

**APPENDIX A**

**Holmes Place Moving to Virgin Active Leisure Management –  
Rochford Contract Progress Report October 2006 – February 2007**

**Introduction**

The reports below 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.

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

It would seem appropriate to commence this report with an update to Members regarding the current position of the recent acquisition by Virgin Active.

Four months has now passed since the deal was concluded and much has happened within the contract. The integration process was originally scheduled to take up to 12 months in its entirety, however progress has been made and it is hoped that this process will now be much shorter.

A summary of changes is listed below:-

- Introduction of interim staff uniforms, full new uniforms will come in from early summer 2007.
- All staff have attended a series of “roadshows” to give awareness of their new employer.
- Many head office support staff have visited all Rochford sites, making sure the feel of the contract is fully absorbed and respected.
- There have been some minor changes to job titles in some cases, however terms and conditions are unchanged.
- An extensive calendar of training, covering all departments, has been introduced and will be issued each quarter. This is far superior to previously.
- The Virgin “people” approach is evident and demonstrable through the investment in it’s staff.
- A far superior maintenance and engineering approach is available, with increased support and resource being put into the contract.
- The introduction of extensive “brand standards” audits designed to grow and maintain standards up to the level Virgin expect. This also covers all aspects of both front and back of house.
- An extensive programme of mystery shoppers, with a monthly report and expected pass mark.
- A fast moving approach to personal development for staff that perform well.
- A robust approach to Health and Safety.

**Contract Overview - General**

The end of 2006 and beginning of 2007 has shown continued progress in uniting the contract sites. Managers are working well together and provide mutual support to ensure a cohesive approach to the management and an increased understanding of each business.

All site managers have adapted well to the Virgin Active integration and have already seen the benefits to their businesses, as mentioned above.

**Clements Hall**

**Staffing**

- The management team here have grown superbly and as mentioned last time, are developing their departments as planned.
- Stephen Brown, Contract Operations Manager has now been in post for 12 months and directly oversees Clements Hall within this capacity. The planned style of management to the team seems to have worked well, and site managers, as well as Heads of Departments at Clements Hall, are responding well.
- Naomi Goss joined us in November 2006 as Marketing Co-ordinator.
- Carolyn Flintham has been promoted to senior sales consultant.
- Michelle Ralph has been promoted to three Site Sales Manager, taking in Clements Hall, Rayleigh and Thundersley Virgin Active.
- Kelly Noble has been promoted to Club-V Manager (Children's Activities).
- Health & Safety training has taken place with the Operations Manager, with new systems being put in place.
- A new style of appraisal system will be activated in April 2007, named "Evaluate", offering much better staff feedback on their own role.

**Activities & Events**

- The children's ACE activity programme will soon be re-branded as Club-V, and in line with this, many solid improvements will come into the service provided. New policies and procedures have already been introduced.
- Planning is underway for the outdoor action range of activities, offered in partnership with the Council, for the summer holiday period.
- 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.

- In partnership with the Police, we have held two extremely successful Dodgeball Tournaments. This encompassed the fire service, RDC, Virgin Active, the Police and local businesses, to better unify these key roles and enhance community cohesion.
- February saw the Community Sports week take place, with free activities to the community. This was held over a one week period at all sporting contract sites, offering choice and coaching, in a wide range of activities. This was paid for by the contractual special events budget.

### **Maintenance**

- Vandalism does continue at the centre and this took a sharp increase in early Autumn but has since lessened in the new year. The Police office at Clements Hall is manned regularly and has had some success.
- John Wells has joined as Contract Building Services Manager. John comes from a PFI background in health and is used to providing the highest standards, in line with the PFI set up. The team has been doubled in size to four staff, two of which will be based at Clements Hall and two will take a mobile role covering the other contract sites. It is expected this will dramatically improve our ability to advance the maintenance effort.
- New air handling units have been fitted to the main pool hall and whilst this did bring some unexpected closure in October 2006, the improvement in air quality was much needed and is clearly apparent.
- As verbally reported last meeting, the pool was closed due to vandalism using a dye substance in November. This was resolved as quickly as possible, with excellent support from Virgin Active.

### **Rayleigh Leisure Centre**

#### **Staffing**

Staffing levels are currently fine, but with two “Front of House” team members soon to go onto maternity leave. New starters will be recruited:-

- **Leaver’s since opening in May 2006**

Liz Stone (Maternity) 12<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

- **Joiner’s since opening in May 2006**

Sam Green (Fit Pro, started 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007)

#### **Marketing**

Some great marketing and advertising material has been used for the Rayleigh Leisure Centre. This is still proving to be a big success, creating huge awareness and general trade:-

- Adverts in the Evening Echo with monthly offer.
- Flyers distribution with monthly offer.
- Internal Posters with monthly offer.

## **Activities and Events**

### **Bowls**

The steering committee is still currently in place, meeting every three weeks to discuss any issues that have been raised and to plan for future events. The AGM has been arranged for the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007, to elect next season's delegates and committee members.

