

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Safety at Sports Grounds Sub Committee.
Date: 22nd January 2024
Report for: Information.
Report of: Corporate Director, Place

Report Title

Report on the Safety Advisory Group Meetings for Manchester United Football Club held since January 2020 - August 2023

Summary

Report summarising the discussions and outcomes of the Safety Advisory Group Meeting.

Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Nicola Duckworth -Team Leader Environmental Health

Email: Nicola.Duckworth@trafford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

SAFETY AT SPORTS GROUNDS ADVISORY GROUP

Report on the Safety at Sports Grounds Advisory Group Meetings for Manchester United Football Club.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The purpose of the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) is to advise the local authority in respect of safety management to ensure and promote high standards of safety and security at a sports stadium. Meetings of the SAG are held three times a year as and when necessary; and to review annually a stadium's General Safety Certificate. This is done using a consistent and co-ordinated multi-agency partnership approach. The SAG also advises the local authority in respect of relevant legislation and guidance whereby reports and debriefs relevant to site visits and / or inspections are presented to the SAG in relation to the issue of a General Safety Certificate.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report will summarise the safety advisory group meetings which have been held for the seasons 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23.

Whilst there have been no sub committee meetings since January 2020 due to the covid pandemic, work to review the general safety certificate has remained on going throughout this period. Due to Coronavirus Regulations which were introduced in 2020, following the return of sport, it was necessary for the club to complete the remainder of the 2020-21 season behind closed doors. Throughout this time the safety advisory group continued to meet and review the General Safety Certificate to ensure that the activities which were taking place at the stadium, were meeting the required regulations and were safe for players and personnel to attend. It was necessary during this period to reduce the capacity of the stadium to permit no spectators present at the ground.

In May 2021, the relaxation of the Coronavirus Regulations saw the return of spectators to sports stadia in England. Games played at Old Trafford throughout the summer season, saw the capacity slowly increased from 40% to 75% and finally back to 100% for the start of the season in August 2021.

3.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting 21st July 2021

- 3.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held on the 21st July 2021 in order to review the safety certificate ahead of the return of fans to the stadium at 100 % attendance.

In attendance at the meeting on were representatives from Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMF&R), Northwest Ambulance Service (NWS),

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), Trafford Council Services (TMBC) including Sports Grounds and Regulatory Services, Emergency Planning, Highways and Legal and Democratic Services.

- 3.2 A presentation was given at the meeting by MUFC, which highlighted the mechanisms in place to enable the stadium to return to full capacity, which included contingency plans to keep the safety team operational during periods where people may have to isolate.
- 3.3 A presentation was also given in relation to the change of the northeast quadrant area to be a rail seated area. This was a total of 1500 seats. SGSA had already carried out their inspection and Trafford Council's team would be completing theirs, prior to reissue of the safety certificate. The intended use of this area as a test event was the fixture against Brentford.
- 3.4 GMP provided an update to the Safety Advisory Group in relation to their police resourcing and arrests during the behind closed doors fixtures. They provided information on plans to scale up police presence during out of season friendly fixtures. Concerns remained regards resourcing due to coronavirus. The SAG was informed a debrief meeting had taken place between the club, local authority and the GMP in relation to the protests which had taken place during the Liverpool fixture. An event clash between an event planned at Lancashire County Cricket Club and a Premier league fixture was raised, and the local authority assured Greater Manchester Police that steps were being taken to ensure that any risks could be mitigated.
- 3.5 It was agreed following the local authority inspection of the new rail seated area, a new safety certificate would be issued.

4.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting 13th December 2021

- 4.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held on 13th December 2021. This meeting was attended by: Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMF&R), Northwest Ambulance Service (NWAS), Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), Trafford Council Services (TMBC) including: Sports Grounds and Regulatory Services, Emergency Planning, Highways and Legal and Democratic Services.
- 4.2 A counter terrorism update was provided by GMP, and the team outlined that the threat level had been increased to severe.
- 4.3 MUFC provided a presentation to the SAG on the following areas: Return to full capacity, Rail seating update, Safe standing update, Transport management plan, Women's Euro's Planning, Plan B, Covid Checks, Games to be covered over the next 3 months.
- 4.4 A discussion took place in relation to covid certification checks.
- 4.5 GMP highlighted that there had been no increase in disorder or crime since the introduction of the rail seating area but mentioned nationally since the return of spectators there had been an increased incidence of pitch incursions at smaller grounds, which MUFC should make plans for.
- 4.6 A discussion took place in relation to the progress of the Hostile Mitigation Measures which were being installed at the end of Sir Matt Busby Way. It had

been indicated that there had been issues in relation to utilities which had held up the progress, but it was expected to be remedied soon.

