

## 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 Operations Manager for Holmes Place will be present at the meeting to give a further verbal presentation to back up this report and also to 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.

Graham Woolhouse

Corporate Director (External Services)

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#### Background Papers:

None

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**APPENDIX A**

**Holmes Place Leisure Management –  
Rochford Contract Progress Report April 2006 – September 2006**

**INTRODUCTION**

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

**Contract Overview – Virgin Active Merger Update**

It would seem appropriate to start this report with an update to Members regarding the current position of the merger between Holmes Place UK and Virgin Active.

As has been well reported in the National press and specifically communicated to the Rochford District Leisure team, it is now clear that a merger will take place.

At the time of writing, the two companies have exchanged contracts with the process of due diligence complete. The current status is that the verification of the deal sits with the Office of Fair Trading and upon approval from this body, the deal can then be completed and changes rolled out.

It is however, still the case that we have no real contact with Virgin and as yet are unable to provide real answers as to how this may alter the operations of the Rochford facilities.

However, facts that are available to us include :

- Clubs and Centres are likely to be re-branded to Virgin.
- Virgin will take on all 47 Holmes Place's sites nationwide, but NOT the European arm of the business.
- Virgin have committed to an initial £20m of investment to upgrade the 47 Holmes Place sites.
- There is no information as yet available on the distribution of this money.
- All staff will be protected by TUPE.

This concludes the information available at the time of writing and Holmes Place has given assurance through the Contract Operations Manager that updates will be provided at the earliest possible time, as the facts unfold.

**Contract Overview - General**

**Introduction :**

2006 has so far been a year to re-evaluate the role of each site within the contract and has required much hard work towards uniting the approach between sites. This

has been with the aim of pooling support and achieving a wider, true status of teamwork between the 6 sites, with a move away from them being “stand-alone”.

All site managers have adapted well and seen the benefits to their businesses with mutual support from all site managers. This has also allowed individual development and it is exciting to watch staff grow in themselves.

2006 has also seen the addition and opening of the Rayleigh Leisure Centre, which is proving an excellent asset to the contract in its early days and will doubtless go from strength to strength.

**Staffing :**

- Staff training always sits high on the site agenda and over the spring and summer this year we have invested in both individual and team training. From a team perspective the site has conducted refresher “SUMMIT” training to re-address the ever present necessity for good service and this very much lays down the standards expected. This was conducted by the Group Training Manager and involved as many staff as possible from all sites.
- Following the service training, a team has been created utilising one representative from each site. This team is now responsible for harmonising the company standard across all sites and training new staff on the service approach used. This also provides exposure to different sites for those involved.

**Clements Hall**

**Staffing**

- The management team here have grown superbly over the year. Senior managers are now learning to become accountable for their departments, financially as well as operationally, and this is certainly aiding development.
- Stephen Brown, Contract Operations Manager has now been in post for 6 months and directly oversees Clements Hall within this capacity. Stephen has brought a different style of management to the team and it is felt that the team are adapting well to it and learning from being given greater freedom to make decisions and have an impact on the site.
- Ian Hopgood joined in April 2006 in the capacity of Café Bar Manager and has brought a new enthusiasm to the food operation, creating a well-motivated team.
- Simon Jones joined in July 2006 as Duty Manager, after Rob Beavis was transferred to Rayleigh Leisure Centre and is heading up the activities programme for 9 years – adults within his role.

- Craig Potter will be leaving us in October 2006 after 10 years to pursue a career in I.T. His replacement has not yet been found and interviews are taking place at the time of writing.
- Trancey Lengden, Deputy Centre Manager is conducting Health & Safety refresher training sessions during August and September, with well over 120 staff attending.
- Appraisals took place in March 2006, with personal targets set for the following 12 months.
- 3 senior managers will be attending First Aid At Work in October, to ensure further strength in the team in this important area.

**Activities & Events :**

- April saw Clements Hall again host the Drugs Roadshow which as ever, was superbly attended by schools.
- The children's ACE activity programme ran well over both Easter, May half term and 6 weeks over the main Summer period.
- This included the Outdoor action sessions subsidised by Rochford District Council. These were particularly well attended this year, with over 100 children enjoying the activities, utilising local schools as base sites.
- September has seen support for Councillor James Cottis, in his bid to raise money for charity for his planned parachute jump next year. Clements Hall is supporting 3 months membership, induction and a personal training session to get Councillor Cottis off to a positive start.
- The 5-a-side league taking place on Sunday evenings, in association with Essex Football Association, is still a huge success with many teams taking part.
- Close work is taking place with the Rochford District Council Sports Development team, and a new range of youth activities has been introduced from September to provide positive diversion. This has been branded "Hyper Activities" and follows the success at Great Wakering, with a similar programme being provided.