This year's leagues have been very well attended, and arrangements are in place to set up some leagues for the summer period and the next season. Internal competitions are still taking place, with the finals to be played on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007. Friendlies are still ongoing, with other bowls clubs already arranging next year's fixtures.

### **General**

Our own programmed courses for the winter term have started and we have established 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, Dodge ball.

"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 and Saturday, for ages of 2 years to 5 years.

"Coombewood" 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 is attended by both children and adults with different abilities.

"Westwood Karate" have regular slots on Wednesdays and Saturdays, which are attended by both children and adults at different abilities

"Scene One" have used the sports hall on a number days to rehearse for the forthcoming shows, with over 100 children attending

### **Maintenance**

- All outstanding snagging issues are being raised for the 12 month snag. Jamie Ferguson, Regional Maintenance Manager for Virgin Active, will be present when the snag is taking place. He will also be present the two days before the snag, to raise any other issues that need addressing.

- Issues being dealt with by Total Construction:-
  - Roof leak in Café

## **The Freight House**

### **Staffing**

Since the last report, Cheryl Steels, Duty Manager, (DM) has left the business for personal reasons. Her leaving date was 5<sup>th</sup> February 2007. This was disappointing but I have already filled her place via an internal promotion - Zoe Bailey was a member of Freight House bar staff for a while and has been doing a GNVQ hospitality apprenticeship on her own initiative. She is currently waiting for her results. Zoe has had experience in the hotel industry where she covered all aspects of the business. She has also had retail experience. To date Zoe has been shadowing existing DM's and is progressing well. In the last week she has done some "easier" shifts on her own, which, after what is a relatively short period, is testament to her thirst for learning her role.

After a three month probationary period, Zoe will be fully trained in First Aid at work. She will also be put on to a licensing course, to enable her to become a licensee and then she will be added to our license.

Due to the change around of staff, I have had to restructure responsibilities again. Michelle Belton will resume responsibilities of conferencing, working with Susan Tilley and Zoe will manage the bars, along with General Manager, Martin Downes.

### **Activities and events**

With reference to my last report, our annual Wedding Fayre in October was another success, with over 100 brides and their partners attending. The mail-out for this year's Wedding Fayre will be starting in April.

Stacey's Auctions are getting busier each month, which is fantastic and is creating a lot more foot fall through the venue. However, due to circumstances beyond my control, parking is becoming an issue, particularly when the auction day falls on a market day (agreed parking with RDC for market traders).

December 2006 was the busiest we have experienced since I joined the Freight House, some six years ago. It was the first December we have worked with our new caterers and the month was a huge success.

Conference usage in January 2007 was up 14% on 2006, which is encouraging as this is an area of the business we have been concentrating on increasing.

### **Catering**

On the whole we are extremely happy with what was a seamless transition from Catering by John Waller to Perfect Banqueting. The quality of the product and the service has been vastly improved and although we have experienced some teething problems, the feedback from 99% of our customers has been very good. Although Perfect Banqueting is a smaller

concern than Catering by John Waller, I feel we are benefiting from this as we are receiving more care and attention than previously.

### **Maintenance**

No maintenance issues to flag up and at the moment we are not experiencing much vandalism, although a new generation of youths has started to hang around outside of an evening, throwing stones at the building. We have contacted local Police and they have said they will get the community officers to walk round the building more regularly.

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

#### **Staffing**

- The Mill is again in the process of building a new team. Adam Stone has been with us for approximately six months and is coming along well in his development. He passed his Licensing Course one month ago and we are now in the process of obtaining his personal license. Matt Cope, our Operations Manager, is developing well in his new role and working hard on making sure each function runs smoothly. Mike Harris is still in charge of maintenance and has just finished doing a massive clear out of the building, allowing us to be more organised for 2007. Donna Eadie has recently received a promotion to Sales and Events Manager and is doing a fantastic job bringing in many new bookings, from community shows to private functions.

#### **Activities and Events**

- We are still heavily involved in Essex on Tour. Our first show was on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2006, which was for the older generation called “Time of Our Lives”, a successful group that we have had here before, whose plays are based on the wars. Unfortunately, it had a poor turnout due to the fact that it was very close to Christmas. On the 25<sup>th</sup> March we are hosting “Me and My Cello” which is a performance around a cello player who uses comedy and her cello to explore the world to different music. Tickets have just started to sell for this performance, and with the help of the Council’s Arts Development Officer, we are hoping for a much stronger turn out.
- The Mill will again be hosting the Essex Book Festival on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2007, with Jane Lapotaire being our key speaker. We are very proud to be the hosts of this large publicised event.
- The Mill is also 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 are wishing to book with us. We feel strongly that these events help to curb some of the vandalism, when the youth can come in for a special event that is dedicated to them and then it has good memories associated with it.
- The Mill ran a Wrestling Event in February, which is becoming more successful and helping us to reach a new type of audience within our community that have a strong sporting interest. Following the success of last year’s Boxing event, we are also going to be hosting another Boxing match this year.

