

Planning Committee - Thursday 06 October 2022

Annual Report - Safety of Sports Grounds 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

Recommendation(s) / Action(s) Required

- a. The Planning Committee notes the activity completed in respect of Safety of Sports Grounds for the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

Report of the Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Summary

- 1.1 This report informs the Committee of the Safety of Sports Grounds work completed during the last financial year. It describes the County Council's statutory obligations and outlines the activity to ensure that these duties have been met. The Report details the performance and highlights how this work influences the Council's priority outcomes.
- 1.2 During the period of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, legislation was amended to allow socially distanced spectators back into sports grounds., Some venues started to operate events with spectators in attendance from the end of May 2021.
- 1.3 On 14th July 2021 Government guidance was provided for people who work in settings related to events and visitor attractions, to help inform planning and business operations as part of the Recovery Roadmap.
- 1.4 The Sports Ground Safety Authority (SGSA) stage 5 guidance was published on 22 July 2021 regarding the safe return of spectators. The team worked with the sports ground's owners and their safety officers to ensure that all appropriate measures were in place to allow safe attendance at scheduled events.

2. Background

- 2.1 Staffordshire County Council is responsible for administering the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, and the Fire Safety and Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1987, in respect of sports grounds within Staffordshire.

- 2.2 This duty relates to “designated grounds” - which are sports grounds with a capacity of over 10,000 (5,000 for football). “Designated Grounds” require a safety certificate granted by the local authority. Within the County of Staffordshire, Burton Albion Football Club is the only club that is recognised a “designated ground.”
- 2.3 Sports stadiums with a covered stand of a capacity of over 500 standing or seated spectators (a regulated stand) require a “safety certificate” under the Act, granted by the local authority.
- 2.4 During 2021/22 Staffordshire County Council had responsibility for seven “regulated stands”:
- Staffordshire County Showground – displays / exhibitions
 - Hednesford Hills Raceway – stock car racing
 - Hednesford Town Football Club – football
 - Leek Town Football Club – football
 - Stafford Rangers Football Club – football
 - Tamworth Football Club – football
 - Uttoxeter Racecourse – horse racing
- 2.5 The Act places a statutory duty on the Local Authority and the Emergency Services to provide advice and guidance to managers of sports grounds on their responsibility under the Act, and how best to discharge their responsibility.
- 2.6 It is the responsibility of the County Council to form and administer a Safety Advisory Group (SAG) for each venue. The SAG brings key partners (emergency services, emergency planning and other key local authority officers) together to plan and prepare for spectator safety. Each SAG is chaired by an officer of the County Council and has representatives from the sports club and other partners.
- 2.7 The involvement of the SAG does not absolve the venue management of the responsibility for spectator safety. When applying the guidance and recommendations, the principal objective is “to secure reasonable safety at the sports ground when it is in use for the specified activity” (section 2(1) of the Safety of Sports Ground Act 1975).
- 2.8 The Safety of Sports Grounds team, along with key SAG partners, provide support and guidance to the management of the sporting venues to facilitate on-going crowd safety whilst ensuring that regulation is not over burdensome or restrictive on the growth of the venue. This support and guidance enable the business to

progress, develop and on occasion diversify from the intended use of the venue.

- 2.9 During May 2011, following a full review of the Safety of Sports Grounds function, Staffordshire County Council's Audit Committee abolished the Safety of Sports Grounds Panel. It was agreed that the Planning Committee should receive an annual report on the work of the Spectator Safety Officer team. This report covers the period for the 2021/2022 financial year.

3. Risk Management

- 3.1 The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 places a statutory duty on the local authority to arrange a periodical inspection of designated sports grounds. The Act stipulates that "periodical" means at least once in every twelve months; within Staffordshire this applies to Burton Albion Football Club only.
- 3.2 Home Office guidance, which relates to stands with a capacity of less than 2000, recommends inspection once every alternate calendar year. This requirement only relates only to the "regulated stands" listed above at 2.4.
- 3.3 The inspections carried out during the year inform the planning of inspections for the following year. All venues are risk assessed to assess the efficacy of the safety of spectator controls.
- 3.4 The criteria listed below formed the basis of the assessment for each site:
- Construction and maintenance of the venue
 - Operation and management
 - Training and development of safety staff
 - Fire safety
 - Provision of adequate medical facilities
 - Appropriate contingency plans are in place and tested
- 3.5 To ensure there is an appropriate use of resource, the risk for each venue has been reviewed enabling the highest risk stands to be prioritised. Each venue has been categorised as High or Medium risk.

4. Risk Assessment – Designated Ground

- 4.1 Burton Albion Football Club was assessed as the highest risk category due to its size. Inspection on both non-event and event days was therefore a priority. The "designated ground" at Burton

Albion has been allocated at least one inspection per 12-month period.

