

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).
- 1.2 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**
 - (1) That the contents of the Holmes Place progress report in relation to the leisure management contract be noted.
 - (2) That the closure of the Crèche facility at The Mill, Rayleigh due to lack of demand, be recommended to the Community Services Committee and that the room to be utilised for a range of other uses and bookings. (CD(F&ES))

Roger Crofts

Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)

Background Papers:

None

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APPENDIX A

**HOLMES PLACE LEISURE MANAGEMENT –
ROCHFORD CONTRACT PROGRESS REPORT MARCH–AUGUST 2003**

Introduction

The partnership between Rochford District Council and Holmes Place continues to strengthen and this report charts the progress made within the contract between March and August 2003.

The financial year for the contract came to an end on March 31st and Holmes Place was delighted to return to the Council £113,000 as their share of the 'super profits'. This reflects the continuing good performance within the contract and the increased customer usage of the Centres.

The protracted management buyout of Holmes Place PLC impacted on the contract and caused some delays to the proposed building works at Clements Hall. Now that the buyout is complete the refurbishment is fully underway.

Mark Talley left the contract in March and has now been replaced by Carl Bentley as Contract Manager.

The following details activities and events at each of the Centres and the overall marketing effort within the contract.

Clements Hall Leisure Centre

Staffing

- 3 excellent new members of staff have been recruited for the gym. They are well qualified and enjoy interacting with customers. 3 gym staff have completed and passed the Holmes Place Personal Trainer (PT) course. Personal Trainers will be offered to customers by the end of September.
- Holiday Activity staff all attended a training day that covered interacting with children, games to play, emergency aid and child protection.
- 5 new staff are now working in the bar and café whilst 6 new casual leisure assistants have been recruited
- We currently have 2 fulltime vacancies for leisure assistants.

Special Events

- RADs have held 3 Sunday Speedo Galas
- On March 29th Kevin Reid, together with centre staff, organised a very successful Community Sports Festival at Clements Hall. 576 people took part in the event, many trying some activities for the first time. The feedback from the event was very positive and lessons were learned on how to improve the event for next year. Definitely one to be repeated.
- Over 300 underprivileged children attended an event in the Main Hall organised by the local Taxi Drivers Association. They held the event at the centre last year and have already been booked for next year.
- Over 200 youngsters took part in a Saturday Sports Night organised by Network Youth in April.
- In May, Wiggles Dance Club held a presentation night for over 600 people in the Main Sports Hall. The children demonstrated their skills before the presentation, which was followed by a disco. Lorraine Field, the proprietor of Wiggles, organised a guest appearance of a local girl band - Tantalise.
- A badminton tournament, a volleyball tournament and a gala were held at Clements Hall in July as part of the Sports Council Festival of Sport.
- 3 Pilates classes were introduced in May attracting in excess of 15 customers per session.
- We were unable to find a venue for Outdoor Action in Hullbridge so had to provide an extra session in Rayleigh at Fairview Park. All sessions have been well attended with many full to capacity.

Maintenance

- The air conditioning units have been tested to the limits over the last few weeks, so have needed several repairs to them.
- Essex and Suffolk Water carried out an inspection in July to make sure we comply with the Water Supply (Water Fitting) Regulations 1999. They have made a number of recommendations to ensure the Centre meets the current regulations and it is anticipated that the work will be completed by the beginning of September.

The Mill Arts and Events Centre

Staffing

Phil Beal was appointed as a duty manager at The Mill and the Centre has had a full complement of staff during this period.

Coffee Shop

The new Coffee Shop has opened and is now operated by Carl Watson who is also the proprietor of Squires in Rayleigh High Street. The environment is modern and lively and the quality of the tea, coffee and food is excellent. It has added significantly to The Mill and is a major element in transforming the Centre into a destination for the people of Rayleigh.

Catering

The new catering contractors continue to provide an excellent service at the Centre and fully justify the decision to contract out this aspect of the business.

Refurbishment

It is disappointing to report that the refurbishment of The Mill has been delayed due to problems experienced with the builder, Capon Ltd. Poor workmanship and supervision led us to remove them from the site and a new contractor has been appointed to correct mistakes and finish the work.

Community Art

The community art piece commissioned for The Mill has now been installed and creates a stunning entrance to the Centre. It is an interesting work that has stimulated much discussion amongst regular customers.

The groups who assisted the artist, Anne Schwegmann – Fielding, all attended the opening of the Mosaic.

Shoppers Crèche

A separate report has been appended to this document seeking approval to close the shoppers crèche at The Mill (Appendix 1). Despite our best efforts it would appear that there is very little demand for such a facility and we firmly believe the space can be put to a more productive use.

The Freight House

Staffing

The Centre has had a stable staff structure during this period.

A bonus scheme has been introduced for the management team based on quarterly financial results.

The appointment of a dedicated manager for the centre is proving to be beneficial giving an extended office coverage and greatly improved communication with customers.

