

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 considers 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 2004 – March 2005**

Introduction

The following reports the progress of the Rochford Contract and the key developments and activities within each of the sites during the period October 2004 – March 2005. In addition the marketing and communication effort is highlighted for each Centre and for the overall contract.

Clements Hall Leisure Centre

Staffing

- The Company strategy based on Service, Standards and Sales has progressed significantly so that the majority of staff have now completed their climb to 'The Summit'. All operational team managers took part in a fantastic training experience which equipped them with the skills and knowledge to train their team mates in the delivery of Award Winning Customer Service. We are keeping a log of astounding stories which demonstrate team-mates 'going the extra mile' to give a great customer experience.
- We are currently recruiting for a new Duty Manager and a Gym Manager to replace Phil West, following his promotion to The Mill and Graeme Hurry who is now pursuing a career in the Fire Service. Dot Richardson leaves at the end of February, after 14 years excellent service to the Centre.
- Carly Nolan has joined the team as the Crèche Supervisor.
- Recruiting and retaining receptionists has proved difficult over the last 12 months but we are now seeing the 'light at the end of the tunnel' with a full complement of excellent receptionists.
- Lifeguard training continues on a monthly basis, alongside quarterly workshops for our studio instructors. 'Summit' training has been delivered to 90% of the team over the last 3 months and assessments have been carried out on their 'GUEST' behaviours (**G**reeting, **U**ltimate eye contact, **E**asy smile, **S**uitable body language, **T**otal charisma). 8 line managers are attending appraisal training this month to implement the Company's new appraisal process linked to the Summit initiative.
- Staff enjoyed a free party at the Freight House as a 'thank you' for all the hard work and disruption experienced during the 12 months of the refurbishment. A good team evening was enjoyed by everyone who attended.

Activities and Events

- Completion of the refurbishment programme coincided with Clements Hall's 25th Birthday celebrations. An 'Open Weekend' at the end of October concluded a week of activities that included the Essex FM road show, a new Workout Programme, special offers, activities, competitions and prizes. A very successful weekend which was enjoyed by everyone who took part. Prizes were presented on the Sunday evening by the Chairman of RDC.
- Events held at the centre have included 4 Karate competitions, a charity football match, 3 swimming galas, one of which was the annual senior schools gala, and a Saturday Sports Night.
- Energy Hours continue to be a feature when as many staff as are available get out on the floor to mix with customers and give fantastic customer service.

Maintenance

- It was recognised soon after opening that whilst the café-bar worked really well as a café during the day, it lacked the 'right' atmosphere as a bar in the evening. Further works were therefore implemented with a lowering of the ceiling, soft lighting and carpeting to create a more intimate bar area.
- Due to the water ingress over many years the contractors were unable to lay the floors in the squash courts in time for the grand opening although 2 were laid early in December. The final one was completed in January as well as sanding the floors of the 3 existing courts.
- Unfortunately we suffered 2 major gas leaks between October and December which led to pool closures on both occasions.
- 2 youths broke into the Centre in the early hours of January 11th and tried to steal the plasma screen in reception. They were unsuccessful in this but did smash the screen and caused damage to the front doors and one computer terminal. The police attended and took away the CCTV recording that clearly showed the youths concerned.
- Youths hanging around the Centre have proved to be less of a problem in the past few months but we have had increasing problems with graffiti on the external walls/door and the astro-turf walls.
- The Centre is now included on the Company's Maintenance Action Desk for the reporting of all faults and maintenance issues. We will be able to electronically track problems and provide general reports to monitor all maintenance issues.

Freight House

Staffing

- Anthony Rodd left the team in August 04 to be replaced by Steve Parker. Steve's probationary period ends at the end of March.
- Michelle Belton and Lucy Ingleson have been rewarded for their excellent performances and general working attitude by each receiving substantial increases to their basic salary from January 05.
- Sue Tilley – administration – is now working an extra ten hours a week. This is due to an influx of delegate uptake, and a significant rise in business over the last two years. It enables us to be more attentive and respond quicker to our customers demands.

