

29th May 2012

Agenda Item: 7

**REPORT OF GROUP MANAGER, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT &
REGISTRATION**

SAFETY AT SPORTS GROUNDS

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an overview of the County Council's responsibilities in respect of safety at sports grounds, plus an update on activities over the last 12 months and forthcoming inspections.

Information and Advice

Background

2. Previously, under the Cabinet and committee structure of the County Council, the topic of safety at sports grounds came under the Planning and Licensing Committee, and was not part of the responsibilities of the portfolio holder for Community Safety. However, with the return to committees, this matter has been assigned to the Community Safety Committee.
3. This report provides a broad introduction to safety at sports grounds work, and details current key topics. It is proposed that future activities will be included in routine update reports to the committee, and that major issues will be the subject of separate reports. By way of background to this topic, it is important to note that whenever large crowds gather in confined spaces there is always the possibility of tragic consequences. On occasions, in this country and abroad, a catastrophic breakdown of safety management has led to large numbers of fatalities. Some of the most notable of these were at football grounds such as:
 - Ibrox Park, 2 January 1971, 66 supporters were crushed to death on a crowded stairway.
 - Bradford City, 11th May 1985, 56 fans were killed and 270 injured in a fire in the main stand at the Valley Parade Stadium.
 - Hillsborough, April 1989, 96 Liverpool fans died in the Leppings Lane end of the ground at an FA Cup semi-final match against Nottingham Forest.

4. Lessons arising from these disasters led directly to the legislative framework in place today. This is designed to safeguard spectator safety, and the County Council has a key role.

Current legislation and guidance

5. Key legislation and guidance governing safety at sports grounds, and the County Council's main responsibilities arising from these, can be summarised as follows:
 - **Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1975 (as amended).** This gives local authorities responsibility for issuing safety certificates for 'designated grounds'. These are stadia with a capacity of 10,000 or more and which are designated by the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport. Section 10 of the Act gives local authority the power to issue a prohibition notice at any sports ground if it is deemed that there is an unacceptable risk to spectator safety.
 - **Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987.** This gives local authorities a duty to issue a safety certificate for covered stands with a capacity of 500 or more.
 - **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.** This places a duty on local authorities to monitor and enforce fire safety at sports grounds.
 - **Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds ('the Green Guide').** This is the key guidance document which is given the force of law by its inclusion in safety certificates for the sports grounds in Nottinghamshire.

Relevant Sports Grounds in Nottinghamshire

6. Under the legislation listed above, there are three 'Designated Grounds' in the County; Trent Bridge Cricket Ground, plus the football grounds of Nottingham Forest and Mansfield Town. In addition there are 'Regulated Stands' at Southwell Racecourse, Eastwood Town Football Club and Hucknall Town Football Club. The County Council's Emergency Planning Team uses the following measures to fulfil the County Council's responsibilities.
 - **General Safety Certificates:** A General Safety Certificate is issued to each ground and is reviewed annually. Special Safety Certificates may be issued as necessary, for example in the case of a music concert.
 - **Safety Advisory Groups (SAG):** A multi-agency SAG, chaired by an Emergency Planning Manager, will normally meet 2-3 times a year in respect of each designated ground, and once a year for each regulated stand. These meetings are arranged more frequently when required.

- **Annual inspection and audit:** These are carried out by the Safety Advisory Group at each ground once a year, for the purpose of reviewing the safety certificate.
 - **Match / Race day inspections:** These are carried out by the emergency planning team 2-3 times a year for designated grounds and or 1-2 times a year at regulated stands. Their purpose is to ensure that the club is complying fully with their safety certificate. In addition, there is normally one inspection per year carried out by a structural engineer at each designated ground, and one every two years at each regulated stand. Further inspections are required during times of change at a stadium, or when other safety issues arise, or when staffing changes occur in the Emergency Planning Team.
7. In view of this regulatory role, including the issuing of General Safety Certificates, details of this work will be reported in routine updates to the Community Safety Committee. These reports will include details of any regulatory actions that may be required, such as reductions to the safe capacity of any ground.