- Swing and Sinatra was a success at Christmas, with 188 tickets sold. We will be having them with us again in 2007.
- For 2007 through to March 2008, new artists for the Coffee shop and the Main Gallery space have been put in place by The Mill. We have a variety of old and new artists showing with us over this period, each exhibition ranging in time from six weeks to two months. Both spaces are again fully booked until March 2008.
- We will be hosting the Civic Banquet again in March 2007. Matt Cope will be fully in charge of this event and we look forward to making it a huge success again, and giving us an opportunity to show off our wonderful new caterers to the Council and all its invited guests.
- With increasing popularity among the local youth, our Friday bands nights for all age groups, (14-30s and 25-60) are a regular event. The Mill works closely with Baker Events and the Local Authorities, to make these music festivals as successful as possible. We now have youths and bands that come from as far as Colchester, who want to attend these well publicised nights. We are 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, increasing our community activities amongst the younger age groups on a weekend.
- The Mill has spent the last six months getting more involved with ticket sales for all of the new shows it has been putting on. This is not normally a service we offer, as taking money for other peoples' events can prove to be very difficult and involves a lot more man-hours. However, to try and increase ticket sales, we offer it as a sideline or a perk for the person booking with us. It is still something we are working on improving.
- The Mill has also put in place a new comments file, where a customer call is done every Monday. A feedback questionnaire is sent out after each event, allowing us to obtain direct feedback from our customers and to make any relevant changes needed, based around what our customers want from us.
- Our main focus in 2007 is to increase customer service and customer care, with an emphasis on operations and running the events.

### **Catering**

- Perfect Banqueting have brought a new level to the quality of catering that we now provide here at The Mill. Their menus and flexibility on choice, combined with reasonable pricing and focus of customer service, is making the move from Catering by John Waller to Perfect Banqueting, to be one of the best choices we have made to improve the services that we offer.

### **Maintenance**

- Vandalism is still happening at The Mill but we feel it is under control for the time being and have not had anything out of the ordinary happening.

- We have also had the new system in place from January, where we have a maintenance person based with us, generally one day a week, to help to combat any major issues and make the building look more appealing.
- We have had new fire doors fitted to the side of the building that had become water logged and needed replacing. They are now in place and fully operational.
- We have also had a new water tank installed in the upstairs boiler room, again fully installed and operational.

## **Great Wakering Sports Centre**

### **Staffing**

- Leanne Hodges is our current new member of staff, who replaced Hazel Philips in October 2006. Leanne's job roles will be receptionist duties.

### **Activities And Events**

- Over the October half term in 2006 we tried new activities during the week, which proved to be popular and well attended. These activities were Multisports events for 11-16 years.
- Our birthday parties are becoming so popular that we are now regularly fully booked every week. Customers have complimented us that it's the place to be for birthdays in 2007!
- Hyper Activities have always been popular here and the success just keeps on growing. We have changed some activities in 2007 with a new programme and have now extended the activities on some of the days.
- Hyper Activities and Rochford Council organised some activities during February half term, which were very well attended. These included trampolining and Boxercise.
- Bookings and events at Great Wakering have been excellent, with barely any space during the evenings and weekends available. Daytime now is the key free availability for customers.
- 5-a-side football is due to start in March and we are also looking at some special needs activities.

### **Maintenance**

- Our maintenance team have been doing some work in 2007, which includes the lighting in the hall being re-tubed and gas pipes in the main hall being serviced and maintained.

## **Castle Hall Oct 2006 – February 2007**

### **Staffing**

- Staff from The Mill have recently increased the number of site check visits previously undertaken and now carry out inspections three times per week.



### **Activities & Events**

- Events that we currently hold at Castle Hall are as follows:-  
Children's birthday parties - one to two per month,  
Day time christenings - one quarterly  
Musical Minis (A child's singing group)  
Yoga x 2  
Mother and Toddler Group  
Karate classes x 3  
Drama Class (twice a month)  
Dance Class x 2  
Christenings (1 every 2 months)
- The hall is not commercially strong and we abide by the restrictions on not operating or running events that make any noise after 6pm, due to previous complaints made by the local community from the immediate residential area.

### **Maintenance**

The main issues surrounding the building relate to the building showing its age somewhat. The building has been inspected by engineering teams from 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 later this year (2007).

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 compensate for 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 work very hard to make this happen.

The immediate area outside the building also suffers severely from fly tipping. We have removed all bins from this area after the fire there last year and it is now in our terms and conditions that people renting the hall must leave it in exactly the state they found it in. All rubbish etc must be taken with them when they leave.

### **Contract Marketing**

#### **General Communication**

- Weekly press releases are still being prepared for local papers with some good coverage
- Work has been underway to entice new "Pay & Play" business into the centre, 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.