Activities and Events

- Our offer of free hall hire on Friday evenings to registered charities is still proving popular with 6 events in this six month period. Most uptake is from Lady Mcadden breast screening who have organised a varying list of events including quiz nights and magic nights.
- Four band nights have been held. One of which was a fund raiser for the Tsunami disaster, the Freight House/Holmes Place gave free use of the Great Eastern Room for this event on 13th February.
- The Beer Festival in 2004 was again a huge success with record numbers of attendees reported for the 3rd year running.
- Another delegate customer has returned. Customs and Excise have commenced booking with us again after a drop in their usage.
- The party nights held in 2004 proved to be a great success and we plan to arrange more of these for 2005.
- We introduced a pantomime this year which was enjoyed by the local community. We had approximately 100 people attending two performances and are currently in the process of organising a similar show for 2005.
- The Wedding Fayre in October was very successful with over 400 people through the doors. This is obviously a good opportunity for us to sell the building and its facilities to people who ordinarily may not be aware of the service we provide. The Fayre will be repeated in 2005.

Catering

- A few minor problems have arisen but all have been dealt with in a satisfactory manner and we are still enjoying huge benefits from the contractual change. A meeting was held in January, with the heads of Catering, attended by John Waller, Carl Bentley, Liz Hughes and Martin Downes, to discuss any issues and strengthen the partnership between us.

Maintenance

- Vandalism of the windows still occurs on a frequent basis and the costs of repairs is considerable.
- An arson attack in December destroyed the large wooden storage shed located in the car park causing approximately £5,000 worth of damage.
- The Freight House is now included in Holmes Place central maintenance reporting and tracking system.
- No cars have been dumped on the site during this period.

The Mill Arts & Events Centre

Staffing

- We have 3 new Duty Managers at The Mill Arts and Events Centre who all started between November 2004 – December 2005. Phil West, our Senior Duty Manager, joined us from Clements Hall Leisure Centre and is now expanding his knowledge in a different environment. Stuart Fance is our Health & Safety Officer. He joins us from working as a freelance writer and doing a variety of different jobs since leaving University where he did his degree in English and Drama. Stuart will be actively involved in re-launching and promoting the Adult Theatre and working with all the stage productions that The Mill have in throughout 2005 including the Essex on Tour events. Matt Cope is the final member of our team and comes from a bar and carpentry background. Matt is in charge of Maintenance in the building and is also working towards increasing sales in our 2 bars. The inclusion in the team of a receptionist/administrator, Donna Eadie is continually improving the customer service at the front of house and gives visitors to the Centre a focal point for communication.
- All three Duty Managers have attended and passed their Licensee course and are named on the Alcohol licence.

Activities and Events

- Regular block bookings continue at The Mill but we have had to make a few adjustments in order to widen the programme available to the community. A 'What's on at The Mill' leaflet is now available to hand out to all customers that come in asking about what regular events we have on at The Mill Arts & Events Centre. This allows us to help promote all of our regular block bookings and help some of our block bookings increase numbers in there classes.
- The Council's Arts Development Officer, Caroline Coates has been working with the Mill to promote the gallery space. We have exhibited 4 new artists over the last 6 months, with 2 successful private viewings. Our aim for 2005 is to keep a variety of work turning over in this space to keep the venue as a destination for people interested in seeing local artist's work.
- The Mill is also engaging with Caroline Coates to re-launch the Cinema in late Spring 2005. The attendance to the movies has been very poor with not a single child showing up for a movie in over 9 months and the adult cinema only attracting low numbers. The re-launch will be directed towards older movies that it is hoped will be more appealing to the community.
- Music Week in October 2004 was a success. The Mill hosted STOMP, a Clarinet Evening and V-Jing. Everyone who attended either the performances or the workshops were very happy with the facilities and the quality of the events. Unfortunately the Clarinet evening was not as well attended as hoped, but the response from those attending was fantastic.
- The Mill did a number of charity events in January and February raising money for the Tsunami appeal. We have had various events going on for this, including quiz nights, band nights and dances and contributed by giving free hall hire to the organisations involved.
- The venue is holding a number of weddings and specialist events for Italian, Indian and Caribbean weddings. These are lucrative for the venue as they are generally held on Sunday's and take over the whole venue.

Catering

- Catering by John Waller are still the main suppliers of Catering to The Mill Arts & Events Centre with a good level of service and food standard.

Maintenance

- We are still experiencing problems with vandalism that resulted in one set of automatic main front doors being disabled, regular graffiti and air vents being

broken. The Police have been notified and we are in the Red Zone for the Community Officers to monitor the site at weekends.

- Management controls are now in place for the public toilets after 6.00pm in the evenings and this has led to less problems with the local youths misusing this facility.
- The Centre is now included in Holmes Place central maintenance reporting and tracking system.

Great Waking Sports Centre

Staffing

- We are currently recruiting a full time duty manager to add to the management team.
- Ryan Hodgson has been appointed to undertake soccer coaching and has previously worked with Celtic football club.

