



Vista Leisure
Corporate Plan 2010–2013

Looking forward, giving back





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1. Chief Executive's Introduction

The continuation of our partnership with Dover District Council (DDC) following the extension of facility leases up until 2021 provides the opportunity to plan for the future with more certainty. Whilst the delivery of services on behalf of DDC at Dover Leisure Centre, Tides Leisure Centre and Walmer Paddling Pool is the current basis of the business model it is essential to maintain and develop other income streams to improve our financial health and deliver even more community benefit.

Balancing the implementation of a profitable and sustainable growth strategy with the need to continually improve the quality and performance of existing facilities and services presents four key challenges:

- Access to affordable resources, to invest time and money in securing new business, and improving existing facility and service provision.
- The continued development of our people to build further upon our capability and reputation.
- The requirement to effectively improve existing and future key partner and customer relationships and exceed performance expectations.
- The ability to effectively respond to the economic difficulties and in particular the squeeze on public sector spending.

Within the public sector the value of Social Enterprises is now being recognised at both national and local level and combined with the emerging importance of pursuing a healthy lifestyle will afford the opportunity for Vista Leisure to develop its portfolio.

In my role as Chief Executive I want to ensure continued success in a changing world. Over the years Vista Leisure has carefully balanced the need for continuous improvement with the need for stability and security. I see this as my challenge to deliver the change which keeps us one step ahead as we move from being good to great. This plan sets out the changing needs of our partners and customers, potential shifts in the political, economic and technological environment, and demonstrates how we must adapt to meet future challenges.

At Vista Leisure we know engaged staff make for satisfied customers, and exceptional commitment is what makes Vista an organisation I am proud to work for. I look forward to working with colleagues and partners over the coming years, as we continue to provide a wide range of leisure opportunities for local people and the wider community.

Kevin Fordham
Chief Executive



What do we want to do?

2. Our Mission and Key Objectives

Vista Leisure's mission is to provide quality facilities and services for the benefit of the communities we serve. Our visionary and commercial approach will provide benefit for all partners, customers and employees and this is emphasised by our Corporate Plan strap line 'Looking Forward Giving Back'.

We can achieve the increased benefit by focusing on key themes – valuing our people, investing in our business, providing a service that exceeds expectations, working as a team and developing partnerships, and improving our financial performance to achieve economic stability.

- V valuing our people
- I investing in our business
- S service exceeding expectation
- T teamwork and partnership
- A achieving economic stability

This Corporate Plan focuses on these five key themes supported by three year objectives and annual operational targets. Each is fundamental to the achievement of our mission. The key test of whether we are delivering against these objectives is what our partners and customers think of our facilities and services.



Why do we need to do this?

3. Key influences

Our existing and potential customers are the lifeblood of our business and it is essential that we meet their requirements and deliver services that exceed expectations. Understanding consumer attitudes and perceptions is fundamental to support our planning.

3.1 Our Customers

The national Health and Fitness Omnibus Survey is the only regular industry barometer of UK consumers' attitudes and perceptions towards health, activity and the active leisure sector. The key messages for the industry are:

Huge opportunity for the sector – An increasing number of people (94%) now believe that physical activity / exercise is important to their health, up 5% from 2009; less than half (45%) consider that they exercise / undertake activity as much as they would like. Those aged 25 to 54 are much more likely to state that they do not exercise as much as they would like, while 50% of men state they do compared to only 42% of women.

Activity levels gradually improving - About 20% of the population stated they had done no sessions of 30 minutes moderate exercise recently (down from 30% last year), 60% say they've done three or more sessions per week (significantly up from last year) and 32% claim to have done five or more. 30% of the sample said that they had increased their activity levels in the last three months. Generally speaking 65% of this activity will be in single sessions of 30 minutes or more, while a 35% will be made of shorter sessions.

People still don't understand what they need to do - Still only 18% of our respondents understand that five times 30 minute sessions per week is the recommended activity level, with 39% thinking that they only need to do three sessions per week or less and 21% thinking that you need to do more than five sessions!

