

WRS Board

Date: 27th June 2024

Title: Report on contracted work on Safety at Sports Grounds

Recommendation

That the Board notes the Report.

Background

The discharge of the Safety at Sportsgrounds (SatSGs) function including Safety Advisory Group (SAG) co-ordination was contracted to WRS under a legal agreement from the County Council's Public Health directorate in August 2020 following the retirement of the member of the County Council's Emergency planning team, who had led on this work. The County Council retains its statutory duty in relation to the legislation with WRS acting on its behalf to deliver the function and service.

The service is required to provide an annual review of activities to the County Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee carried out by Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) on behalf of the Directorate of Public Health (Emergency Planning) at Worcestershire County Council to discharge statutory duties in relation to Safety at Sports Grounds (SatSGs). Members should note that the operational detail of this information report is historical in that it reflects the activity presented to Worcestershire County Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee at its last annual review meeting of November 2023. The next review is scheduled for this coming autumn. The purpose of this information report is to make District members aware of this aspect of work being delivered by WRS.

Report

The County Council's responsibilities under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO) 2005 are discharged by WRS and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (H&W F&R).



The Safety at Sportsgrounds function is about ensuring the safety of anyone in a regulated stadium, so it has aspects of health and safety and building control and is thus well suited to sit alongside similar functions that are discharged by WRS.

The legislation focuses on both “designated stadia” and “regulated stands,” which are defined in the legislation. The "Designated" stadium in Worcestershire as defined by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport under The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 is:

- Sixways Stadium –Worcester Warriors Rugby Football Club

The "Regulated Stands" in Worcestershire, that is effectively stadia with stands that provide covered accommodation for 500 or more spectators and are 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 Racecourse,
- Aggborough Stadium –Kidderminster Harriers Football Club
- The Victoria Ground –Bromsgrove Sporting Football Club

Members may be surprised that the Worcestershire County Cricket Ground at New Road and the Worcester Arena do not fall into these categories but their capacities and the nature of the buildings or the individual stands mean that they are not subject to the legislation.

Safety Certificates

In discharging its statutory responsibilities the County Council must consider applications for, and issue to qualified persons, Safety Certificates for designated sports grounds with the aim of securing reasonable safety and setting maximum capacity at the sports grounds. Where grounds are used for other purposes such as concerts or firework displays, there is provision for “Special Safety Certificates” to be issued where the grounds are used in ways not covered in the same way as in the general certificates.

Where there are concerns about safety, the power is available to serve a Prohibition Notice in respect of a sports ground if the Council considers 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".

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 of the regulated locations and their premises covered by the SatSGs legislation. This assessment is carried out by H&W F&R on behalf of the County Council.

Safety Advisory Groups

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 regularly throughout the year, coordinated and administered by WRS. The core Agency membership of 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,
- Worcestershire Regulatory Services (Environmental Health, Licensing, Health and Safety) and,
- the host stadium Safety Officer and Club representatives.

Where necessary this can be supplemented with other bodies including District Councils or their shared services (i.e., Parking Enforcement, Building Control) and National Highways

All SAG decisions are made on a multi-agency basis under the chairmanship of WRS as the County Council's representative. Under the terms of the Scheme of Delegation and Policy statements the Chair and Vice Chair of the County Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee are made aware of any significant alterations and modifications to General and Special Safety Certificates issued.

Site Specific work

(i) Sixways Stadium, formerly Worcester Warriors RFC

The club went into administration in September 2022. The SAG group were able to ensure that safety documentation and professional reports were up to date and in good order to permit the remaining home game to be played at the ground.

Collaboration between the Club and its SAG members was maintained and a Special Safety Certificate was issued for the fireworks display in



November 2022.

(ii) Aggborough Stadium, Kidderminster Harriers FC

Matchday safety management at KHFC Aggborough Stadium is carried out by qualified Stadium Safety Officers. The stadium safety certificate holder is the Club Chairman, with safety management being the responsibility of its Safety Officer supported by a deputy.

All four of the stadium's stands are managed as individual regulated stands. KHFC meet all current safety management criteria and collaboration with the SAG remains excellent.

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 all deemed satisfactory.

KHFC were the hosts for a match night visit by members of the County Council's Committee in March 2022. The members were briefed by the Clubs Safety Officers, given a tour of the ground and the opportunity to watch a local Premiership's under 18's side play.

(iii) The Grandstand, Worcester Racecourse

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

Worcester Racecourse SAG operates site specific working practices that meet the special safety considerations of horse racing and its spectators recognising that crowd behaviour and dynamics at horse racing is very different to that found at football or rugby grounds.

Worcester Racecourse holds jump racing meetings during the summer between April to October. The SAG meeting for the racecourse was held virtually, however an in-person site visit was conducted during the season.

(iv) Victoria Ground, Bromsgrove Sporting FC

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.

The Bromsgrove Sporting FC safety certificate holder remained the chairman and the club has a suitably qualified safety officer. The in-match inspections took place in November 2022 and identified some safety issues that the Club has worked with local police to resolve.

SAG members, in particular the Fire Safety Inspector and the Officer and West Midlands Ambulance Service, continue to work with the club to ensure the terms and conditions of their General Safety Certificate are being adhered to.

Non-Statutory Event Safety Management Advice

The multi-agency members involved with the SAG's 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. Some of the venues and events where advice has been offered included:

- Malvern, Three Counties Showground.
- Worcestershire County Cricket Ground
- Worcester's Victorian Christmas Fayre
- Tri County SAG for the 3 Shires car rally
- Passion Play Worcester
- Hanbury Show

Festivals such as Mello and Sunshine are also engaged, and support was provided to the Tom Jones concert held on the racecourse.

This work is funded by the County Council, so the service's costs are fully recovered. Officers of WRS are engaged with many aspects of these activities as part of their normal duties, so this work is a relatively natural extension and progression of that and provides a good platform on which to engage with these business operators and of course, helps maintain our links with the County Council and Public Health colleagues.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

None

