

WRS Joint Board

Date: Thursday 24 September 2026

Title: Report on contracted work on Safety at Sports Grounds

Recommendation

That the Joint Board notes the Report.

Background

1. The discharge of the Safety at Sportsgrounds (SatSGs) function including Safety Advisory Group (SAG) co-ordination has been contracted to WRS under a legal agreement from the County Council's Public Health directorate since August 2020 following the retirement of the member of the County Council's Emergency planning team who had previously 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.
2. WRS is required to provide an annual review to the County Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee of activities carried out on its behalf to discharge these statutory duties (SatSGs). Members should note that the operational detail of this information report reflects the activity presented to Worcestershire County Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee at its last annual review meeting of June 2026. The purpose of this information report is to make District members aware of this aspect of work being delivered by WRS.

Report

3. 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).
4. 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.

5. 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
6. The “Regulated Stands” in Worcestershire, namely 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
7. Members may be surprised to learn that the Worcestershire County Cricket Ground at New Road and the Worcester Arena do not fall into these categories. Their capacities and the nature of the buildings or individual stands mean that they are not subject to the legislation.

8. Safety Certificates

9. 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.
10. Where there are concerns about safety, powers are available to local authorities 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".

11. 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.

12. Safety Advisory Groups

13. 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.

14. 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
15. 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.

16. Venue Summaries:

17. Sixways Stadium, Worcester Warriors RFC

18. In May 2024 the safety certificate for the stadium was issued to the new owners Junction 6 Ltd and reissued in November 2024 and June 2026 to allow for additional Safety Officers and increased spectator numbers for designated football matches. A

Special Safety Certificate was arranged to cover the 2026 fireworks display.

19. Junction 6 Ltd made an application in November 2024 to the Rugby Football Union to play in tier two of a new format league from September 2025. This was in part supported by confirmation that the stadium had a valid safety certificate in place. In April 2025 Worcester Warriors were admitted into Champ Rugby (formerly the RFU Championship).
20. Worcester Raiders Football Club continued to play at the ground during 2024/5, but Worcester City Football Club became tenants for the 2025/6 season. The stadium also hosted Hereford United FC whilst their waterlogged pitch was re-laid.
21. The club sold the North Stand to Ospreys Rugby Club (this was a temporary addition approx. 14 years ago) and removal of this area of seating had the potential to affect the designation of the stadium. Advice was sought from the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, however capacity remained over 10,000 (a requirement for designation).

22. Aggborough Stadium, Kidderminster Harriers FC

23. KHFC played in the National League North (6th tier of English football) having been relegated from the National League in the previous season. In the 2025/6 season they were successful in the play offs and returned to the National League. The stadium safety certificate holder remains the Club Chairman. Wolves Under 21s also play at the Aggborough Stadium
24. Collaboration continued to be excellent with the club hosting the SAGs. During September 2024 members held a match day inspection - a well-run fixture with no concerns. In October 2024 an unplanned partial evacuation of the stadium (the result of a false alarm) was dealt with safely and responsibly.
25. The club refined its youth match and season ticket scheme and consulted with the SAG on matters of safeguarding and security. The club dealt robustly with spectator problems, issuing bans to individuals where appropriate and were able to advise other local clubs experiencing similar problems.
26. On the advice from SAG the club's medical provider underwent assessment to become CQC registered in anticipation of changes in exemptions for sports grounds.
27. In January 2026 the club began the process to potentially purchase the ground from Wyre Forest District Council.

28. The Grandstand, Worcester Racecourse

29. Worcester Racecourse is owned by Worcester City Council with the Grandstand and surrounding area together with the racecourse being operated by the Arena Racing Company (ARC). The Grandstand is managed as a Regulated Stand under the SatSGs legislation. The Racecourse has a designated safety certificate holder and safety officers. Other than racing and events, the whole area is fully open to the public.
30. The SAG met twice a year to mirror the summer jump season which in 2024 was shortened due to flooding - the first 3 meetings were transferred to Hereford (another course operated by ARC). The most popular fixture of the year, Ladies Day, became their season opener in 2024, for which the SAG reviewed their event management plan. The full 18 fixtures took place in 2025. SAG members attended the stewards' annual briefings in May 24 and April 25 and undertook an in-meeting inspection in September 2024. Worcester Racecourse is also subject to inspections and monitoring by the British Horseracing Authority.

31. Victoria Ground, Bromsgrove Sporting FC

32. Bromsgrove Sporting leases the Victoria Ground on a long-term arrangement from Bromsgrove District Council, who own the freehold. The Main and North stands are Regulated Stands under the SatSGs legislation. The Club played in the Southern League Premier Division Central.
33. The SAG met pre, mid and end of season. Although the club applied for, and was granted, planning permission for a new stand at the Town End of the ground, the decision was made to postpone (this would have become the third regulated stand at the ground).
34. The Bromsgrove Sporting FC safety certificate holder remains the Club Chairman. The club has a suitably qualified safety officer. The in-match inspections took place in January 2024 and October 2025. The former identified some safety issues that were subsequently resolved with the Fire Officer, with the latter raising no concerns.
35. A new consortium became involved with the club in April 2026 and will be making a request to increase capacity which the SAG will assess through due process.

36. Defibrillators

37. All sports grounds have at least one defibrillator available. The majority, including New Road, have two. Each sports ground's Safety Officer, as well as other large event organisers, were also made aware of grants available for trauma kits from Worcestershire's Public Health team.

38. Non-Statutory Event Safety Management Advice

39. The multi-agency members involved with the SAGs 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 include:

- Malvern, Three Counties Showground.
- Worcestershire County Cricket Ground
- Worcester's Victorian Christmas Fayre
- Sunshine Festival.
- Worcester Balloon Festival
- Hanbury Show
- Astwood Bank Carnival
- Battle of Evesham.
- Dubs in the Middle

40. The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO)

41. The Fire Safety duty is currently administered by the County Council through a Service Level Agreement provided by the Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.

42. Funding

43. The work described in this report is funded by the County Council, so WRS'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 provides a 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 strong links with the County Council and Public Health colleagues.

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