5. Risk Assessment – Regulated Stands

Risk rating	Stand
High	Staffordshire County Showground
	Uttoxeter Racecourse
Medium	Stafford Rangers Football Club
	Leek Town Football Club
	Hednesford Town Football Club
	Hednesford Hills Raceway
	Tamworth Football Club

6. Inspections

6.1 Designated ground

- 6.1.1 During 2021/22 Trading Standards continued to work with Burton Albion Football Club and SAG partners to ensure the safety management controls in place at the club were fit for purpose as the UK started to recover from the pandemic.
- 6.1.2 To ensure COVID controls at the club remained robust, a representative from Public Health was invited to attend Safety Advisory Group meetings and participate in the planning process. The SAG supported the club through the transitions controlling the various government restrictions including stage 5 – return to competition, safe return of spectators.
- 6.1.3 There has been changes of personnel within the club, including the departure of Fleur Robinson, Commercial Director, the appointment by the club of a new safety officer, changes to the Safety Management structure and changes to the ground infrastructure, particularly the catering facilities. This has necessitated a high level of involvement from trading standards officers and Officers from Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (FARS).
- 6.1.4. In November 2021, the Club’s safety certificate was reviewed following consultation with SAG Partners, and a revised certificate was issued. The terms and conditions of the safety certificate have been amended to ensure they reflect the learnings from Covid 19, the counter terrorism agenda and the Manchester Arena terror attack.

6.1.5. The completed activity for Burton Albion for the year 2021 / 2022 was:

- The club's compliance with the requirements of the current Safety Certificate, including capacity calculations was reviewed.
- An annual inspection of the ground was completed.
- Two event day inspections were carried out, focussing on high-risk games
- The Safety Certificate was revised and updated to reflect changes in the SGSA template
- Safety Advisory Group meetings took place on a quarterly basis
- Officers continued to work closely with the SGSA Local Authority Inspector, and an audit was carried out in- December 2021

6.2 High Risk Regulated Stands

6.2.1 Two regulated stands, Staffordshire County Showground and Uttoxeter racecourse, are risk rated as high and as such should receive an annual inspection, whilst the remaining stands receive an inspection every two years.

6.2.2 This programme has been disrupted by the Pandemic and a formal site inspection did not take place during 2021/22 at Uttoxeter Racecourse. However, plans are in place to recommence the programme during 2022/23.

6.2.3. Non-Event Day inspection work was carried out on 12th November 2021 at Staffordshire County Showground, with broad compliance reported. Visit was supported by Staffordshire Fire & Rescue and Stafford Borough Building Control teams from the SAG.

6.2.3 Engagement with high-risk venues has continued by email, telephone, or virtual meetings as stage 5 - return to competition, safe return of spectator's legislation was delivered. Two live racing events were supported with SAG meetings between May and December 2021 to ensure compliance with safety management requirements and relevant covid control re: capacity and vaccine passports.

6.3 Medium Risk Regulated Stands

6.3.1 Officers have also engaged with all medium risk venues with regulated stands to ensure the safe return of spectators, and to

continue to ensure compliance with current government covid guidance.

6.3.2 Detail of the activity carried out at each of the venues is attached as Appendix 1 to this Report for information.

6.3.3. Inspection Plans for 2022/23 have been scheduled and are attached as Appendix 3 to this report for information.

7. Ironman 70.3 Staffordshire 2021

7.1 During 2021/22 the Technical and Business Manager was invited to establish and chair a SAG for the Ironman event in July 2021. This was achieved and the SAG Chair was actively involved with the development of the plans and procedures and the practical implementation of safety management systems for the event. Due to COVID-19 the event was rescheduled to 13th June 2021, and subsequently postponed to Sunday 18th July 2021. The event was successfully held on the rescheduled date.

8. Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022

8.1 As part of the County Council's preparation for the safe delivery of the Commonwealth Games in 2022, officers have been taking part in the planning and preparation activities for the enforcement, resilience, and Safety Management functions for the games. Officers have been involved with the National / Regional planning as well as on-site inspection and development of the SAG for the event.

9. Resources

9.1 Following the outcome from the Hillsborough Inquests (where the jury found errors and omissions in the safety certification and oversight, and that a lack of pre-match and contingency planning contributed to the deaths), it is important that an appropriate level of resource for this area of work is maintained.

9.2 The resources for this area are drawn from within Trading Standards, the Safety of Sports Grounds work forms part of the team's overall activity. This enables the resourcing for a specialist area to be managed efficiently. The Trading Standards Operations Manager holds the FSOA (Football Safety Officers Association) Certificate in Event and Match Day Safety Management and a Diploma in Spectator Safety Management Level 4 NVQ. The lead for the function has become the responsibility of the Trading Standards

Technical and Business Manager for the Local Authority following the January 2021 trading standards redesign.

