

**Virgin Active Health Clubs –  
Rochford Contract Progress Report March 2007 – September 2007**

**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.

Due to the recent changes in the Rochford District Council structure, this report will mainly focus on the West Committee Area Leisure facilities, these being Rayleigh Leisure Centre, Mill Hall Arts Centre and Castle Hall, while also giving a brief overview of Clements Hall, Freight House and Great Wakering.

**Contract Overview – Virgin Active Update / General Information**

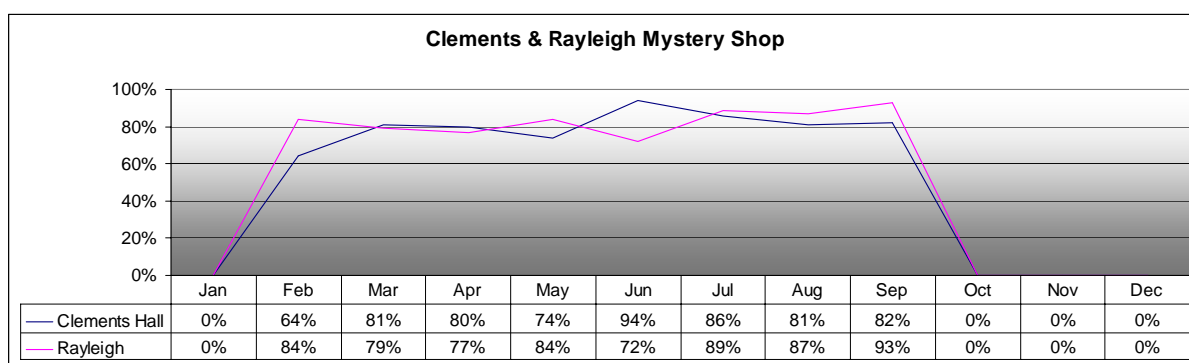
It would seem appropriate to commence this report with an update to Members regarding the current position on the integration of the Rochford District Council leisure sites post the Holmes Place acquisition in November 2006.

Ten months have now passed since the acquisition of Holmes Place was concluded and much has happened within the contract. It was initially proposed that the integration of the Holmes Place Estate, including the contract sites, would take a maximum of 12 months. Due to some unforeseen problems with planning consent for new signage, alteration to building and access, (within the old Holmes Place Health Clubs) this schedule has suffered some setbacks but has only resulted in a delay in the re-branding and refreshing of some of the sites. Integration of policies, procedure and people have maintained good progress and it is reaching its final stages. An update on the current changes are listed below.

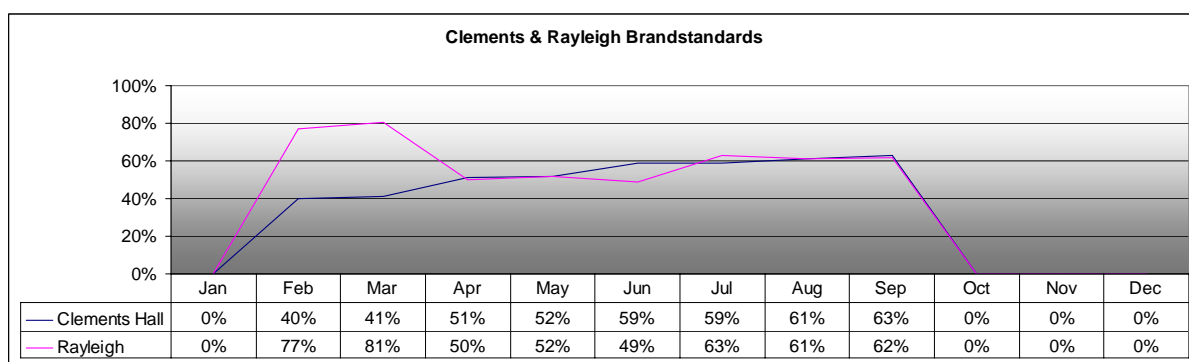
**A summary of changes is listed below :**

- In March 2007 Stephen Brown the Contract Manager at the time was promoted to Regional General Manager for the Virgin Active midlands region.
- In mid May 2007 Tony Hine was appointed as Stephen Brown's replacement and became Contracts Manager. This appointment allowed for the Contract Manager position to fall inline with the contract requirements of a fulltime contracts manager, with no responsibility for centre management, and all centres now have a dedicated General Manager.
- Introduction of a second interim, staff uniforms, was done in May 2007, removing the Holmes Place Moves to Virgin Active logo, bringing an end to any reference to Holmes Place. It is proposed to have the final uniform in place within the first quarter of 2008.
- Our mystery shopper programme is now well established at Rayleigh Leisure Centre (RLC) and Clements Hall. Both sites have delivered good results in this area. With Rayleigh Leisure Centre achieving the top score for both July and August within the Virgin Active Midland Region, exceeding the bench mark of 85% on both occasions.

