

PLANNING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

28 SEPTEMBER 2021

SAFETY OF SPORTS GROUNDS ANNUAL REVIEW 2020/21

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an annual review of activities carried out by Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) on behalf of the Directorate of Public Health (Emergency Planning) to discharge statutory duties under the Safety at Sports Grounds (SatSGs) and related legislation during 2020/2021.

Background

2. Members will recall that the legislative background for the Council's responsibilities for SatSGs is based on the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO) 2005.

3. Worcestershire County Council (WCC) therefore has an interest in all sports grounds in the County but more specifically those that are formally "designated" and stadia that have "regulated stands" as follows:

4. The "**Designated**" stadium in Worcestershire as defined by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport under The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 is:

- **Sixways Stadium** – home of Worcester Warriors Rugby Football Club

5. The "**Regulated Stands**" in Worcestershire – stadia with stands that provide covered accommodation for 500 or more spectators and covered by the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO) 2005 are:

- **The Grandstand** – Pitchcroft, Worcester Race Course,
- **Aggborough Stadium** – home of Kidderminster Harriers Football Club
- **The Victoria Ground** – home of Bromsgrove Sporting Football Club

6. The Worcestershire County Cricket Ground at New Road and the Worcester Arena are neither "designated" nor "regulated". Consequently, these venues are not subject to SatSGs legislation due to the nature of definitions contained within that legislation.

7. Following a review of the administration and delivery of the S@SGs duty, P&RC members are informed that the S@SGs function including SAGs co-ordination was transferred, under a legal agreement, from WCC Public Health to Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) in August 2020. WCC retains its statutory duty in relation to the legislation with WRS acting on its behalf to deliver the function and service.

Safety Certificates

8. In discharging its statutory responsibilities WCC must consider applications for, and issue to qualified persons, Safety Certificates for designated sports grounds with the aim of:

- **Securing reasonable safety** at the sports grounds.
- **Serving a Prohibition Notice** in respect of a sports ground if the Council consider that "the admission of spectators to a sports ground or any part of a sports ground involves or will involve a risk to them so serious that, until steps have been taken to reduce it to a reasonable level, admission of spectators to that part of the ground ought to be prohibited or restricted".
- Issuing a **Safety Certificate** for Designated Stadia or Regulated Stands in the County to "secure reasonable safety in the Stand when it is in use for viewing the specified activity or activities at the ground".

9. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO) 2005 ensures a risk-based approach to fire safety. The County Council is the enforcing authority for the FSO to ensure that all necessary fire risk assessments have been made at all four locations and their premises covered by the SatSGs legislation. This assessment is carried out by H&W F&RS on behalf of WCC.

Safety Advisory Groups

10. Management and discharge of SatSGs legislation is administered through a site-specific Safety Advisory Group (SAG) based on each sports venue. SAG meetings were convened throughout the year and co-ordinated and administered by Worcestershire Regulatory Services. Agency membership of each SAG is composed of:

- Worcestershire County Council (WRS Senior Practitioner or nominated representative)
- West Mercia Police,
- Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service,
- West Midlands Ambulance Service,
- District Councils (Parking Enforcement, Building Control),
- Worcestershire Regulatory Services (Environmental Health, Licensing, Health and Safety) and,
- the host stadium Safety Officer and Club representatives.

11. All SAG decisions are made on a multi-agency basis under the chairmanship of the County Council (WRS). Under the terms of the Scheme of Delegation and Policy statements the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning and Regulatory Committee are made aware of and consulted on any significant alterations and modifications to General and Special Safety Certificates issued. No significant alterations or modifications were necessary during 2020/21.

12. Due to the outbreak of the Covid -19 pandemic in March 2020 and the subsequent postponement and /or cancellation of the competitive league fixtures, the SAG meeting cycle was affected during 2020/21. Many sports fixtures went on "behind closed doors".

13. Spectators were either not allowed to attend rugby, football and horse racing etc until post 17 May 2021, or were allowed in small numbers. SAGs considered the relevant sporting association's COVID guidance and discussed those controls and requirements with the safety officers at existing venues.

Venue Summaries:

Sixways Stadium, Worcester Warriors RFC

14. Sixways stadium continues to be managed in a manner that meets current legislation. Collaboration between the Club and its SAG members remains excellent. All safety documentation and professional reports are up to date and in good order.

15. The safety certificate holder is the Worcester Warriors RFC's Stadium Manager and Safety Officer, Gené Willis. Gené and her deputy Allan Rushton hold relevant and appropriate safety management qualifications. Warriors play in the English Premiership and stadium stewarding is provided by Innovative Security Solutions.

16. During the financial year season spectator attendances were prohibited, until the end of the extended season in August 2021. Whilst up to 4,000 spectators would have been allowed to attend the final two games, in order to facilitate social-distancing the Club, in collaboration with the SAG, opted to allow attendances of only 3,000 fans.

