

# Safety at Sports Grounds

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Appendices with report:

**Appendix A Standard Procedures Currently in Place  
Appendix B Information on Each Sports Ground**

## **1. SUMMARY**

This is the annual report, to inform the Committee, of the action taken by Officers, with respect to the Council's responsibilities under the Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1975 and the Fire and Safety at Places of Sport Act 1987. The Committee is asked to provide comments before a report is submitted to the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration, for approval.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the Committee note the report and provide any comments with respect to inspection levels. The report will then be sent to the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration, for approval.**
- 2.2 Attention is drawn to Appendices A & B. Subject to any comments received, it will be recommended to the Cabinet Member that the same level of inspection is maintained during 2016/2017, as was undertaken in 2015/2016.**

## **3. REASONS FOR OFFICER RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Council is the enforcing authority under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 and the Fire and Safety at Places of Sport Act 1987.**
- 3.2 The Department of Culture Media and Sport circular, dated 16<sup>th</sup> November 1995, states that Local Authorities are expected to secure the provision of a reasonable standard of safety on a voluntary basis for smaller, non-designated sports grounds.**
- 3.3 In order to achieve this, the Hillingdon Safety Advisory Group has agreed that all sports grounds are inspected once per year and that a written schedule of recommended remedial actions is provided to the management committee of the ground after each inspection.**

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#### **4. Alternative options considered**

- 4.1 To increase, decrease, or maintain, the same level of safety inspections in 2016/2017, that were conducted in 2015/2016.

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1 Following Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations after the Bradford City fire and the Hillsborough Stadium disaster, local authorities were advised to review their arrangements for discharging their responsibilities under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987. In addition, local authorities were advised to ensure that a structure of accountability was in place, whereby the enforcing department/personnel were regularly and effectively supervised by Senior Officers who would then report directly to elected Members on the action instigated. The object is to ensure that Senior Officers and elected Members are fully aware of the action being instigated on their behalf, in discharging the Authority's duties. This is carried out through the Cabinet & RESPOC reporting procedures.
- 5.2 The principal framework outlining safety of spectators at sporting events are:
- Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975
  - The Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987
  - The Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (5<sup>th</sup> edition Department of Culture, Media and Sport).
- 5.3 The Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987, makes provision for the safety of spectator stands at sports grounds. It requires the local authority to issue a 'Safety Certificate' in respect of covered spectator stands which accommodate 500 or more people. There are currently no Spectator Stands which fall into this category within the Borough. There are however, two stands are under construction at Hayes & Yeading United FC and the Gaelic Athletic Association. Completion dates are, as yet, unknown but Officers are in discussions with both clubs to monitor progress.
- 5.4 The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 makes provision for safety at sports stadia and other sports grounds. It governs the issue of safety certificates in respect of "designated sports grounds". It is for the Secretary of State to set the criteria for designation and in the case of football grounds the trigger spectator capacity for designation is 5,000. For other sports stadia it is 10,000. The Act also empowers a local authority to issue a Prohibition Notice in respect of all or part of any sports ground, irrespective as to whether or not it is a "designated" ground, where it feels that spectators cannot be accommodated safely. The legislation also requires the local authority to consult with the police and fire authorities in respect of safety at sports grounds within their boundaries. It also places a duty on the Council to conduct periodic inspections of any "designated" sports ground and at any sports ground at which there is a regulated spectator stand which is subject to a Safety Certificate.
- 5.5 None of the sports grounds listed in Appendix A are 'designated' and are therefore not subject to a safety certificate. However, if the Council or a member of the Safety Advisory Group were of the opinion that the unrestricted admission of spectators to a ground for a particular game or event could present a significant safety risk, then the Council would

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have a duty to use its powers under Section 10 of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 to serve a 'Prohibition Notice'. The Prohibition Notice would stipulate the number of people that the Council has determined that could be safely accommodated within the sports ground. Any non-compliance with a prohibition notice will be acted upon by way of enforcement in accordance with the Residents Services Enforcement Policy.