Grey market resistant to message - Overall 59% of the population said they would like to do more activity / exercise. The % reduced significantly within the older age groups, reducing to just 30% of over 75's.

Motivation varies between ages and genders - Most people (62%), state that they want to be more active to 'improve their general health', but 28% say it is more about body shape and tone. Women are more likely than men to want to do more activity, at 62% female compared to 54% male.

Challenge for leisure centres, health and sport - When asked how they would most be likely to get more active, the preferred options were activities such as walking and cycling, followed by leisure centre / health club options and finally working out at home and playing traditional sport.

Time, costs and transport are significant obstacles - The main stated barrier to being more active continues to be perceived as time, followed by direct costs and then lack of transport.

Potential customers ready to use our facilities - 41% of the sample said that they were open to the idea of using their local leisure centre or health club, the main reasons given for not wishing to use them was cost followed by 'no need'.

2012 will encourage others but not me - 46% of the sample stated that the London Olympics in 2012 will encourage people generally to be more active, but only 22% said that it would encourage them personally. Both these figures are down marginally on 2009.

Change4life making impact - 51% of the sample had heard of Change4life, the government's main healthy lifestyle initiative. This figure is based on responses from English locations only; interestingly awareness in Scotland was still around half of that in England. Of these people who had heard of it, 75% had seen the TV adverts, 20% had seen the posters, and 13% had received information direct.

An independent customer satisfaction survey undertaken at Dover Leisure Centre and Tides Leisure Centre revealed that 54% of customers were satisfied and 41% very satisfied with the overall service (based on day of visit). The critical requirement is to plan to address the gaps between satisfaction and importance.

Customer Satisfaction Levels

The table below provides detail revealing the % of customers who were satisfied to very satisfied with the service. The table indicates also the customer expectation and the % improvement required for each service area:

Criteria	% of sample satisfied and very satisfied with services	% of sample that found this area important and very important	% improvement required to fill the gap in service expectation
Toilet cleanliness	84%	99%	15%
Changing area cleanliness	84%	99%	15%
Choice of food and beverage	80%	94%	14%
Activity value for money	88%	98%	10%
Ease of booking	91%	99%	8%
Activity area cleanliness	91%	99%	8%
Quality of equipment	93%	97%	4%
Quality of sports facility used	92%	95%	3%
Activity available at convenient time	95%	98%	3%
Staff friendliness and helpfulness	96%	99%	3%
Reception area cleanliness	95%	97%	2%
Availability and standard of coaching	90%	91%	1%
Food and beverage VFM	83%	83%	0%
Parking	93%	93%	0%
Range of activities on offer	93%	92%	-1%

It is important we recognise the behaviour, attitudes and expectations of customers and our response will be to:

- Actively develop the local market potential by: (1) promoting the benefits of physical activity and a healthy lifestyle and explaining the recommended activity levels; (2) linking our key messages with the 2012 Olympics and the Change4life campaign; (3) encouraging loyalty towards the local leisure centre; (4) promoting the health and body shape and tone benefits of our services; (5) seizing upon the trend towards cycling and walking.
- Maximise the use of technology and develop our capability to effectively communicate with existing and potential customers.
- Work with partners to develop our programme of activities including community initiatives to address the barriers of time, cost and transport.
- Introduce a range of measures that will enable us to monitor the views of our existing and potential customers. This will enable us to respond more quickly to the issues and address gaps in service provision.
- The achievement of service delivery and operational excellence through maintaining existing and achieving new industry accreditations.

Our ability to deliver our mission is influenced by our operating environment. Our plans need to build in flexibility, so we can respond to changes that will inevitably occur.

Why do we need to do this?

3. Key influences

3.2 The Operating Environment - Political

The general election and new coalition Government has stimulated yet another period of change for the country and particularly the public sector. Existing and forthcoming funding restrictions are a significant threat to services, however the emphasis on the Big Society concept presents opportunities for those with social objectives and creative ambition.

We need to be ready to adapt to policy changes at national level and benefit where possible from changes to the strategic delivery and commissioning of sport / physical activity / health services. We must provide support to Local Authorities and statutory / non statutory bodies to facilitate the opportunity to deliver more of their services through community led organisations.

