

SAFETY AT SPORTS GROUNDS

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REASON FOR ITEM

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.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is asked to 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.

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 2017/2018 & 2018/2019 for sports grounds without regulated stands, and increased for sports grounds with regulated stands.

REASONS FOR OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 The Department of Culture Media and Sport circular, dated 16 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.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 The Hillingdon Safety Advisory Group were consulted on the new stand constructions and now the Regulatory Services Team are currently working to certify the two regulated spectator stands in the borough.
- 1.5 Increasing the level of inspections from one to two inspections per year for sports grounds with regulated stands would benefit both club and Regulatory Services. The club would gain from having more than one inspection as, since this is new regulation to the club, this will help the club in complying with the terms and conditions of the safety certificate and improve public safety. This will also be beneficial to the Regulatory Services in ensuring that high standards in public safety are maintained. As this department has not issued these certificates for some time, two inspections would enable more detail to be picked up during inspections.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 To increase, decrease, or maintain, the same level of safety inspections in 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 that were conducted in 2016/2017.

BACKGROUND

- 3.1 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 & Corporate Services and Partnerships POC reporting procedures. The item had previously been considered by the Residents and Environmental Services POC, but it was since considered that it fell under the remit of Corporate Services & Partnerships POC.
- 3.2 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; and
 - The Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (5th edition Department of Culture, Media and Sport).
- 3.3 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 is currently one Spectator Stand which falls into this category within the Borough; this is the completed new stand at the Gaelic Athletic Association. This stand has the capacity to hold 1892 seated spectators. The safety certificate for this stand is currently being drafted. Hayes & Yeading FC have been in the process of building a stand for several years which will require a regulated stand safety certificate. Unfortunately Hayes & Yeading have suffered a number of setbacks along the way and it is still uncertain when this certificate will be determined.
- 3.4 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.

- 3.5 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 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. Non-compliance will be dealt with under the provisions of the Sports Grounds legislation and in accordance with current Council enforcement policies.
- 3.6 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 Regulatory Services Officer appointed for this purpose acts on behalf of the Council as the Chairperson of the Safety Advisory Group.
- 3.7 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 or appointed officer 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. The Club’s management team are then advised 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.
- 3.8 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 Head of Service Residents Services, can issue a ‘Prohibition Notice’ on behalf of the Council under delegated powers.
- 3.9 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 2016/2017.
- 3.10 The Cabinet Member with the Portfolio for Community, Commerce and Regeneration will be recommended to increase the inspections in respect of the two sports grounds with regulated stands and to maintain inspection levels for the remaining grounds for the years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019. Alternatively, the 2016/2017 inspection levels can be maintained, increased or decreased.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications contained within the report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. Under the provisions of section 10B of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, and section 34 of the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987, Local Authorities are required to undertake inspections of designated sports grounds and regulated stands in accordance with the guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The guidance in respect of designated grounds is contained in Home Office Circular 72/87 and in respect of regulated stands in Home Office Circular 97/88
- 4.2 The provisions of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 require that all regulated stands and designated grounds are inspected at least once every twelve months

EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

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

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Appendix A - Standard Procedures Currently in Place
- Appendix B - Information on Each Sports Ground
- 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 (5th edition issued by the Department of Culture Media and Sport)

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 (Safety Certificate to be issued imminently)
 - 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. Officers are currently in discussions with the club, offering advice on the process and documentation required in order for the club to be able to obtain a 'Regulated Stand Certificate'.
4. The development at the Gaelic Athletic Association ground, which includes the erection of a stand for approx 1900 spectators, has been completed. The Regulatory Services Department is in the process of issuing a Regulated Stand Safety Certificate.
5. As both of these new stands will provide accommodation for more than 500 spectators and are covered, 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 Team 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 Head of Service Residents Services.
2. The report is submitted to the Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee, for consideration and approval.
3. Following scrutiny by the Corporate Services & Partnerships POC, the report is passed to the Cabinet Member for Community Commerce and Regeneration for formal approval.

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; and
- 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 following the construction of the new stand does have:

- An emergency lighting system;
- Fire alarm system;
- PA System;
- First Aid Room;
- Suitable purpose made alternative means of escape route;
- Crush barriers; and
- 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 Team 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 Now that the new spectator stand is constructed, a Regulated Stand Certificate has been applied for and is awaiting issue following consultation with the SAG.

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; and

- Crush barriers have not been installed.

3.2 The average number of spectators for a home game does not currently exceed 100.

4. Hillingdon Athletics Stadium, Gating Way, Uxbridge

4.1 This ground has spectator seating in the main stand for approximately 250. Spectators may also stand on the grass areas around the perimeter of the running track.

4.2 The stadium has the benefit of 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. A number of improvements have been made over the last twelve months including record keeping, daily safety routine, the installation of two evacuation sledges and improvements to the booking system in order to obtain detailed event information from the clients.

5. Hillingdon Borough Football Club

5.1 Although the ground is still in some disrepair pending further investment, the club have started to make some improvements. Currently, the ground is unsuitable for large numbers of spectators and parts of the ground are unusable although these problems are being addressed. The club have also produced risk assessments and an operations manual.

5.2 Exit A and Exit B are located immediately adjacent to the main social clubhouse building, meaning that any incident located in the clubhouse would render these exits unusable.

5.3 Exit C is remote from the social clubhouse, however the alternative means of escape pathway is routed up to, and adjacent to, the clubhouse.

5.4 Additionally, the ground does not have:

- A secondary source of power for the installed public address system; and
- Crush barriers.

5.5 The spectator capacity is still restricted to 100 due to the state of the ground.

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

5.7 The Council's Food Health & Safety team previously visited this ground due to concerns around health and safety, under the Health & Safety at Work 1974.

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; and
- 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 have previously visited this ground due to concerns in relation to health and safety, under the Health & Safety at Work 1974. Two inspections were carried on this ground, as just prior to the first visit, the ground had suffered quite badly from vandalism. The second visit which was conducted by an inspector from the Sports Ground Safety Authority showed that the ground was still in a very poor state of repair.

6.4 The club had previously never entered into a lease agreement with the London Borough of Hillingdon. This is currently being reviewed by our Estates and Tenancy department and also the Green Spaces Team.

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.

7.5 The club have constructed a new all seated stand which can accommodate approximately 350 spectators. This will not qualify for a 'Regulated Stand Certificate' due to being less than 500. The stand is constructed to a high standard, as are the improved emergency evacuation routes around the stand. The club are also updating their general and fire risk assessments and operations manual to take the new stand into account.

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;
- The public address system does not have a secondary source of supply; and
- 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>