- 4.7 The local authority updated the safety advisory group as to the changes which had been made to the Special Safety Certificate application process and charges included. There was now a need to communicate with other venues in the borough as well as GMP, to ensure that no clashes of events would take place which may overwhelm the emergency services resources at any given time. A brief outline of match day visits that had been carried out at the stadium were given, and that any issues which had been identified had been rectified.
- 4.8 The local authority highlighted a concern in relation to the gathering of information from people attending the stadium where incidents had occurred, to try and ensure that any recurrence could be prevented. The club agreed to look at procedures and protocols going forward.
- 4.9 The Community Safety Team at Trafford were working with Greater Manchester Police neighbourhood teams to look at the issue of urination in alleyways behind Old Trafford on match days.
- 4.10 A concern was also raised in relation to illegal parking on match days, as it was felt that the parking situation was becoming unsafe in some areas. A separate group would be set up to tackle this and would report back to the Safety Advisory Group.

5.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting 27th April 2022

- 5.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held on 27th April 2022. This meeting was attended by representatives from Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMF&R), Northwest Ambulance Service (NWAS), Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), Trafford Council Services (TMBC) including Sports Grounds and Regulatory Services, Emergency Planning, Highways and Legal and Democratic Services
- 5.2 MUFC provided a presentation on the following: Review of games so far this season, Rail seating update, Safe standing update, incidents of note since the last SAG and the actions taken, Protests, Upcoming fixtures.
- 5.3 Discussions took place in relation to further provision of rail seating in the away end and in the west stand. Work on this was expected to be completed during the World Cup break.
- 5.4 GMP reported that fan behaviour has changed nationally causing issues. In the season there had been 61 arrests on footprint and 7 off footprint, with abusive behaviour being the main reasons. A national review of work is taking place looking at the reasons for this change. It was recognised that the protests had been challenging but plans have been in place with further work planned for future protests to mitigate the smoke bomb risks. Work is on-going around recent issues for the disabled seating.
- 5.5 The local authority provided an update on some issues which had been identified via match day reports. The licensing team also reported on an unannounced match day inspection which had been carried out.

- 5.6 Northwest Ambulance Service (NWAS) expressed some concerns with issues in using radios in some parts of the stadium due to the lack of signal. Work was ongoing to sort out mitigation measures and identify how it can be repaired. MUFC reported that a medical co-ordinator had been appointed and a Medical Advisory Group will now be convened.
- 5.7 The Sports Grounds Safety Authority updated the SAG regarding early adopters to the safe standing program. They also stated they were awaiting a government role out of safe standing licensing. They stressed the importance of looking at high risk areas of the ground where persistent standing is an issue.
- 5.8 An update was provided on the plans for the Euro Fan Party which was due to be held in E2 car park.

6.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting 14th September 2022

- 6.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held 14th September 2022, in attendance were representatives from: Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMF&R), Northwest Ambulance Service (NWAS), Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), Trafford Council Services (TMBC) including: Sports Grounds and Regulatory Services, Emergency Planning, Highways and Legal.
- 6.2 MUFC provided a review of games so far this season, rail seating update, safe standing update, incidents of note since last SAG, agreed actions, protests, mitigation measures for Europa League games, disabled platform/Away fans and games to be covered over the next 3 month to end of the season.
- 6.3 GMP gave an update as to the number arrests so far this season and feedback on outcomes of arrests from previous incidents.
- 6.4 NWAS welcomed the appointment of a medical coordinator.
- 6.5 SGSA advised that the licenced safe standing review had been completed and was now permitted across the league. The SGSA had published a pyrotechnic tool kit. Consultation had been completed on the SIA exemption for in-house stewards and conditions would need to be added into certificates for in-house stewards to undergo enhanced checks and would feedback when this is required. The consultation forms part of a wider review into stewarding. Inspections have been carried out with persistent standing remaining the main issue.
- 6.6 The local authority advised that match day visits were undertaken for the Women's Euros and Liverpool fixture. The challenges at the Liverpool fixture were managed well. The P Factor audit had been completed. A meeting had taken place with SGSA and the club in relation to persistent standing to discuss the next steps. A separate meeting between the council and the club also took place to discuss how persistent standing will be managed and new measures for the club to use.
- 6.7 The community safety team at Trafford advised that they are working with the club in relation to antisocial behaviour and new toilet facilities had been

introduced. Alley gates were looking to be installed, to try and prevent public urination in these areas.

- 6.8 The licensing team at Trafford advised that engagement had taken place with licensed premises in the local area in relation to pre-match alcohol sales and engagement with businesses on the protest route. Licensing is looking to carry out work to minimise impact. