



| <u>Committee and Date</u> | <u>Item</u> |
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| Strategic Licencing Committee: 17/06/2020 | |
| | <u>Public</u> |

SAFETY OF SPORTS GROUNDS – ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITY (JULY 2020)

Responsible Officer:

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1. Summary

1.1 On 15th December 2009 it was agreed that an annual report be given to members of the Strategic Licencing Committee detailing the exercise of delegated functions in respect of the safety of sports grounds, undertaken by the Public Protection service over the past year.

1.2 There are no financial, environmental or health and safety implications associated with this report.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Strategic Licencing Committee note the activities in respect of safety of sports grounds at designated sports grounds and regulated stands in Shropshire.

REPORT

3. Background

3.1 The Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order are enforced by the Regulatory Services team.

3.2 Under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, the Council is required to issue Safety Certificates for designated sports grounds which are defined 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.

3.3 Safety certificates are required in sports grounds that can accommodate more than 10,000 spectators (5000 in the case of Football League grounds) or have a covered stand that holds more than 500 spectators.

3.4 The primary purpose of the safety certificate is to set a limit on the safe capacity of a designated ground or regulated stand. The capacity of a sports ground or stadium is calculated on the physical condition of the stadium (the P factor) and the level of safety management (the S factor).

3.5 The safety certificate will also detail conditions in respect to safety matters with which the certificate holder must comply if that capacity is to be maintained.

3.6 The venues within Shropshire which hold safety certificates are:

- Shrewsbury Town Football Club
- Ludlow Racecourse
- The New Saints Football Club, Park Hall, Oswestry.

4 Shrewsbury Town Football Club (Montgomery Waters Meadow)

4.1 An annual regime of during performance inspections (DPI's) and site visits have been conducted to verify the safe capacity of the stadium taking account of the physical condition of the stadium and the safety management operations in place (P and S factors). The calculations have been verified and the capacity of the club has been retained at a maximum of 9875 people.

4.2 A Safety Advisory Group (SAG) consisting of West Mercia Police, Shropshire Fire and Rescue, West Midlands Ambulance Service, The Sports Grounds Safety Authority, Building Control, Emergency Planning and Public Protection has met twice with representatives from Shrewsbury Town to routinely address any safety issues associated with football matches at the stadium. Two SAG meetings have been held in the last 12 months on the, 25th July 2019 and 12th March 2020

4.3 A General Inspection was carried out on 21 November 2019. The club were deemed to be fully compliant with the testing and inspection requirements of Safety Certificate.

4.4 A total of two During Performance Inspections (DPI'S) were carried out on 14 December 2019 (Coventry) and 26 January 2020 (Liverpool – which was a full capacity game). No significant organisational safety concerns were noted and only minor issues with housekeeping in the hospitality department were raised and these were reported on and followed up by the club.

4.5 The latest version of the General Safety Certificate dated 18 July 2018 was reviewed by the SAG and no amendments were necessary.

- 4.6 Plans are currently being made to explore a change from a prescriptive General Safety Certificate to a risk based certificate which focuses on developing the clubs operational procedures to comply with the safety requirements.
- 4.7 Due to COVID-19 the football season was suspended on 13 March. Resumption/end of season is not yet confirmed but Regulatory Services will provide appropriate guidance on compliance with government guidance on opening and ensuring appropriate social distancing and hygiene measures are implemented where appropriate.
- 4.8 COVID-19 Update: League 1 Clubs are meeting on 8 June to decide on process for ending the season. As it stands it looks very likely that the league programme will not be completed and that will be the end of the season for Shrewsbury. No proposals have been made yet for the 2020-21 season resumption.

5 Ludlow Racecourse

- 5.1 A General inspection of the ground took place on the 20 August 2019, where the operations manual was reviewed, and a site inspection was undertaken. No significant changes to buildings or operations were noted.
- 5.2 A race day inspection was conducted on the 25 November 2019. No issues in relation to the race day organisation were noted and no amendments to the Safety Certificate were required.
- 5.3 The current capacities of the regulated stands are:
- COURSE ENCLOSURE STAND Total 440 persons
 - MEMBERS STAND Total 975 persons
 - JUBILEE STAND Total 1525 persons
- 5.4 COVID-19 Update: National Hunt racing season has now ended and the next fixture is scheduled to take place on the 7th October 2020 subject to government guidance.

6 The New Saints Football Club, Oswestry

- 6.1 The Regulated Stands Certificate was issued on the 22nd March 2019 and relates to two covered stands on the site. This does not currently need to be updated.
- 6.2 The seated capacity of the 2 stands is 1000 (512 Woodland End Stand and 488 Venue Terrace)
- 6.3 A matchday inspection was undertaken on the 23rd July 2019. This was a midweek fixture for round 1 of the UEFA champions league against FC Copenhagen. Approximately 100 away fans were in attendance and it was

noted that access and security was well marked and controlled by security and stewards. Approximately 75 supporters stood during the game as more tickets were sold than seats available. This was not deemed to be a safety issue as the ground can accommodate standing spectators, but this was contrary to UEFA requirements.

6.4 A general inspection was carried out on 10th March 2020 where a physical inspection of the ground highlighted no issues. Although the submission of safety documentation is still pending, the season was suspended 3 days later due to Covid-19 and this will be followed up in advance of re-opening.

6.5 COVID-19 Update: Football Association Wales have now ended the season. TNS will enter the Europa League next season but dates for qualification matches will inevitably start later than usual as other European nations complete their league programmes.

7. Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA):

7.1 The Sports Ground Safety Authority regulate the Council in relation to how it exercises its licencing functions in relation to Sports Grounds.

7.2 Shropshire Council also sit on the West Midlands Sports grounds safety advisory group whereby good practice is shared with other regulators, clubs and the SGSA.

7.3 Regulatory Services were subject to a self-assessment audit by the SGSA in relation to its function in terms of licensing of Sports Grounds. The result of this was a high score of 126 out of 140 and all minor recommendations / guidance have been actioned.

8. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

None

9. Financial Implications

None

10. Additional Information

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

None

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Cllr. Gwyllm Butler

Local Member: The report is applicable Countywide.

Appendices None