Recent inspections and Safety Advisory Group (SAG) meetings

8. The 2011-2012 Business Plan for the Emergency Planning Teams envisaged a minimum of seven inspections at the three Designated Grounds, and one each at the three Regulated Stands. In practice, a total of 17 were required, as follows:
- **Trent Bridge Cricket Ground:** 6th July 2011.
 - **Eastwood Town FC:** 3rd September 2011, 12th November 2011, 3rd December 2011, 21st January 2012, and 31st March 2012.
 - **Mansfield Town FC:** 10th September 2011, 20th September 2011, 22nd October 2011, 3rd December 2011, 25th February 2012, and 3rd March 2012.
 - **Nottingham Forest FC:** 2nd October 2011, 29th November 2011, and 10th March 2012.
 - **Hucknall Town FC:** 24th March 2012
 - **Southwell Racecourse:** 27th March 2012.
9. To date, in the current financial year, the following inspections have been completed:
- Hucknall Town FC 7th April 2012
 - Nottingham Forest FC 14th April 2012
 - Mansfield Town FC 20th April 2012.
10. The Safety Advisory Groups have met as follows:
- **Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club:** 26th September 2011

- **Mansfield Town FC:** 10th October 2011, 12th December 2011, 6th February 2012, and 16th April 2012
- **Nottingham Forest FC** 13th October 2011, 23rd January 2012, and 26th April 2012.

11. The pre-season Annual Audit and Safety Inspection for Trent Bridge Cricket ground took place on 27th March and those for other sports grounds have been arranged as follows:

- Southwell Racecourse – 26th June 2012
- Eastwood Town FC and Hucknall Town FC – 5th July 2012
- Mansfield Town FC – 12th July 2012
- Nottingham Forest FC – 19th July 2012.

Regulatory measures

12. The permitted capacity of Mansfield Town Football Club is currently reduced slightly to reflect concerns stemming from the relative inexperience in football safety amongst the most senior executives at the club. The club was issued with a 'Warning' notice following the fixture against Kidderminster Harriers on 24th September 2011. This was due to a technical breach of their General Safety Certificate. The Safety Advisory Group was satisfied that the club had understood the issues raised and made sufficient undertakings to enable the matter to be resolved without formal enforcement action being necessary. There was minimal impact to spectator safety on this particular occasion; however, there was the potential that on a different occasion this could have led to more serious problems.

13. A Special Safety Certificate was issued to Mansfield Town Football Club for their Fireworks Display on 6th November 2011, following consultation with the Safety Advisory Group.

14. The permitted capacity of Eastwood Town Football Club's two regulated stands is currently reduced by 50%, due to safety concerns relating to stewarding, ground maintenance and safety management, which mean that the club would be poorly prepared to host a large crowd. In addition, safety concerns have been raised in relation to the floodlight masts at the ground, and the club has been required to undertake pre-match checks and risk assessments before each home game to ensure that the condition of the masts has not deteriorated. This issue will be considered in detail by the Safety Advisory Group in July and appropriate action taken to resolve the situation for the 2012-13 football season.

15. After consultation with the Safety Advisory Group, a Special Safety Certificate has been issued to Southwell Racecourse for a Scout activity camp called the 'Big Weekend' from 4th to 7th May 2012.

Other considerations

16. Guidance on a revised process for safety certification has been issued by the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, and the Emergency Planning Team is in discussion with clubs about moving towards a new style of safety certificate described in the guidance.

17. Also, members for the Emergency Planning Team are currently applying their knowledge of Safety at Sports Grounds to assist in the planning for major events this summer. These include arrangements to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and events along the route of the Olympic Torch Relay in Nottinghamshire.

Statutory and Policy Implications

18. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described in the report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1) It is recommended that the contents of the report be noted.

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For any enquiries about this report please contact:
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Background Papers

The following items of legislation and published guidance are relevant to the content of this report:

- [Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1975 \(as amended\)](#)
- [Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987](#)
- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds \('the Green Guide'\)](#).

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

The content of this report will be of interest to all Members as their constituents may attend sporting events as spectators. It will be of particular interest to Members who have relevant sports ground in their areas. These relate to the following Electoral Divisions:

- West Bridgford Central & South - Nottingham Forest and Trent Bridge Councillors Barrie Cooper and Michael Cox.

- South Mansfield - Mansfield Town Football Club
Councillors Chris Winterton and Stephen Garner.
- Eastwood - Eastwood Town Football Club
Councillor Keith Longdon.
- Hucknall - Hucknall Town Football Club
Councillors Tom Irving, Mick Murphy and Kevin Rostance.
- Southwell and Caunton - Southwell Racecourse.
Councillor Bruce Laughton.

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