17. The Chair of the SAG initiated a mid-year inspection to note safety reports and certifications and found Warriors' safety systems to be satisfactory. Worcester Warriors meet current safety management criteria and collaboration with key safety management staff has remained excellent throughout the financial year.

Aggborough Stadium, Kidderminster Harriers FC

18. Matchday safety management at the Kidderminster Harriers Football Club (KHFC) Aggborough Stadium is carried out effectively by qualified stadium safety officers. The stadium safety certificate holder is Club Chairman, Richard Lane and Keith Mansell is Safety Officer. Keith is supported in his role by Paul Biggerstaff, Commercial Manager.

19. All four of the stadium's stands are managed as individual regulated stands although to contain operational costs the Club open only three of these stands on matchdays. The stewarding is contracted to Spears Worldwide Security a company based in the Midlands. KHFC meet current safety management criteria and collaboration with the SAG has been excellent throughout the 20/21 year.

20. Crowd attendances were prohibited due the COVID pandemic, although plans were put together in December 2020 relating to allowing low levels of attendees. However, the move into the third lockdown meant that matches were attended by players and staff only.

21. During the season members of the SAG carried out inspections examining the spectator safety standards and records set and maintained by the club. These inspections were noted as being satisfactory.

The Grandstand, Worcester Racecourse

22. Worcester Racecourse is owned by Worcester City Council with the Grandstand and surrounding area together with the racecourse is operated by Arena Racing Company on a long-term leasing arrangement. The Grandstand is managed as a Regulated Stand under the SatSGs legislation. The safety certificate holder is Michael Thomas and the safety officer is Chris Booton.

23. Worcester Racecourse SAG operates site specific working practices that meet the special safety considerations of horse racing. These arrangements recognise that crowd behaviour and dynamics at horse racing is very different to that found at football or rugby grounds. The Racecourse has employs trained stewards, and provides one per 250 attendees (increasing to 1 per 100 where necessary).

24. Over the course of the summer season members of the SAG carried out "during" performance inspections and the satisfactory spectator safety standards set were noted. Worcester Racecourse meets current safety management criteria and collaboration with safety officers remains excellent. It is noted that plans are in place to replace and/or remedy the condition of the perimeter fencing adjacent to the Grandstand, which was highlighted in 19/20, and the SAG will continue to monitor this.

Victoria Ground, Bromsgrove Sporting FC

25. Bromsgrove Sporting leases the Victoria Ground on a long-term arrangement from Bromsgrove District Council who own the freehold. The Main and North stand are Regulated Stands under the SatSGs legislation.

26. The Bromsgrove Sporting FC safety certificate holder is the Chairman Michael John Burke and Simon Nicol, safety officer, holds a relevant (NVQ 3) safety qualification. The Club plays in the Southern League Premier Division Central and has 14 regular stewards on its books. COVID affected crowd attendances, and being in the SL Premier Division, were allowed fans, unlike teams in higher divisions. During 2020/21 attendances averaged 568 and the highest gate was recorded as 600.

27. Maintenance of the Victoria Ground is carried out with co-operation of owners Bromsgrove DC, and improvements to the stands have been noted. However, SAG members continue to be concerned about spectators leaving the stadium, immediately on to the A38 road outside of the ground. As BSFC become more successful and attract greater attendances this issue will require further attention by the Club, with oversight from the SAG.

Non-Statutory Event Safety Management Advice

28. The multi-agency members involved with the SAGs also provide safety management advice to several well-established venues and events that take place throughout the year. This process ensures that best practice is shared with organisers, safety managers and stewards many of whom work at the designated or regulated grounds. During 2020/21, a large number of events were cancelled due to COVID. A limited number of small events were run, and WRS officers made appropriate checks to ensure that COVID controls were in place, by both visits during the events and considering risk assessments in advance.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO)

29. The Fire Safety RRO duty is currently administered by the County Council through a Service Level Agreement provided by H&W Fire and Rescue Service. There were no significant issues at sites managed through the SatSGs legislation during 2020/21.

Recommendation

30. **The Director of Public Health recommends that:**

- a) The 2020/21 Annual Review of activities carried out by the Council to manage and implement the Safety at Sports Grounds legislation be noted; and**
- b) It be further noted that the Council has successfully met its statutory duty in respect of Safety at Sports Grounds legislation during 2020/21.**

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

Peter Maloney

Tel: 07773 183000

Email: peter.maloney@worcsregservices.gov.uk

Background Papers

31. In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Public Health) the following papers relate to the subject matter of this item:

WCC Planning and Regulatory Committee Terms of Reference 2020

WCC Planning and Regulatory Committee SAG Policy 2020

WCC Enforcement Policy Relating to Safety at Sports Grounds 2020