Activities and Events

- The half term soccer school proved to be extremely popular last year and is being repeated in the February half-term, with 35 junior players booked on the week's course.
- The 'Hyper' activities continue to be popular with local children with over 200 registered and on average a weekly attendance of between 300– 350 per week.
- Approximately 60 youths attended a DJing evening in-conjunction with the Council at the beginning of February.

Maintenance

- A number of works have been completed at Waking including new showers, extensive repairs to the main hall heating and ventilation systems, new office heating, replacement of an emergency exit door and redecoration.
- The floodlights on the tennis courts have been replaced and realigned so that some use can be made of the tennis area during the winter months. A number of local youth teams have now been booking this facility.
- One front door window had to be replaced in November due to vandalism.

Advertising and Marketing

General Communication

- Press releases sent to the key publications in the area providing information on launch of new facilities and 25th Birthday celebrations.
- Production & distribution of Rochford District Matters (32,000 x 2).
- Production and distribution of Focus Newsletters (32,000 x 1).
- New contract website has been launched www.clements hall.co.uk

Clements Hall

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

- Design, production and distribution of half term brochure for February (Distributed to all schools in the District).
- Presentation Board updated regularly.
- Inclusion of site activities in RDM/Focus newspapers.
- Additional classes on Tuesdays for Gym Tots and Jumping Bean for the under 5’s has been introduced.

Health & Fitness

- Internal challenges / promotions have included a Quadrathon to coincide with the 25th Birthday celebrations.
- Half page advertisement in the Echo announcing the completion of the refurbishment programme.

NEW – Teen Scene

- New gym sessions and classes for 12-14 year olds have been introduced between Mon-Sat 4.00pm and 5.00pm.

Membership Campaigns

- End of Summer Sale...September campaign to recruit new Health & Fitness Members. Displayed around the Centre and in Focus Newsletter.
- Relaunch/25th Anniversary. An Open Weekend was held over 30th & 31st Oct to raise the profile of the ‘New’ Centre and celebrate 25 years in the leisure industry. The Events included:
 - Quadrathon Gym challenge.

- Friday 15th October Teddy Taylor and Mark Francois and Members attended the launch evening.
 - Programme of events and taster session, incorporating ACE Sports Courses and badminton, squash, football and table tennis tournaments.
 - Children could swim for 25p all weekend.
 - Essex FM Road show
 - Membership Offer – receive 25 days free upon joining.
 - The week closed with an award ceremony with Cllr. Rosemary Brown presenting trophies to the competition winners.
- Marketing for the event included; Programme designed and produced, special edition Focus Newsletter, posters, banners and window stickers around the Centre, Wrap around the Yellow Advertiser, Essex FM Radio advertisements as well as a broadcast from the Centre and press coverage.
 - Regular leafleters recruited. Fit Street – Distribution of leaflets, customised to selected Streets, inviting residents to join as Preferential Members.
 - Centre Member Letter – Monthly Letter sent to all Centre Members with an incentive to trade in their Centre Membership against Health and Fitness Membership joining fee, for a limited period only.
 - Corporate Fact Finding Calls - Proactive calls to prospect companies with incentive to set up Corporate Membership Schemes within their company.
 - Corporate Member Email - Update on refurbishment progress and CTGF offer.
 - Buddy Letters - Sent Monthly to new members offering them a 7 day fitness pass to give to a friend, family member or work colleagues.
 - Privilege cards are issued to all new members to give to friends, colleagues offering a free one week pass.

Other

- Design and production of Community Sports Festival leaflets, now in its 3rd year.
- New Sports Course brochure designed and distributed to all schools in the District.
- More presentation frames - 6 x A1 frames and 16 A3 Silver Aluminium frames to raise profile of Membership.

- A 'Refocus' scheme has been introduced to raise the profile of the benefits of Personal Training.

The Mill Arts and Events Centre

General promotional activity has included:

- Advertisement in Jewish community news.
- ½ page advert in Essex Wedding Guide.
- Inclusion in RDM/Focus – developments.
- Events listed in 'What's On'.

Freight House

- ½ page advert in Essex Wedding Guide.
- Advertisement in Jewish community news.
- Regular weekly advert in The Business Echo.
- Inclusion in RDM/Focus.
- Events listed in 'What's On'.
- Corporate Open Day on March 9th 04.
- Wedding Fayre fliers designed & produced for event in October.

Great Wakering Sports Centre

- Centre is included in RDM/Focus.