- 5.6 The Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds advises the managers/owners of sports grounds to consult with the Local Authority, the Fire Brigade, the Ambulance Service and the Metropolitan Police in regard to safety issues. In order to ensure good liaison between all the responsible authorities, the Council delegates Regulatory Services to organise the Safety Advisory Group inspections and to co-ordinate the input, observations and advice from each authority. This advice is then sent to the management committee of the ground in the form of a schedule of recommendations. The Senior Licensing Officer acts on behalf of the Council as the Chairperson of the Safety Advisory Group.
- 5.7 Whenever Regulatory Services, or any member of the Safety Advisory Group, becomes aware of a particular game or event that may attract large numbers of spectators, the Regulatory Services Manager contacts the club's officials to request that they submit their risk assessments, emergency contingency plans etc. for consideration and approval prior to the proposed event. The Regulatory Services Team will consult with the Safety Advisory Group, to discuss the club's proposed safety plans/arrangements. Regulatory Services then, on behalf of the Safety Advisory Group, advises the Club's management team of any additional safety precautions that they require the club to implement to ensure the safety of the spectators. In addition, the Safety Advisory Group will set a maximum capacity of spectators who may be admitted into the stadium/ground.
- 5.8 Should the club not adhere to the requirements and advice set out by the Safety Advisory Group, and there were serious concerns about spectator safety, the Regulatory Services Manager, in conjunction with the Deputy Director Residents Services, can issue a 'Prohibition Notice' on behalf of the Council under delegated powers.
- 5.9 Members may be aware of the most recent inquest into the Hillsborough disaster being finalised in April 2016, giving a verdict of unlawful killing. It should be noted that this inquest has no bearing on the current practices surrounding the operation of sports grounds but was solely concerned with the criminal elements arising from the disaster.
- 5.10 The procedures and inspections detailed in this report as set out in Appendix A are considered as reasonable and correct in discharging the Council's responsibilities under the legislation. These procedures and inspections were implemented in 2015/2016.
- 5.11 The Member with the Portfolio for Community, Commerce and Regeneration can decide whether to maintain these procedures and inspections in 2016/2017. Alternatively, the level of inspections can be increased, or decreased.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The recommendation to approve the report and action taken has no direct financial implications beyond the existing budget allocations, should previous levels of inspections be maintained.

- 6.2 It should be noted that any increase in inspection levels will carry additional Officer costs and also additional costs for members of the Safety Advisory Group where they are present at inspections.

## **7. Legal Implications**

- 7.1 Members will note from the contents of the report that the Council is responsible for regulating the safety of sports grounds. There are two pieces of legislation which govern this area. Both Acts impose a duty on the Council to carry out periodic inspections of the grounds to ensure that they are complying with the requirements of the legislation.
- 7.2 As indicated in the report, officers are required to advise Members of the inspections they carry out. This requirement stems from guidance which was issued following inquiries into the Bradford Stadium fire and the Hillsborough Stadium disaster.
- 7.3 If the Council failed to carry out inspections of the relevant sports grounds, it would be in breach of its statutory duties under these two pieces of legislation which cover this area.

## **8. EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT**

- 8.1 When required (as set out in Appendix A, item 6) the following authorities are consulted:
- The Metropolitan Police Service
  - The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
  - The London Ambulance Service

## **9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975  
Interim Report on Hillsborough Stadium Disaster  
Final Report on Hillsborough Stadium Disaster  
The Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987  
The Safety of Places of Sport Regulations 1988 (SI 1988/1807)  
Home Office Circular 11/1990  
The Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (5<sup>th</sup> edition issued by the Department of Culture Media and Sport)