- 9.3 In addition to the Trading Standards Technical and Business Manager, the Trading Standards Operations Manager continues to support the transition arrangements, and a Trading Standards Team Leader has responsibility as the designated officer for conduct of the inspection work for the designated ground. Both provide comprehensive reports to the SAGs and relevant sports grounds following inspection. Additional administrative support has been provided from within the trading standards team to ensure any issues are addressed and prioritised by the risks associated with each stand.
- 9.4 The resources committed to this activity during 2021/22 were increased from 0.5 FTE to 0.7 FTE to ensure resilience and capacity to discharge statutory duties effectively and efficiently. These resources were be drawn from the operational trading standards team. This approach will continue for 2022/23.

10 Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) Audit

- 10.1 Following the Grenfell fire, Central Government reviewed areas of risk to the public to ensure that all local authorities responsible for licensing designated grounds, such as Burton Albion, received an audit to check that there were consistent and adequate safety criteria in place. The Audits took place in June 2021 and December 2021, several recommendations were made following each audit and have subsequently been completed, these are detailed at appendix 2.
- 10.2 During 2021/2022 Trading Standards officers worked closely with the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) Local Authority Inspector to update the processes for Safety of Sports grounds controls at Burton Albion.
- 10.3 New Policies and procedures have been introduced and template documents have been updated to reflect the changes required because of national events, particularly COVID-19 and the Manchester Arena terror attack.
- 10.4 The County Council's scheme of delegation has been updated to ensure the new structure for trading standards is reflected. Included in the update is a change allows officers to issue a prohibition notice under the Fire Safety and Safety of places of Sport Act 1987 when the risk to spectators at a ground is so

great that until steps have been taken to reduce it to a reasonable level, the admission of spectators can be restricted or prohibited.

10.5 Supported by the SGSA inspector, officers have updated and adapted the Safety Certificate for Burton Albion (November 2021) to ensure it encourages a more robust safety culture at the club, which includes:

- The wider definition of "Safety" within the Safety Certificate to ensure counter terrorism, anti-social behaviour, and safety of all personnel in the ground including the Club's employees are addressed.
- To ensure the structure and maintenance of the ground and the safety management at the club is built into the calculation of the safe capacity at the ground.
- The clearly define the physical boundary where the club's responsibility for safety ends

10.6 During 2022 / 2023 officers will continue to work with the SGSA inspector to update and enhance the way the Safety Advisory Group operates and are attached as Appendix 2 of this report for information.

11. Conclusion

11.1 2021/2022 has been a challenging year for the team, particularly the changes in safety management resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. Following the restructure of the trading standards service additional training and development has been undertaken by officers in their new roles. Existing qualified officers have (and will continue to) provided support for officers to ensure the delivery of roles and responsibilities within the current structure.

11.2 Whilst the anticipated formal inspection process has not been completed this year due to COVID-19 controls, the team has engaged with venues' Safety Management Teams and Partners to ensure that all events that have gone ahead, have done so safely. This has been achieved via virtual Safety Advisory Groups as well as providing individual advice and support within a fluid and challenging environment.

11.3. During 2021/2022 significant focus was required by the team to ensure the return of spectators has been achieved in a safe and considered manner.

12. Link to Strategic Plan

- 12.1 The attendance of people at these stadia using local businesses and services influences the Council's priority outcome "Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community."

13. Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

N/A

14. Community Impact

- 14.1 There are no specific equalities implications raised by this report. Safe access and movement within venues, particularly in the event of an emergency for all users is considered as part of the safety team's inspections. The Safety of Spectator inspections take into consideration the safety of all spectators, particularly those with disabilities, the elderly, families, and children.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - details of inspections and engagement programme carried out during 2021/22

Appendix 2 - SGSA Audit - Action Plans June and December 2021

Appendix 3 - details of planned inspections, engagement, and related activities to be carried out during 2022/23

Contact Details:

Interim Assistant Director: Catherine Mann, MBE, Interim Assistant Director, Culture Rural and Safer Communities.

Report Authors:**Job Title:**

Trish Caldwell
County Commissioner Regulatory Services
and Community Safety

Telephone No.:

(01785) 277804

E-Mail Address:

trish.caldwell@staffordshire.gov.uk

Mark Wilson
Technical and Business Manager
Trading Standards

(01782) 297004

mark.wilson@staffordshire.gov.uk

Antony Shore
Trading Standards Operations Manager
(01785) 277870
antony.shore@staffordshire.gov.uk