Catering

The quality and quantity of products offered to the customers continues to improve. Analysis of returned questionnaires clearly demonstrates that there is a greater level of satisfaction from our customers.

Maintenance

Redecoration of the Centre has continued. It includes main areas of The Great Eastern Room, and three of the six toilet areas. The remaining toilets will be completed inside the next two months.

We are experiencing problems with vandalism, resulting in seven windows being smashed in the last two months. Most of the ammunition for this vandalism is being gathered from the stony area of the car park. The damage to the windows occur outside of opening hours and have cost approximately £185 to repair.

Car Parking

Issues surrounding car parking have diminished considerably with the introduction of parking restrictions and checks by the Council's car park attendants. This has freed up a number of spaces for the Centre customers. Over 60 parking tickets were issued on the first day.

Great Waking Sports Centre

Staffing:

The key changes that have been made include:

- Appointment of Sherry Pankhurst as Centre Manager.
- Appointment of an additional Duty Manager Jonathan Noakes to improve cover and service levels.

Maintenance and refurbishment:

Improvements to the Centre continue.

Examples of the improvements include:

- Great Waking – Redecoration of circulation corridors and public areas.
- Party room moved to first floor and redecorated.
- Sun bed room moved to ground floor and decorated.
- Front doors and windows repainted
- New external welcoming sign has been ordered to replace existing sign.

Some vandalism at the site has been experienced including:

- Damage to the repainted front doors with names etched into the paint.
- External side of first floor fire exit severely damaged.
- Fire extinguisher and signs stolen on two occasions.
- 11 windows smashed at various times.

The damage is primarily caused after the Centre has closed in the evening and has cost in the region of £600 in repairs.

Arts and Sports Development:

A strong working partnership has developed between the Centre and the arts and sports development officers and has led to a number of new initiatives at the Centre.

The Sports Development Officer has assisted in the organisation of a number of events and activities at Great Waking, including after school activities such as volley ball, uni-hoc, rounders, badminton and tennis.

The Arts Development have a great response to the drama classes held at Waking every Saturday morning.

In addition a number of new children's activities have been organised including ACE Action for the over 8's during holidays, football coaching, basket ball coaching additional trampoline classes and an increase in allocation of time for birthday parties.

Special Events

An aspect of the Holmes Place tender was an events budget and to date over £10,000 has been spent on the following events:

- Community Sports Festival at Clements Hall
- Creation of the community art piece for the entrance to The Mill Arts and Events Centre

- ‘Essex on Tour’ performing arts group at various venues around the District

Currently discussions are being held to stage a music festival in the District and further post Christmas events.

Marketing, Sales Support and Site Presentation

The following highlights the continued marketing effort and aesthetic improvements that have taken place.

General Communication

There continues to be a concerted effort to communicate with the residents of Rochford District via many different media including:

- Press releases to the key publications in the area.
- Production and distribution of Rochford District Matters (32,000 x 2).
- Production and distribution of Focus Newsletters (32,000 x 2).
- Updating of contract-wide leaflets and presentation materials.
- Updating of website.

Clements Hall

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

- Design and production of half term brochure – April.
- Design and production of half term brochure – May.
- Design and production of Summer holiday brochure (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: -

- Tour De France Gym Challenge – raising money for Marie Curie Cancer Care.
- Rowing Challenge.
- Challenge the Instructor.

H2O Swim School

New promotional material and activities have been created for the Centres swimming lesson programmes including:

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

Membership Campaigns

- **The Perfect Gift 14th Feb – 31st March**
10,000 Maildrop, to coincide with Valentines Day, was offering 7-day trial membership to resident and their partner with a joining incentive.
- **Eggcellent Savings April**
Charity driven membership promotion, to encourage residents to donate an Easter egg in return for discounted Membership. Eggs were donated to Southend Hospitals Children's Ward. Advertised on site and in Focus Newsletter.
- **Summertime to join May & June**
Discounted joining fee. Maildrop and Advertised on site.
- **Commit To Get Fit July – mid August**
Participation in the UK's Largest Charity Membership Drive. 6 weeks O2 Membership for the price of 4. Advertised on site and RDM.
- Membership drive through publicity surrounding the Clements Hall developments, through RDM, Focus, the Echo plus The Southend & Rayleigh Times.

Other

- Produced & distributed marketing material for Rochford Community Sports Festival.
- **½ Page ad in Official Rochford District Guide.**
- Presentation board in foyer detailing Phase 1 of the development plan.

Leisure Card

- The Rochford Leisure Card Scheme was launched from the 1st April as an extension under the current Centre Membership.
- A new Membership leaflet has been produced with new prices detailed for Rochford residents and non-residents.
- The new brochure highlights the new partner supplier discounts which are listed on the Clements Hall website.

- Competition set up in March's Focus Newsletter to name the 'Leisure Card'.

The scheme is continuing to be developed throughout 2003 in conjunction with improved IT management systems being implemented at Clements Hall.