Our approach to the political scene will be to grow relationships with local authorities and other partners. We will highlight our ability to provide creative solutions to the challenges ahead and aim to expand our involvement in the development and running of public services.

3.3 The Operating Environment - Economic

The economic position remains unstable and it is difficult to predict the level of customer confidence and attitudes to spending during the lifetime of this plan. What is clear is that we have entered a period of unprecedented public sector funding reductions which will impact on everyone in society for years to come.

We need to be engaged in collaborative efforts to solve problems and challenges through creative means, encouraging the convergence of agendas. We must drive down the cost of delivering services, increase employee productivity in our core business activities and grow customer and partner revenue streams through adding value and developing relationships.

We must invest in the fabric of our business. Invest in the training and education of the workforce and seek ways to invest in our facilities. We must invest in marketing, raising the profile of the company and the services we offer.

3.4 Technological Changes

The pace of technological change is increasing in an unprecedented fashion. Technology is continuously evolving and driving customer demands. Whilst it is difficult to predict the growth and changes in technology within three years it is important to look at current trends and analyse their relevance.

Recent changes in technology have seen the introduction of online booking and payment with an increasing demand for this. The possibility of fitness equipment being programmed to a personal routine through either a swipe card or stick has already become a reality and also the introduction of swipe pods for entry would mean less reliance on reception staff.

In order to gain best value for customers Vista Leisure must be flexible to change in both customer demands and technology advancement whilst assessing the cost v benefit of investment.



What actions will we take?

Our objectives apply to the three year period April 2010 – March 2013 and each will be led by a member of the Vista Leisure Senior Management Team and championed by a Trustee. Supporting operational targets relating to the objectives will be reviewed annually.

4 Valuing our People – People are our most valuable asset.

Achieve an overall employment satisfaction score of 90% amongst all of our employees; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this above objective by:

- 4.1 Designing a three year development framework and within this framework including and implementing the 2010/11 Training Plan.
- 4.2 Actively continuing with the 'Good to Great' programme, by specifically:
 - 4.2.1 Completing the final phase of the organisational re-structure.
 - 4.2.2 Consulting with stakeholders, finalising and implementing a total reward package.
 - 4.2.3 Introducing a framework for the empowerment of employees to improve customer service and business efficiency.
 - 4.2.4 Undertaking a skills audit of the Vista Leisure team to encourage and provide multi – skilling opportunities.
- 4.3 Designing an internal communication strategy and implementing the resulting action plan.

Obtain Investor in People (IIP) accreditation at silver standard; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this above objective by:

- 4.4 Conducting a review of Vista Leisure practices and processes against the ten IIP standards.



5. Investment in our Business – Doing nothing is not an option.

Improve the quality and mix of facilities to meet customer demand; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 5.1 Completing an options appraisal of potential facility improvements determined by customer demand, competitor activity, trend analysis and an infrastructure condition survey.
- 5.2 Successfully opening the new Tides Indoor Tennis Centre and developing a programme to achieve future usage and sales forecasts.
- 5.3 Providing a total management solution for Dover Sea Sports Centre and complete merger process with Dover sea Sports Development Trust.

Continue to develop the Community Vista brand and extend range of services Kent wide; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 5.4 Delivering on the 2010/11 actions outlined in the Community Vista Strategy.

Secure three new surplus generating opportunities to meet our charitable objectives; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 5.5 Developing agreements with the client and partners to manage Buckmore Park facilities and prepare for opening in Spring 2011.
- 5.6 Develop opportunities to provide management services to educational and community facility providers e.g. Abbey School.
- 5.7 Exploring further the management opportunity at the Triangles Community Centre in Dover.

- 5.8 Considering the possibility of closer links with the Dover Lifeguard Club to provide consistent standards in swimming lesson provision linked to increasing competitive participation and elite performance.