## APPENDIX A

### Standard Procedures Currently In Place

1. The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 defines Sports Grounds as; 'A place where sports or other competitive activities take place in the open air and where accommodation has been provided for spectators, consisting of artificial structures or of natural structures artificially modified for the purpose.'
2. The following enclosed sports grounds meet the above definition and are currently inspected once a year and recommendations are made to the management of each club on measures that they should implement to improve safety. Additional inspections may be carried out where large events are planned at a ground. Brief details of each club are set out in Appendix B
  - AFC Hayes Football Club
  - Gaelic Athletic Stadium
  - Harefield Football Club
  - Hillingdon Athletics Stadium
  - Hillingdon Borough Football Club
  - Northwood Football Club
  - Uxbridge Football Club
  - Wealdstone Football Club
3. The Hayes & Yeading United FC site at Beaconsfield Road, Hayes is still under development and the club are seeking additional funding to continue the building works. Meanwhile, the team have relocated to a ground outside of the borough. The redevelopment of the ground includes the erection of a covered spectator stand with approx 1250 seats. Officers are currently in discussions with the club offering advice on the process to apply for a 'Regulated Stand Certificate'.
4. There is also ongoing development at the Gaelic Athletic Association ground which includes the erection of a stand for approx 2500 spectators. Work has begun and is due for completion Summer 2017.
5. As both of these new stands will provide accommodation for more than 500 spectators, they will be subject to a separate legal certification procedure under The Fire and Safety at Places of Sport Act 1987.
6. If a larger than average number of spectators is likely to be attracted to a special game/event, the Regulatory Services Manager will contact the Safety Advisory Group to seek their views and requirements. These requirements are then issued to the club management committee. If necessary, enforcement action can be instigated to ensure the safety of any spectators who may be attracted to that particular game/event.
7. When deemed necessary, an officer from Regulatory Services may attend the special game/event to ensure that the Safety Advisory Group's requirements/recommendations are being implemented.

8. Inspections are carried out in accordance with the 'Green Guide' and the assessments made include the following areas:

- Terracing & Seating stands
- Pitch perimeter fencing/barriers
- Emergency procedures
- Stewarding arrangements
- Means of escape

### **Reporting Procedures**

1. The Council's Regulatory Service Manager is responsible for ensuring the matters detailed above are implemented and reports to the Deputy Director Residents Services.
2. The report is submitted to the Residents Policy Overview Committee, for consideration and approval.
3. Following scrutiny by RESPOC, the report is passed to the Cabinet Member for Community Commerce and Regeneration for formal approval.

## APPENDIX B

### **Information on each sports ground**

Guidance with regard to the safety of spectators at sports grounds is detailed in the publication **Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds** (Green Guide). This publication contains very detailed specific safety requirements. The following is a brief description of each ground. If required, full detailed information on each ground can be obtained from Regulatory Services.

#### **1. AFC Hayes Football Club, Kingshill Avenue, Hayes**

1.1 This ground is not suitable for large numbers of spectators as it does not have:-

- An emergency lighting system.
- A public address system with a secondary source of power.
- A suitable alternative means of escape route
- Crush barriers.

1.2 This club typically attracts crowds of 20-40 spectators.

#### **2. Gaelic Athletic Association, Emerald Stadium, West End Road, Ruislip**

2.1 This ground does not have:-

- An emergency lighting system.
- A suitable purpose made alternative means of escape route.
- Crush barriers.
- Level and even spectator accommodation

2.2 In addition to its normal weekly games, the ground is usually used once a year for a special game between two professional Gaelic Football Clubs. Such games normally attract approximately 3,000 to 4,000 spectators. Prior to this special match, the club notifies the Regulatory Service Manager who then consults members of the Safety Advisory Group (SAG).

2.3 Following consideration of the club's safety proposals by the SAG, the club are notified of any additional safety measures that may be required in order to safeguard the large numbers of spectators that are to be accommodated within the ground.

2.4 Once the new spectator stand is constructed, a Regulated Stand Certificate will be applied for and considered. It is anticipated that this is likely to involve more than one inspection in conjunction with members of the Safety Advisory Group.

