of activities specifically aimed at 12-16yrs, starting with a Teen Combat class, is about to commence. This programme will gradually increase with additional activities throughout 2004. Flyers advertising the current programme have been distributed to all Senior Schools within the District.

Membership Campaigns

- End of Summer Sale - September – mid October
Advertised through Focus (distributed to 33,000 households) with 50% off the joining fee plus 13 months membership for the price of 10 on all annual upfront payments.
- Come Back - November
Mail shot to all ex members with no joining fee incentive to rejoin.
- New Year New You - January
33,000 mail drop via Standard Recorder offer £9.99 joining fee to compete with Virgin Active.
- Bigger, Better, Brand New... February campaign to advertise new facilities opening soon. Members who join prior to the completion of the new gym will benefit from preferential membership prices. Poster displays internally, banners around the District, plus posters and flyers sent out to corporations.

- Fit Street - February
Leaflets customised to Street Names, inviting residents to join as Preferential Members.
- Love Actively - February
2000 flyers distributed to coincide with Valentines Day, offering a complimentary day membership. Distributed to Hair Dressers, Beauty Salons and Restaurants to hand out to their clients.
- Member Referral Scheme - February
Mail shot to all current Direct Debit and Annual members. For every new member referred before March 31st, they will receive a selection of treatments to choose from the new Serenity beauty salon. If they refer 3 new members they will receive 1 months free membership.
- Centre Member Letter - February
Letter sent to all Centre Members with an incentive upgrade to Health and Fitness Membership with no joining fee, for a limited period only.
- Corporate Prospect Letter
Mail shot to prospect companies with incentive to set up Corporate Membership Schemes within their company.
- Corporate Member Email
Update on refurbishment progress with incentive to join and benefit from Preferential Membership for a limited period.
- Membership drive through publicity surrounding the Clements Hall developments, through RDM, Focus, the Evening Echo and The Southend & Rayleigh Times.

Other

- Produced & distributed marketing material for Rochford Community Sports Festival 2004.
- Presentation of development plans and new facilities in temporary walk way.
- Distributed new Sports Course brochure to all schools in the district.
- New Saturday Sports Night flyer being designed and produced.

Leisure Card Scheme

- The new IT management system is now in place at Clements Hall and the new 'Rochford Leisure Card' has been distributed to all members to 'swipe in' with every visit to the Centre.
- The Leisure Card scheme currently has 20 local companies offering discounts of approximately 10% on goods and services. New companies will now be

approached to increase the benefits for our customers with a target of 50 companies on the scheme by the end of this year.

The Mill Arts and Events Centre

General promotional activity has included:

- Newly designed adverts placed in Yellow Pages.
- Advertisement in Jewish community news.
- ½ page advert in Essex Wedding Guide.
- New general information brochure designed & produced.
- Developed & distributed programme for January – March.
- Events Display in foyer.
- Inclusion in RDM/Focus – developments.
- Events listed in 'What's On & Where'.
- New photography, café/bar, terrace, exterior.
- High levels of PR for The Mill following the completion of the refurbishment.
- Double sided flyer advertising Christmas Party bookings and the new 'Meeting Room'.

Movies at The Mill

- Developed & distributed new programme for 2004 January, February & March.
- Inclusion in RDM/Focus.

Freight House

- Newly designed adverts placed in Yellow Pages, plus inclusion of Business Pages.
- ½ page advert in Essex Wedding Guide.
- ½ page advert in Essex County Council Conference Venue Guide.
- Advertisement in Jewish community news.
- Regular weekly advert in The Business Echo.
- Advertorial in Evening Echo – March 04
- Inclusion in RDM/Focus.
- Events listed in 'What's On & Where'.
- Invitations designed and produced inviting prospect companies to a Corporate Open Day on March 9th 04.
- Letters sent to all Clements Hall members to remind them of their milestone Birthday and to book Freight House as a party venue.

Great Wakering Sports Centre

- New Centre brochure detailing all centre activities designed and published.
- Centre is included in RDM/Focus.

General

Events Team

The objective of the 'events team' is

- to be actively involved in all community events – schools, fetes, town shows, etc. with the aim of creating more localised awareness of all sites, facilities and services that they offer.
- to use each event as a sales & marketing opportunity and to gain a competitive advantage.

Britvic have agreed to sponsor the event team and have provided us with prizes including 3 mountain bikes, T-shirts & bags.

During this reporting period the Team attended the Fire Works Display at Belchamps, distributing flyers, with vouchers, allowing discounts on activities/bookings at all Centres.