Extend our involvement with the management of school facilities for community use using the Walmer Science College model; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 5.9 Achieving a contract extension for management of the Walmer Science College dual use facilities.
- 5.10 Expanding community use of Priory Fields School facilities and extending involvement in delivery of curriculum activities.
- 5.11 Lead and support the development of an infrastructure to provide high quality sports and leisure activities to educational partners.

Introduce a range of initiatives to measure and increase customer retention and new sales; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 5.12 Devising a method to accurately measure retention and sales performance.
- 5.13 Introducing two new initiatives to improve customer retention.
- 5.14 Designing a detailed marketing strategy and associated delivery plan with a focus on commercial opportunities.

6. Service to Exceed Expectations – Our reward is returning customers.

Based upon an independent survey we aim to achieve an overall score of 70% (42% in 2009) of customers being very satisfied and 30% (55% in 2009) being fairly satisfied; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 6.1 Commissioning independent research to understand existing and potential customer attitudes and behaviour.
- 6.2 Using the research detail we will empower the Vista Leisure Customer Services Team to develop, implement and monitor a Customer Services Strategy and Action Plan, with a focus on addressing the gaps between customer satisfaction and importance.
- 6.3 Introducing at least two new customer services initiatives for each of the four service clusters supported by targets developed through the performance appraisal process.

Maximise the use of technology to improve customer communication and to extend booking and payment options; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 6.4 Carrying out a comprehensive study of existing Vista Leisure Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems and evaluating options (cost v benefit analysis) to develop our ICT capability.

Recognition as a leading provider by the leisure industry; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 6.6 Maintaining Quality Leisure Management (QLM) Leisure Safe at Dover and Tides Leisure Centres.
- 6.7 Achieving Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) Swim21 accreditation replacing existing Aquamark.
- 6.8 Achieving UK Quality Scheme 'QUEST' for facility management and sports development at commended level.
- 6.9 Maintaining Institute of Qualified Lifeguards (IQL) Approved Training Centre.
- 6.10 Joining the Fitness Industry Association (FIA) and obtaining recognition in the Flame Awards for the 'Trust sector'.
- 6.11 Achieving Inclusive Fitness Initiative (IFI) status for new facility developments where appropriate.
- 6.12 Achieve Advanced status in QiSS (Quality in Study Support) / QES (Quality in Extended Services) with educational partners.



7. Teamwork & Partnerships – Shared aims and shared solutions.

Add maximum value to partners by providing value for money tailored solutions; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 7.1 Finalising new lease agreements with Dover District Council with an emphasis upon demonstrating value and performance.
- 7.2 Conducting a quantitative and qualitative survey of our key partners to understand the existing value of our contribution and explore opportunities to deliver more services to add more value. To also prioritise involvement in local and county strategic groups.
- 7.3 Producing and circulating quarterly electronic communication to our key partners outlining our community contribution.

To develop and review collaboration opportunities with other Leisure Trusts in Kent; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 7.4 Implementing recommendations in the Matrix Consultants report on efficiency and growth opportunities from Vista Leisure and Thanet Leisure Force coming together.
- 7.5 Complete a merger with Dover Sea Sports Development Trust.
- 7.6 Reviewing the effectiveness of existing Leisure Trust joint procurement arrangements and proposing alternative options to improve the time v benefit ratio.
- 7.7 Working with Ashford Leisure Trust and supporting the development of a community brand linked to Community Vista.





8. Achieve economic stability – Prudent resource management and a commercial approach.

Achieve an audited cumulative trading surplus (net incoming resources) of £100,000 over the three year period; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 8.1 Increasing direct debit membership sales and achieve a year end increase in the average monthly collection by 10%.
- 8.2 Examining energy saving investment opportunities and considering implementation measures with a payback period of 5 years or less, with an emphasis upon those measures with the shortest pay back period.
- 8.3 Achieving a labour costs to turnover ratio of 58% (61% in 2009/10).
- 8.4 Introducing a detailed weekly sales reporting system to illustrate trends and disseminate to the Leadership and Support Team.

Meet Vista Leisure's Reserves Policy by maintaining £64,000 as immediately available funds; in 2010/11 we will contribute to this objective by:

- 8.5 Achieving the 2010/11 budgeted surplus and allocating to reserve funds.