The Mill Arts and Events Centre

General promotional activity has included:

- Newly designed adverts placed in Yellow Pages.
- Advertisement placed in Limited Edition.
- Advertisement in Jewish community news.
- ½ page advert in Essex Wedding Guide.
- ½ page advert in Official Rochford District Guide.
- Cinema - Film Bookings.
- Leaflets for Children's Activities.
- New Presentation Folders designed & produced.
- New general information brochure designed & produced.
- Developed & distributed programme for March – August. Comedy @ The Mill programme.
- Display in foyer.
- Children's cinema sponsorship from Britvic.
- Inclusion in RDM/Focus – developments.
- Events listed in 'What's On & Where'.
- New photography, table/room set-ups.
- High levels of PR for Mill Hall refurbishment, Mosaic and Squires at The Mill.

Movies at The Mill

- Developed & distributed new programme for 2003 April – September & October – March.
- Changed matinee showings to a Wednesday evening.
- Inclusion in RDM/Focus.

Freight House

- Newly designed adverts placed in Yellow Pages, plus inclusion of Business Pages.
- New Database management system – Act to improve prospecting for new business. Information has been sent to all local funeral directors who were supplied with full details on our funeral package, local government departments ie. Southend and Basildon Hospitals, customs and excise and local NHS departments and previous business customers such as Essex Police and Great Eastern Railways.
- ½ page advert in Essex Wedding Guide.
- ½ page advert in Essex County Council Conference Venue Guide.

- ½ page advert in Official Rochford District Guide.
- Advertisement placed in Limited Edition.
- Advertisement in Jewish Community News.
- Regular weekly advert in The Business Echo.
- New general information leaflet designed.
- Inclusion in RDM/Focus.
- Wedding Fayre flyers being produced.
- Events listed in 'What's On & Where'.
- Children's Parties Flyer.
- New photography – Conference set up and building exterior.
- 3000 leaflets were distributed before the school holidays throughout all local schools offering opportunities for children's birthday parties at Freight House.

Great Wakering Sports Centre

- Summer Holiday Flyer produced and distributed to local schools.
- A new Centre brochure is being published.
- Centre is included in RDM/Focus.
- Areas of the Centre being re arranged to promote additional activities targeted at children.

General

Events Team

A new initiative has been launched within the Rochford contract with the aim of the Centres being truly integrated within the community. The following illustrates the objectives of the 'events team'.

- To be actively involved in all community events – schools, fetes, town shows, etc. with the aim to create more localised awareness of all sites in the contract and the 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.

Appendix 1

**Proposal to cease the operation of a Crèche at
The Mill - Arts and Events Centre**

Introduction

The following report is to consider alternative uses for the existing shoppers crèche facility located in The Mill - Arts and Events Centre, Rayleigh.

Since taking over the Rochford Contract, Holmes Place has promoted the use of the crèche within the Town through a variety of media including leaflet drops, mail shots to local schools, the Focus newsletter and Rochford District Matters. We have also closely monitored the use and perceived benefit of having such a facility to support shopping Rayleigh.

Having given a concerted effort to improving the performance of the crèche over the past year it has become clear that there is no real demand for such a facility in the Town.

We now believe that it should be closed and alternative use made of the area that is to the greater benefit of a wider group of potential customers for The Mill.

Background

The Crèche at Mill Hall has been in operation for a number of years and was opened as a 'shoppers crèche'. The intention was to provide a place where parents could leave their children whilst shopping in Rayleigh High Street.

The crèche is currently open for 20 hours per week on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9.30am – 2.30pm. The room is Ofsted registered for a maximum of 12 children and each child can only be left for a period not exceeding two hours. The charge per child is £2.00 per hour.

Three staff are employed to supervise the area on a part time basis, working a total of 32 hours per week.

The following is a break down of the gross income and expenditure for the crèche over the period April 2002 – March 2003:

	£
Income	2,346
Salaries	7,894
Gross Profit	(5,548)

Other Expenditure	<u>200</u>
Net Profit	(5,748)

The income equates to a total usage of 1,173 children over the year, 22 per week or 1 child per opening hour.

Clearly one child per hour in the crèche does not constitute a significant demand for this particular service and we believe much better use can and should be made of this area.

The Proposal

As the refurbishment of The Mill is almost complete Holmes Place will be re-launching the Centre as a modern arts and events centre and releasing the crèche will enable the room to be used for a wide variety of community and commercial activities.

These activities will include;

- A general purpose meeting room for local organisations, commercial and non-commercial.
- Special occasion dinners
- Art exhibitions
- Art classes
- Seminars, presentations and small conferences
- Children's party room
- Yoga and related exercise classes

The room will require additional investment for redecoration and fixtures and fittings, including tables and chairs, wipe boards, projectors etc. so that it can accommodate the new activities.

It is also our intention to increase the reception cover at The Mill and we will need to cover the costs of any potential redundancies of existing staff.

The savings made on the current staffing of the crèche will generate the funding for the above.

Should the Committee approve the closure we anticipate that this would take effect at the end of October, as it will be necessary to undertake a consultation process with the staff involved.