**Maintenance :**

- Vandalism does continue at the centre, although had lessened over the early summer. Disappointingly matters have degenerated in early September following the 'moving on' of youth issues from Park Gardens

Despite this, even more effort has been made to strengthen links with our local Police team. This has resulted in positive action and the creation of a Police Office within Clements Hall at which they can conduct open surgery for the local community; we benefit from an increased police presence on site. This is still in its infancy but is showing early, successful signs.

- The lobby area outside the beauty rooms and leading up through to the Gym has been fully refurbished and adds another fresh looking area to the centre.
- New air handling units have been fitted to supply air conditioning to the beauty rooms and a massive unit has also been fitted to service the pool hall, which will substantially improve both air control and quality. These units were being commissioned at the end of September / early October.

### **Rayleigh Leisure Centre**

#### **Staffing:**

Staff were all employed well in advance of the centre's opening date, so they could participate in the Holmes Place induction process. This process will help equip staff to provide award-winning service. Rayleigh Leisure Centre staff shadowed staff at Clements Hall so that they could observe the day-to-day operation of each department.

- Leavers since opening in May 2006

Lorraine Saddler (Crèche) –  
No reason given 21<sup>st</sup> June 2006

Daniel Carey (gym) 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006  
Left to pursue a Job abroad

Rob Beavis (duty manager) 31<sup>st</sup> August 2006  
Left to pursue career in Management in the health industry

Launa Steel (reception) – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2006  
Left to pursue a career in physiotherapy

Steven Bourne (sales consultant) – 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2006  
No reason given

Carolyn Harvey (reception) – 16<sup>th</sup> August 2006  
Left for personal reasons

- Joiners since opening in May 2006

Darren Smerald (gym) 7<sup>th</sup> July 2006  
Emma White (duty manager) 24<sup>th</sup> July 2006  
Joanne Tracey (crèche) 30<sup>th</sup> July 2006

Rachel Stone (sales consultant) 14<sup>th</sup> August 2006

Chloe Sargant (gym) 14<sup>th</sup> August 2006

Vicky Symonds (reception) 1<sup>st</sup> September 2006

“One to one” reviews will be taking place with all staff in October, to assess the first six months in their job roles.

### **Activities and Events:**

#### **Bowls**

A Steering Committee was formed with committee members from other clubs, to help with the set up of the bowls club. A number of meetings have been held and are now at the stage where the leagues are due to start early October.

The final name for the bowls club, with input from Rochford District Council, is Rayleigh Leisure Indoor Bowls Club. The balance between forthcoming league and matches and ensuring there is constant pay and play ability is proving successful. Those who chose a pay and play option are subject to a one off initial induction charge and a hire facility has been put into place for the woods and jacks.

The stretching of and marking of the green will be taking place in early October. Open days were held to gain interest from new prospective members and the setting up of the leagues.

#### **General:**

Our own programmed courses for the new autumn term have started. We are keen to establish solid links in the community and so leaflets have been distributed to all schools in the District.

Our programme includes courses in –

- Trampolining
- Badminton
- Netball
- Football
- Ladies multi Sports
- 50 Plus
- Judo

We have hosted our own Dodgeball events, supported by the Rochford District Sports Development team. These were held for both children and adults, creating good publicity and great attendance.

“Football 4 You” have started 5-a-side men’s football league’s on Wednesday evenings, with over 10 teams attending each week.

“Three Lions” host a junior football coaching scheme every Tuesday for ages of 2 years to 5 years.

“Coombewood” are a disabled group that are using facilities such as the gym and sports hall on a regular basis.

“Akitas Judo Club” have a regular slot on Tuesdays which is attended by both children and adults at different abilities

“Westwood karate” hosted a knife defence course, with over 120 children attending.

“Scene One” have used the sports hall on a number of Sundays to rehearse for the forthcoming shows, with over 100 children attending

### **Maintenance:**

- All outstanding snagging issues were resolved by Total Construction at the end of September 2006.

Issues included –

- Additional CCTV camera to rear of car park
- Alteration to skate park lights
- Heating in bowls hall
- Studio window film
- Leak in disabled lift

Basketball post installation has been delayed due to the wrong type of supports within the walls. However, this is now resolved with a schedule being drawn up for the works to be actioned as quickly as possible.

### **The Freight House**

#### **Staffing**

Mandip Heer (Duty Manager) has left for pastures new and we very quickly employed Cheryl Steels as his replacement. Cheryl has had relevant bar supervisory experience and has adapted well in her new role. Cheryl is booked to do the full First Aid At Work course in October this year and she has already taken and passed the course required to become a licensee and will be added to the license in due course.

With reference to the last update, Michelle Belton passed her First Aid at Work qualification.