Who will we work with?

9 Our Partners and Customers

Vista Leisure has established a range of successful partnerships that need to be developed and effectively managed to provide long term mutual benefit through the achievement of agreed outcomes.

What our Partners and Customers say about Vista Leisure:

Cllr Sue Chandler – Portfolio Holder for Community, Housing and Youth, Dover District Council

'Increasing healthy living and encouraging people to participate in leisure activities is a corporate objective for the Council. We are pleased to be working with Vista Leisure to provide valuable services from our facilities and also on a range of community based initiatives. We are confident, that together, we can make a positive difference to the lives of Dover district residents.'

Chris Hespe – Head of Kent Sport Leisure & Olympics, Kent County Council

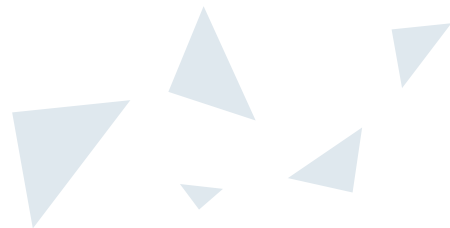
'Vista Leisure has been a tremendous partner for our work in East Kent. It's commitment to improving the quality of life of local residents is matched by their expertise. We have had incredibly productive partnerships with Vista on the young people's campaign for the Olympic Torch to enter the UK at Dover, swimming programmes and the Kent School Games, to name just a few. Always innovative and visionary, always willing to try new ways to help the community and always reliable. I can't praise them highly enough.'

James Brown – Extended Services Manager Dover, Kent County Council

'Vista Leisure is an integral and highly valued partner within the extended services framework throughout Dover district. In terms of activities and programmes to support Every Child Matters outcomes and the Kent Children and Young People's Plan, the Community Vista team provide children and young people with an excellent range of high quality provision.'

Claire Martin - Acting Assistant Director of Public Health Dover & Thanet Locality, NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent

'NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent recognise the value of enabling people to make healthier lifestyle choices. Our local leisure providers play a key role in helping us to improve the health of our local population. Vista Leisure has demonstrated innovative approaches to the delivery of a range of services and taken a more targeted approach where appropriate. We hope that we can develop these approaches in the future to reach out to more of our local communities.'



Paula Watson – Project Manager, Kent Adult Social Services

'Through their overarching principles, strategies and implementation Vista Leisure clearly demonstrate a commitment to providing sports and leisure opportunities to everybody within the local community. They are particularly pro active in their partnership working to ensure the people in sections of our community who are hard to reach or disadvantaged are included and actively encouraged to participate in sport and leisure.'

Sue Williams – from Family Matters Fostering Ltd, regarding a visit to Tides Leisure Centre on 7 April 2010

'Everything went exactly to plan... we were all impressed with not only your facility but also with the excellent staff you have working there. Every one of your employees we encountered went out of their way to help and were very polite, smiley and caring... all our food was served promptly and we were very grateful to have been put in the bar area (away from all the noise) to enable us to enjoy it.'

Stuart Honey – from the Dover Table Tennis Association, regarding the Dover Closed Tournament at Dover Leisure Centre on 28/29 March 2010

'Over the course of the weekend, your staff could not have been more helpful. The Dover Closed has developed something of a reputation in recent years for its competitive nature and good organisation. That's why we attract players from all over East Kent. Vista Leisure has undoubtedly played a part in that success and that should be recognised; the tournament was a great success once again and all the staff should be congratulated on the efficiency and attitude.'



Links to Local & Regional Strategies

Aiming High for Young People

www.hm-treasury.gov.uk

Dover District Corporate Plan 2008 - 2020

www.dover.gov.uk

East Kent LSP Sustainable Community Strategy

www.eastkentlsp.org.uk

Every Child Matters

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Kent Agreement 2

www.kentpartnership.org.uk

Strategic Framework for Sport in Kent 2009 - 2013

www.kent.gov.uk

Vision for Kent

www.kentpartnership.org.uk