RLC achieved 87% in July and 93% in August, showing a good increase and consistent delivery on customer service.



- 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. This support function 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 Wakering will fall under the maintenance manager and his team who are 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.
- There has been additional investment behind the scene in relation to maintenance at Clements Hall, with the centre falling short of some of the Virgin Active and national body requirements. Additional investment has been requested for 2008 to bring up the standards of the centre, in relation to operational requirements for the future.
- Approval for all the internal and external signage for the contract sites is now in the final stages of approval and installation should be completed by mid October.
- Costing and site surveys have now been completed for a refresh program to be completed on most of the sites, some will be more extensive than others, but this will involve refreshing existing paint work and working within the Virgin Active colour pallet, giving a fresh and brighter look.

### **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 already as mentioned above. There have been some changes to the management structure at the sites and some movements.

- Liz Hughes formally General Manager at Mill Hall 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, who currently manages both Freight House and Mill Hall will take up the permanent position of general manager at Mill Hall on the 1<sup>st</sup> October.
- Ricky Turner who will join the contract on the 1<sup>st</sup> October will be placed at Freight House as general manager.
- Matthew Griffiths has taken up the position of Operations Manager at Great Wakering.

### **Rayleigh Leisure Centre**

#### **Staffing:**

We are working on FTE (Full time equivalent) tracking and staffing levels in the gym and Front of House. We have two members of the Front of House (FOH) team and one member of the crèche team off on maternity leave. Our fitness manager is also leaving to join the British Bobsleigh team and we are in the process of recruiting for a new Fitness Manager.

- **Head of Department Leaver's**  
Tina Hornsby May 07  
Greg Goodrem Oct 07 (leaving to join British Bobsleigh Team)
- **Head of Department Joiner's**  
Kate Hooper as new Crèche Manager Sept 07

### **Marketing:**

Marketing has recently been changed from on-site marketing, using a preferred supplier, to in-house at VA head office in Milton Keynes. Our in house marketing manager is also working on getting on top of these issues and moving the centre forward. Various forms of advertising are being done:

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

### **Activities and Events:**

#### **Bowls**

- Bowls committee meetings are currently taking place in the first week of every month. These are attended by the General Manager of Rayleigh Leisure Centre to help answer any centre queries and to try to resolve any issues before they get out of hand.
- We have had approximately 210 members sign up again for the new bowls year 2007-2008 and the centre is in the process of signing up new people and renewing existing customers for their locker rentals for 2007-2008. The price has increased to £10.00 per locker for the year rental.
- There are some issues being raised as far as heating and ventilation, but all the standards meet the required regulations which were investigated by the VA maintenance and communicated to the Council.
- A new bell for the leagues has been fitted.
- New honours boards have gone up in the hall which has been purchased by VA along with a frame with the committee members photos in it.
- Customers have been signing up again for Leagues and Friendly matches and arrangements are being put in place to set up some leagues for the summer period, and the next season.
- We are continuing with the Leagues this year but aiming for a more congruent system of booking the members in and getting the correct dues. This should make the process easier for reception and decrease queuing.

### **General:**

The summer program was poorly attended. This was due to other venues offering free or lower cost activities that were in direct competition with our courses. It could also be down to the poor weather we had this summer.

At the present time we have our own programmed courses for the autumn term which started in the first week of September. We have established solid links in the community and so leaflets have been distributed to all schools in the District. Our attendance is still minimal for most of the courses, due to continual issues and inconsistencies we have had with coaches from the previous courses but we are working on restoring faith in our members.

Coaches in a lot of these sports courses are difficult to find and tend to lack consistency and reliability, but we are continually recruiting to get the best coaches in the area for our chosen areas courses. We are also trialling new areas like dance, cheerleading and basketball to see if we can interest a wider variety of people.