It is the intention, with the introduction of Cheryl, to have a change around with regard to areas of responsibility. When fully confident and trained, Cheryl will take over organising/arranging all aspects of delegate business, along with Susan Tilley (Office Manager). Michelle Belton will take over responsibility of all aspects of the bar operations.

### **Activities and Events**

Stacey's Auctions are now a regular thing,, with Mark and his brother Paul holding their auctions here once a month. They have provisionally booked twelve dates for next year, which is very encouraging, and as well as these events, they are holding regular antiques courses at Freight House. There is talk for next year that the TV series 'Flog it' may want to film here.

As ever our Wedding Fayre is fast approaching. This year's Fayre will be held on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Catering**

Our contract with Catering by John Waller is coming to an end at the end of September. For several months we have been meeting with potential replacements and are delighted with our final decision, to enter into a working partnership with 'Perfect Banqueting'. Andy and Donna Couzens have a wealth of experience and we are very excited about the superior quality and value for money we will be offering from October. Their attention to detail, along with the excellent menu's they have produced for us, is yet another step up in our development.

In conjunction with the changes to our catering business, there have been developments with regards to our drink trade. Again we have researched, changed and updated our wine lists. Freight House has upgraded its 'House Wine' along with many others and coming into the busy party season, we are sure that this, together with our catering change, will enhance the quality and value for money provided to our customers.

### **The Mill Arts & Events Centre**

#### **Staffing:**

- The Mill is again in the process of building a new team. We now have 3 duty Managers in place. Adam is our new start who, at the present time is being trained in his new role and responsibilities.
- Matt Cope has been with the team at The Mill for just over a year and a half is now the acting Senior Duty Manager. He has been enjoying new role and is excelling at motivating his team.
- Donna Eadie has been with us for just over two years. Her progress is excellent and she is still the face of The Mill, adding that inviting, open element for customers coming though the door. Donna has worked hard on building strong relationships with many of the local community groups and block booking groups.
- Michael Harris has been with The Mill for a little over 9 months and is making fantastic steps in the right direction. Mike is amazing at building strong



customer relationships and also logs all maintenance issues with our head office.

- Mike, Donna and Matt have now all completed their Team Leader Skills Level 2. This has helped to create better communication skills for the team when dealing with each other and the general public. It has also helped in developing them within their roles and increasing their 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 promote the performing arts in this area. We are running one for the older generation called Time of Our Lives, a successful group that we have had here before, who put on plays based on the wars. The other performance is from a Cello player who uses her cello to explore the world and the different music that is available to us. "Me and My Cello" is a comical performance and one that we hope the public will enjoy. By keeping ticket prices low we aim to try and get as many age groups interested as possible. I am also hoping through increased work with the Council's Arts Development Officer, that we can push the number of attendees higher to increase awareness of The Mill while servicing the community in the arts.
- The Mill hosted the Essex Book Festival, with Kate Adie being our key speaker. We are very proud to be the hosts of this large publicized event. The show sold out and was as successful, if not more so, than the previous event with Michael Burke last year. They have again, with the encouragement of the Council's Arts Development Officer, chosen to rebook with us for 2007.
- The Mill has enjoyed running four of the local school Proms again this year. Our reputation for affordable quality and an excellent night out is really helping, as more schools want to book with us. It is also a great experience to be part of such an important night in so many young people's lives. We think it helps to curb some of the vandalism when the youth can come in for a special event that is dedicated to them and take part in something special.
- The Mill ran its first ever Boxing Event in March. It was hugely successful with the local community and we are hoping to run it again in 2007.
- Swing and Sinatra has been a success. The Mill has booked them in for two shows and a further one at Christmas. The response from the local community is great, as we are trying hard to listen to what they require and give them the shows they are asking for. Swing and Sinatra is generally aimed at the older generation. The show and dance were both sold out and the feedback was fantastic.
- We are getting more community activity 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 Thursday. We also now run a successful Card Making Class and Salsa.

- The Mill has had a variety of new innovative artists showing over the last 6 months. A few 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 preferred 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 a two to three month period, the artist can change the work they display and people purchase certain pieces of work can take the art work away with them, unlike the Main Gallery Space where each piece of art work is hung for the full 6 week exhibition period. Squires Coffee Shop's art space is also booked up until February 2007.
- The Civic Banquet was again a huge success and we had many compliments on the venue, food and general ambience of the evening. We have again been asked to hold this prestigious event for 2007.
- Bands Nights for all age groups, (14-30s and 25-60) are becoming a more regular event. The Mill works closely with Baker Events for these bookings. We are now hosting a minimum of two band nights a month, helping to 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.
- We are still having issues with youth and lack of response from the local police but by working closely with the police we have put many measures in place to try and curb these issues. We have also hosted a Band Night through Baker events, sponsored by the Police, to try and reduce the level of anti social behaviour. This was successful and again something we would like to do again in 2007, as it shows the Police are not the enemies but are there to also help the youth.
- The Mill, alongside Baker Events, ran a Battle of the Bands in August over a 5-week period. This was a competition amongst local bands and musicians, leading to a final event for a cash prize. The general interest this year was not as strong as the previous year, so we will be working closely with Baker Events to find new ways to improve this for 2007.
- The Mill, alongside Baker Events, attempted to host a 4-Day Dance Competition in the Main Hall. Unfortunately we could not get anywhere near enough interest from the local schools - only one school signed up for the competition and we had to cancel the event.
- The Mill is working with the Caroline Coates, the Council's Arts Development Officer with regards to the Cinema. It has been decided to try and get Leigh