#### **3. Harefield Football Club, Breakspear Road, Harefield**

- 3.1 This ground could accommodate approximately 1,000 spectators. However, additional safety measures should be implemented in the event of a game that would attract that number of people.
- The installed emergency lighting system is limited and does not cover all the public areas
  - A public address system with a secondary source of power
  - Crush barriers have not been installed.
- 3.2 The average number of spectators for a home game does not currently exceed 50.

#### **4. Hillingdon Athletics Stadium, Gattling Way, Uxbridge**

- 4.1 This ground has spectator seating in the main stand for approx 250. Spectators may also stand on the grass areas around the perimeter of the running track.
- 4.2 The stadium does not currently have a designated alternative means of escape route, for spectators and participants, should the main/exit route not be available (e.g. an incident taking place immediately in front of the main entrance to the stadium).
- 4.3 Discussions are ongoing with the Sport & Leisure Team and the stadium management company, Fusion Lifestyle, with regard to the suggested alterations and improvements which should be made to the premises.

#### **5. Hillingdon Borough Football Club**

- 5.1 The ground is in a general state of disrepair pending further investment. Currently, the ground is unsuitable for large numbers of spectators and parts of the ground are unusable.
- 5.2 Exit A and Exit B are located immediately adjacent to the main social club-house building meaning that any incident located in the club house, would render these exits unusable.
- 5.3 Exit C is remote from the social club-house, however the alternative means of escape pathway is routed up to, and adjacent to, the club-house.
- 5.4 Additionally, the ground does not have:
- A secondary source of power for the installed public address system
  - Crush barriers
  - Emergency procedures
  - Match day procedures
- 5.5 The spectator capacity has been restricted to 100 due to the state of the ground and the lack of emergency procedures.

- 5.6 The average number of spectators for a home game does not exceed 50.
- 5.7 The Councils Food Health & Safety team are visiting this ground due to concerns around health and safety, under the Health & Safety at Work 1974.
- 5.8 Officers are currently not aware of any firm plans for investment or redevelopment of this ground.

## **6. Northwood Football Club**

- 6.1 This ground is not suitable for large numbers of spectators in that it does not have:
- An emergency lighting system.
  - A public address system with a secondary source of power.
  - The main entrance/exit to the ground and the alternative means of escape from the grounds are not clearly identified.
  - Crush barriers
- 6.2 The average number of spectators for a home game does not exceed 50.
- 6.3 The Councils Food Health & Safety Team are visiting this ground due to concerns in relation to health and safety, under the Health & Safety at Work 1974.

## **7. Wealdstone Football Club**

- 7.1 Generally, this ground is in good order and the emergency and match day procedures implemented by the club are good.
- 7.2 Overall this ground could not permanently accommodate large numbers of spectators as it does not have crush barriers.
- 7.3 A number of large games are played at this ground each year. When this occurs and in accordance with the agreed procedure between the club and Regulatory Services, the Regulatory Service Manager is notified and (if time permits) a meeting of the SAG will be convened to obtain their requirements/recommendations. At this meeting, a spectator capacity is set, usually around 2500.
- 7.4 For normal league games, attendance is usually between 300-700 spectators.

## **8. Uxbridge Football Club**

- 8.1 This ground is not suitable for large numbers of spectators as it does not have:
- A comprehensive emergency lighting system

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- The public address system does not have a secondary source of supply.
- Crush barriers

8.2 The average number of spectators for a home game does not currently exceed 50.

## **Notes**

The safe accommodation of spectators depends on all the factors, set out in the **Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds** document. Particular consideration must be to be given to each individual ground's infrastructure such as the pitch perimeter fence, the structural stability of walls and fences, the position and size of exits, and the experience, competency and training of the management team and stewards.

All the above clubs are advised to consult with the Regulatory Service Manager/Safety Advisory Group before they stage any match that will attract more than the normal match day numbers. Fixtures are regularly monitored by Officers.

A copy of the Green Guide is available for free at the following web address:

<http://www.safetyatsportsgrounds.org.uk/publications/green-guide>