### **Community Based Block Bookings:**

- Block bookings are carrying on as usual and are beneficial for our club and community. We running bookings for all ages
- “Three Lions” host a junior football coaching scheme, which is highly successful and is bringing in many new people into the centre.
- “Glenwoods” is a centre for learning and development issues that use our facilities to promote health and wellness for all their customers.
- “Junior Gym” is for all children from 12-16 to be in the gym supervised and to help towards training for their areas of expertise.
- “Coombeewood” are a disabled group that are using facilities including the gym and sports hall on a regular basis.
- “Akitas Judo Club” have a regular slot on Tuesdays which are attended by both children and adults at different abilities
- “Westwood Karate” have regular slots on Wednesdays and Saturdays which are attended by both children and adults at different abilities
- “Slimming World” local slimming group run on a Wednesday night to help promote healthy weight loss. Helps to make the Centre better rounded.
- “Hyper Activities” complimentary funded sports course ranging in activities from trampolines, dance, dodgeball and boxing for 8yrs-15yr old children

### **Maintenance and other issues:**

- All outstanding snagging issues are being resolved with RDC and our maintenance department at VA.
- Heating and ventilation in the Main Hall cause some issues with customers but meet the set regulations.
- The roof leak has been totally fixed in the café by Total Construction
- Graffiti coating has now been completed by Community Clean.
- Also ongoing issues with the operation of the skate park.

### **The Mill Arts and Events Centre**

#### **Staffing**

- Staffing at The Mill remains predominantly unchanged and Matthew Cope, senior DM, has been helping to keep The Mill operational and going strong.
- From 1st October, Martin Downes takes over as full time General Manager at The Mill. Martin has been General Manager at Freight House for seven years and will be transferring to The Mill, with Ricky Turner being appointed as his replacement at Freight House.

- There have been some difficulties filling vacancies for bar staff at The Mill but after a recent hard push we are back up to very encouraging number of new and reliable casual staff.

### **Activities and events**

- Martin has had meetings with RDC Arts Development Officer, Emily Malcolm and both are keen to work together and establish a strong and productive partnership as soon as possible; giving the opportunity to develop a strong program of arts and events at Mill Hall.
- Working with Baker events there is a new music night starting up on a Thursday night. This replaces allsorts (a dance group), as they gave their notice some weeks ago due to dwindling numbers.
- Work has started on updating the website.
- RDC are currently perusing the licensing of the Windmill at the Mill for wedding ceremonies, which we are keen to support.
- Capital expenditure is being asked for to update fixtures and fittings in and around the building. These are to include, an overhaul of the meeting room and new curtains and carpets for the Bar Lounge upstairs, and new cubicles for the toilets.
- A recent site survey was also carried out for a complete repaint of the interior of Mill Hall, which would benefit the overall appearance.

### **Catering**

- Perfect Banqueting are continuing to supply an excellent service on the catering at Mill Hall, with a good working relationship and an open attitude to feedback. We have a strong working relationship with the current caterers and I think this is evident in the low number of complaints we are receiving.
- There will be a small increase in catering costs in November but this will be in line with inflation, some 3% thus keeping us very competitive in the local area.

### **Maintenance**

- The essence to the VA way of maintenance is excellent. There are some inherent maintenance issues and these will be addressed with the new structure in the contract maintenance team.
- A number of the existing items of catering equipment have recently been replaced, which has improved the catering facilities.
- Experiencing a number of complaints from regular bookings about the temperature inside the rooms. As an interim measure, we have invested in a number of turbo fans which has alleviated the problem.

## **Castle Hall**

### **Staffing**

- Castle Hall is now regularly checked by the staff at The Mill. There have also been a number of visits by head office staff from the Virgin Active maintenance team, who have introduced a system of H&S checks and facility checks for the site.

### **Activities and Events**

- Castle Hall still suffers commercially due to the restrictions placed on its operating hours, not allowing events to be run after 6pm.
- We have had to refuse to re-book one particular booking due to continued indiscretions. There had been a number of previous incidents running up to the final complaint, which led to the suspension of the booking.
- Other bookings are still continuing, with yoga and day time children's parties.

### **Maintenance**

- Castle Hall will be due for a refresh of the paint work and this will be carried out shortly by the Virgin Active refresh team.
- A request has also been put in for capital expenditure for a new heating system, for 2008.
- The issue of cabs using the car park for Castle Hall, as a stop point has now been resolved.

## **The Freight House**

### **Staffing**

- Two new members of the DM team (covering maternity) are Tracy Crabtree and Diane Offord. Tracey will be with us until April when Lucy is due to return to work and Diane is with us until the end of December 2007. Both have the correct qualification for personal licences and both have recently been booked on to a four day first aid course.
- Martin Downes has been General manager for both Freight House and The Mill since March of this year. This is coming to an end on 1<sup>st</sup> October, when Ricky Turner will be taking over responsibility for Freight House and Martin will be General Manager for The Mill, after a brief handover period. Martin has recently renewed his first aid qualification for another three years.