Film Society involved and Caroline is working on funding for the group and pushing forward this exciting opportunity.

- 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 for Indian, African, Italian and Caribbean weddings, gatherings and special events.

**Catering:**

- Catering by John Waller has been The Mill's main suppliers of catering over the 6 month period this report covers. As mentioned earlier in the Freight House Section of the report, a new caterer, Perfect Banqueting, has been taken on to provide the service from October 2006.

**Maintenance:**

- We are still experiencing problems with vandalism, particularly affecting the front doors, locks in both the men's and women's toilets, and various areas on the outside of the building.
- The Terrace Garden paving has now been re-laid and is now open again for our events and use by community groups.

**Great Waking Sports Centre**

**Staffing:**

- Hazel Phillips left the company in August to go into the Royal Bank of Scotland and we have now employed a new receptionist. Paul Horwood left the company in May with Kyle Poxon replacing him as the new duty manager.

**Activities And Events**

- In the summer holidays we continued our progress with children's activities and organized three exciting weeks for children aged between 6-14yrs, which included a 5-a-side football, multisports, and football coaching. Each activity was a huge success, with over twenty children participating in each event. Multisports was a new activity at the centre organized by Ryan Hodgson and Dan Griffiths and included badminton, rounders, quick cricket and basketball.
- As part of the Council's summer activity programme, the sports hall was hired for trampolining and activities through the summer holidays, which was also a success.
- Children's birthday parties continue to be extremely popular at weekends, after school in the week and also through the school holidays.

- Hyper Activities is now being run by the Star Partnership Youth Football Project, with Pat Kielty employed as the specific project coordinator, working in partnership with the Council's Sports Development Officer. This has brought in some new activities such as dodge ball, and more advanced football coaching. The early signs are that these sports are proving popular with the children, with usage levels increasing. There are six days of different activities, free of charge, for children between the ages of 5-16 years generating good attendance figures.

**Maintenance:**

- It is good to note that we have not had any vandalism in the last six months. We have had some building work carried out, with the lighting system re-tubed in the main hall and some electrical work maintained.

**Castle Hall March Feb 2006-Aug 2006**

**Staffing :**

- Staff from The Mill have recently increased the number of site check visits and now carry out a 3 x weekly inspection.

**Activities & Events :**

- List of Events that are currently held are as follows:

Children's birthday parties x 1 – 2 per month ,  
Day time christenings x 1 quarterly  
Musical Minis (A child's singing group)  
Yoga x 2  
Mother and Toddler Group  
Slimming World (New booking as of August 2006)  
Karate classes x 3  
Drama Class (twice a month)

- The hall is not commercially strong and we abide by the restrictions in not running events that make excessive noise. This is due to complaints previously received from the local community in the immediate residential area.

**Maintenance :**

The main issues relate to the age of the building.

Recently the building has been inspected by Engineering teams from both Holmes Place and Virgin Active and a "wish list" of capital expenditure items has been drawn up.

However, a definitive answer on this list is not expected until after the completion of the merger later in 2006.

The building itself suffers from extreme heat in the summer and extreme cold in the winter. We are very flexible with all our block bookings at Castle Hall and keep the rates extremely low, to reflect the fact that it is a small self contained hall.

The toilets are very old and the floor is very difficult to maintain to a high standard but our cleaners, DMB work hard to achieve a satisfactory level of cleanliness.

The immediate area outside the building also suffers severely from fly tipping. We have removed all bins from this area after the fire last year. Our terms and conditions now state that people renting the hall must leave it in the same clean and tidy condition, with all rubbish etc taken with them when they leave.

### **Contract Marketing**

#### **General Communication :**

- Weekly press releases are prepared for local papers.
- Work has been underway to entice new “Pay & Play” business into the centres, as this is an area that is proving to be a tough market at the current time.
- Production and distribution of Rochford District Matters continues.
- Some good marketing material was used for the launch of the Rayleigh Leisure Centre. This proved to be a big success creating huge awareness and included :

Adverts in the Evening Echo with pre sale offer  
Flyers distribution with pre sales offer  
Displays at Clements Hall with pre opening offer.