

## **Planning Committee**

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### **Annual Report - Safety of Sports Grounds April 2016 - March 2017**

#### **Report of the Director of Families and Communities**

##### **1. Executive Summary**

This report informs the Committee of the work of the Safety of Sports Grounds team carried out during the last financial year. It explains the County Council's statutory obligations under the relevant legislation and outlines the activity carried out to ensure that these duties have been met. This Report details the performance of the team and highlights how this work influences the Council's priority outcomes. Finally, it advises the Committee of the future workload planning for the team to ensure that the Council will continue to meet its statutory obligations in this area.

##### **2. Background**

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 in Staffordshire.

This responsibility covers designated grounds which are sports grounds with a capacity of over 10,000 (5,000 for football). They are designated under the 1975 Act, and require a safety certificate granted by the local authority. Staffordshire County Council has responsibility for the designated ground at Burton Albion Football Club.

Sports stadiums which are not designated but contain a covered stand with a capacity of over 500 standing or seated spectators require a safety certificate under the Act, granted by the local authority. Staffordshire County Council has responsibility for the following eight regulated stands:

- Staffordshire County Showground – displays / exhibitions.
- Hednesford Hills Raceway – stock car racing.
- Hednesford Town Football Club – football.
- Leek Town Football Club – football.
- Newcastle Stadium – speedway.
- Stafford Rangers Football Club – football.
- Tamworth Football Club – football.
- Uttoxeter Racecourse – horse racing.

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.

It is the responsibility of the County Council to form and administer a Safety Advisory Group (SAG) for each stadium. Each SAG is chaired by a member of the County Council and has representatives from the sports club and other partners. The SAG brings key partners (emergency services, emergency planning and other key local authority officers) together to plan and prepare for spectator safety. The involvement of the SAG does not absolve the ground management of the ultimate 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).

During May 2011, following a full review of the Safety of Sports Grounds function, the 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 last financial year.

### **3. Outcomes**

During the year commencing April 2016, all of the premises listed above received inspection visits, support and advice to ensure the efficacy of the safety of spectator controls.

The criteria listed below form the basis of the inspections at each site:

- Construction and maintenance of the premise
- Operation and management
- Training and development of safety staff
- Fire safety
- Provision of adequate medical facilities
- Appropriate contingency plans are in place and tested

Issues identified by these inspections have been subsequently addressed, to ensure the safety of all spectators, including those with disabilities, the elderly, families and children.

The attendance of people at these stadia using local businesses and services clearly influences the Council’s priority outcome “*Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community.*”

### **4. Capacity/ Capability**

The resources applied to this task were drawn from a designated officer employed within the Trading Standards Investigation Team within Regulatory Services, and the Safety of Sports Grounds work forms part of their overall activity. This enables the resourcing for a specialist area to be managed efficiently.

The designated officer who carried out the inspection work provided comprehensive reports to the Safety Advisory Group and relevant sports grounds following inspection. A number of officers within the trading standards team have been trained to provide support to the designated officers should strategic and tactical emergency meetings become necessary providing contingency and resilience for the statutory service. Additional administrative support has been provided to the designated officer from within the trading standards team to ensure any issues are addressed prioritised by risk associated with each stand.

In addition support and advice is also available, where required, from the Community Protection Manager who holds the FSOA (Football Safety Officers Association) Certificate in Event and Match Day Safety Management.

The resources committed to this activity during 2016/17 equated to approximately 0.5fte. In order to ensure there is an appropriate use of resource during 2017/18 the risk for each regulated stand has been reviewed enabling the highest risk stands to be prioritised for attention.

## **5. Performance**

The statutory duty under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 requires that every local authority should enforce within their area the provisions of the Act and of regulations made under it, and for that purpose to arrange for the periodical inspection of designated sports grounds. The Act stipulates that “periodical” means at least once in every twelve months.

In 2016/17 the designated ground and seven of the eight regulated stands were inspected, in addition these venues were also visited during an event. Due to changes in use and spectator attendance, Newcastle Speedway has not received a formal inspection, visits to the premises and discussions with the site operator have taken place and there are continuing issues that need to be addressed.

In line with the risk assessments carried out, some of the inspections were lighter touch than others. Specific and where appropriate, extraordinary, SAG meetings were held to oversee and enhance spectator safety by assisting safety managers and event organisers to develop and implement robust spectator safety management controls. The SAG’s for these events were chaired and administered by the designated officers.

The promotion of Burton Albion FC to the Championship has involved additional support and guidance to ensure the club’s safety management team adjusts to the changes in attendance and spectator profile.

The Safety of Sports Grounds team, along with key SAG partners, provides support and guidance to the management of the sports grounds to facilitate ongoing crowd safety whilst ensuring that regulation is not over burdensome or restrictive on the growth of the venue. This support and guidance enables

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

## **6. Plans for current year and subsequent years**

On 26 April 2016, the Jury on the Hillsborough Inquests reached their decision on the 14 questions set out by the Coroner, and concluded that the 96 people who died were unlawfully killed. The jury found errors and omissions in the safety certification and oversight, and a lack of pre-match and contingency planning contributed to the deaths. It is important to ensure that this area of work continues to be resourced to enable the County Council to meet its statutory obligations.

The inspection programme during 2016/17 has informed the planning of inspections for the current year and future years which will continue to be risk based. The highest risk is assessed as Burton Albion Football Club due its size, and inspection on both non-event and event days will continue to be a priority. Burton Albion stadium will also be subject to a regular Football League Association audit. Additional resource will continue to be focussed on the club whilst they are in the Championship supporting the changes needed for additional attendance and the changes in the supporter profiles.

Specific, additional, structured support will continue be provided to Newcastle Speedway to ensure the safety of spectators at the various events that are planned at the site over the coming year.

Stadia which require further certification will be risk assessed in order to prioritise limited officer resources.

## **7. Conclusion**

The Safety of Sports Ground team achieved their business objectives; they carried out inspections at all designated grounds and 7 of the 8 regulated stands, gave remedial advice where necessary and ensured that Staffordshire County Council met its statutory obligations in respect of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, and the Fire Safety and Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1987.

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Equalities implications:**

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.

**Legal implications:**

The Team fulfil responsibilities the County Council has under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, and the Fire Safety and Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1987, in respect of Sports Grounds in Staffordshire.

**Resource and Value for money implications:**

The team have initiated a risk based approach to inspection which will take into account “earned recognition” for those grounds who are reaching the appropriate standards of spectator safety. This will ensure the limited resources available to the team are focussed where they are most needed. Whilst providing support and guidance to the relevant sports clubs, the team are clear that the ultimate responsibility for spectator safety lies with the club. The Team will review the risk assessment for premises with a view to assessing whether the level of prioritisation is appropriate.

**Risk implications:**

Risk to spectators and others attending venues is a primary consideration during inspections. Responsibility for the spectator’s safety lies at all times with the certificate holder and ground management. The holder and ground management must produce a written statement of safety policy, operations manual and risk assessments (including fire and medical) for spectator safety. These documents must take into consideration the safety of all spectators, including those with disabilities, the elderly, families and children.

**Climate Change implications:**

The newly implemented risk based approach to inspections will ensure that only those stadia that require a visit will be visited. This will reduce mileage travelled by staff and improve the carbon foot print of the team, thereby reducing any impact on climate change.

**Health Impact Assessment screening:**

By improving spectator safety at regulated and designated stadia the health and wellbeing of all spectators, including those with disabilities, the elderly, families and children will be enhanced. The Environmental conditions experienced by spectators at sporting events will be improved

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