



LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

19 OCTOBER 2011

REPORT OF THE INTERIM REGULATORY MANAGER

WALSALL FOOTBALL CLUB (LTD) STADIUM SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report provides Committee with an update relating to the safety certification of Walsall Football Club, and the operation of the Stadium Safety Advisory Group and a review of arrangements over the 20010/11 football season.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are recommended to note the contents of this report.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The role of Chair of the Walsall Football Club (Ltd) Stadium Safety Advisory Group (WFCSSAG) has been carried out by the Head of Public Safety since December 2008, in compliance with Football Licensing Authority recommendations that Special Advisory Groups are chaired by an officer from the local authority with delegated powers to act quickly and appropriately to protect the safety of the public and prevent dangerous situations arising. Since the Head of Public Safety left on 31 March 2011 that position has now been taken by the Interim Regulatory Manager. Licensing and Safety Committee (15.4.09) received a report describing the arrangements for the discharge of the Council's functions in respect of certified sports grounds and the role and constitution of the Walsall Football Club (Ltd) Stadium Safety Advisory Group, and in September 2009, and October 2010, received further reports reviewing arrangements over the 2009/10, and 2010/11 football seasons.

- 3.2 WFCSSAG has continued to meet at quarterly intervals to discuss and agree arrangements for spectator safety and to enable the annual review of the sports ground and the safety certificate to be completed.

4.0 MATCH INSPECTIONS

- 4.1 Six formal match inspections were conducted during the 20010/11 season by Building Control officers at the following home games:

Home game versus	Date
Wolves	20/07/2010
M K Dons	07/08/2010
Swindon	18/09/2010
Bristol Rovers	29/01/2011
Leyton Orient	08/03/2011
Sheffield Wednesday	23/04/2011

All matches passed off without any major incidents within the ground, and no further actions were necessary. The 'S' and 'P' factors have been assessed using the methods prescribed in the 'Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds' and both the S and P factors have come out as 1.0 which reflects the high standard of safety and ground management at the club. Using the 'S' and 'P' factors, calculations for safe crowd capacities for the individual stands have been calculated. Evacuation times for the Blue stand have been calculated at 5.8 minutes, Red stand at 5.2 minutes. Yellow stand at 5.2 minutes and finally the Green stand lower at 6.16, Green stand middle and upper at 4.9 minutes. All of which are well within the tolerance given within the guide of 8 minutes.

4.2 During the 2010/2011 season there have been 23 first team games, and 2 Pre season friendly games played against Aston Villa and Wolves, of which the Wolves game was policed. Only one other game against Sheffield Wednesday required policing. Policing of matches is chargeable against the football club based on a risk assessment model of potential spectator safety issues.

4.3 **Match statistics** relating to spectators have been prepared regarding attendance as follows:

Attendance

Season	Season attendance	League attendance	Average attendance at home	Average attendance away	Stewards	Injuries
2007-08	163476	128530	5588	784	85	13
2008-09	129075	105182	4573	763	89	14
2009-10	104357	91773	3990	700	88.5	7
2010/11	116803	92802	4035	730	77.2	16

Injuries

During the current season 16 spectators reported injuries. Of these 6 were suffering from previous illness or ailments; 3 were as a result of trips or falls, 1 tripped down steps and two slipped on seats (1 climbing on them and 1 standing on them); 5 persons were hit by the ball (3 during the warm up and 2 during the game). None of the above was taken to hospital as a result of their injuries.

Spectator interventions

Season	Spectators refused entry – Home	Spectators refused entry - Away	Spectators ejected – Home	Spectators ejected - Away	Spectators arrested – Home	Spectators arrested - Away
2007-08	1	35	35	84	11	
2008-09	3	18	29	38	2	1
2009-10	0	11	19	48	1	3
2010/11	0	5	5	36	2	3

- 4.4 The average League attendance was slightly up and the overall attendance was up by some 12,000 people. Ejections, refusals and arrests were all down on last season.
- 4.5 Effective stewarding resulted in only one League game being policed. However, pre-season friendlies resulted in 3 persons being arrested outside the ground whilst two others were arrested outside the ground at other games. One of these was for abusing a police spotter inside the ground and the other was a banned supporter who was identified, ejected and then arrested outside. Five home supporters and 36 away supporters were ejected from the ground throughout the season, the vast majority of these were for smoking. Despite signs at every entrance and inside the ground, the national smoking ban is still being ignored by some supporters who go to great lengths to smoke inside the ground. It is not only against the Ground Regulations, but it is also against the Law to smoke on the premises and therefore a strong stance continues at the Club.
- 4.6 As part of the annual review process, the football club is required to produce a number of annual test certificates to demonstrate that the stadium is adequately maintained and safe. All required test certificates have been produced and discussions have been ongoing in order to ensure that the safety arrangements are in line with new Football Licensing Authority guidance.
- 4.3 A letter has been sent to the football club confirming that all safety arrangements are in place as required before the season formally starts.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. There is no fee chargeable for the annual review of the safety arrangements. Should the football club wish to make substantial changes to the safety certificate it is possible to charge a fee on a cost recovery basis relating to the extent of work entailed in reviewing the changes.

6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Services have been consulted on the contents of this report and there are no legal issues arising from this report.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from the report. The costs of administration of the Walsall Football Club (Ltd) Stadium Safety Advisory Group Advisory Group are met from existing budgets.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 This report has no direct equality implications as it relates to the way the Council discharges specific responsibilities across a range of sports premises. All stadia must demonstrate full compliance with the access requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are indirect environmental implications arising from this report, as there can be traffic congestion on match days. Work has been ongoing to look at the sequencing of traffic lights to improve the movement of traffic into and away from the ground at times of peak usage. On match days the sequencing of traffic lights in the vicinity of the ground are set to a pattern which assists traffic moving away from the ground after the match and the use of vehicle messaging signs on match days, also gives drivers warnings of possible delays around the area.

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Minutes of the Safety Advisory Group meetings.