### **Activities and events**

- As reported in the last report, Stacey's Auctions continue to grow with the possibility of them looking for an extra day each month.
- The business is showing good growth, with a slight increase on income year to date from 2006



- A new general brochure has been generated. The idea behind the new design is to update what was becoming slightly dated but also to give a better first time impression to our customers. I think we have been successful in achieving our goal which was to come up with a simple, classy and informative information pack.
- Mail outs have been completed for our October Wedding Fayre and advertising put in place and mail outs have also been completed to the local business community for our Christmas Party nights. Four nights in all this year, and all bar one, are already nearly full!
- Conferencing bookings are still strong and showing a slight increase.
- The next major event will be this year's Beer Festival, at the end of November.

### **Catering**

On the whole we are very pleased with the service and product we are being provided with and thus supplying to our customers. There have been a couple of issues particularly with a minority of Council bookings but any issues that have arisen have been addressed.

We have a much better working relationship with the current caterers and I think this is evident in the low number of complaints we are receiving.

There will be a small increase in catering costs in November but this will be in line with inflation, some 3% thus keeping us very competitive in the local area.

### **Maintenance**

There are no major maintenance issues to report.

Freight House will shortly be receiving new internal signage and the existing road-side signage should be updated as part of this program.

### **Great Waking Sports Centre**

#### **Staffing:**

- Since June 2007 we have had a change in the management and we now have a new Operations manager Matthew Griffiths and are currently looking for a new Duty Manager.

### **Activities And Events**

- Over the summer holiday bookings were slow as Hyper had finished for the summer and we had badminton drop out until September but managed to pull through by getting more bookings in the evening for football teams training for their new season.
- Our Birthday parties have been bringing in the main income this summer, with an average of three a week, these are popular through out the community with a lot of good response.
- Hyper Activities have kicked back off again with a new program and high numbers are already attending this month.



- In June we started a new 5-a-side football League on Monday nights and has been a new fun and exciting booking, with teams coming from all over to play. It's a shame that our work team is top of the league and looks to win it!
- We are looking to get a booking every night on our hard court outside with teams needing to train for their season. However, the court is currently undergoing some maintenance work.

#### **Maintenance:**

- We are currently undergoing some maintenance work with our fire exit stairs needing new safety bars and also our hard court is being repaired with a new fence being installed.
- Vandalism is currently low and there have been very few incidents of graffiti at the centre.

#### **Clements Hall**

##### **Staffing**

- Changes to the managers in the contract have seen Tony Hudson General Manager at Rayleigh Leisure Centre move across to General Manager at Clements Hall in March 2007.
- Still a good strong team of managers based in Clements Hall, giving great support.
- Internal promotions have taken place with Bradley Lang, Phil Beal & Sean Grant moving up from Centre Assistants to Senior Centre Assistants.
- New Members of Staff: Alan Rumble Maintenance Manager, Claire McMurray Sales Consultant, Ben Preston Centre Assistant, Danny Kamil Swim Co-ordinator, Tina Hornsby Club V Supervisor, Chloe Sargent Fit Pro & Instructor, Judi Lee Fit Pro,
- The new style of appraisal system called "Evaluate" was put into place in April this year and has had positive feedback and conducted phase two of the evaluate process in July. This offers much better staff feedback on their own role.

##### **Activities & Events :**

- The 5-a-side league taking place on Sunday evenings, in association with Essex Football Association, is still a huge success with 16 teams taking part. The season started again on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September.
- In a partnership with the Police and Ambulance Services, we have hosted another extremely successful Dodgeball Tournament encompassing the fire service, RDC, Virgin Active, Police and local business to better unify these key roles and enhance community cohesion. The next event is scheduled for Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September.
- Outdoor Action and Ace Action was disappointing this year, with very few participants and have held meetings with Julie Gooding to look at holding joint ventures next year. Trial days for this will be held in October half term.

### **Maintenance :**

- Vandalism does continue at the centre but has decreased over the last 5 months. Great communication with Steve Joynes our Community Officer and the security firm has helped.
- Alan Rumble has joined Clements Hall as Building Services Manager. Alan has transferred over from Chelmsford Virgin Active and comes fully qualified in all aspects. Alan's experience will set a precedence for the new recruits coming in.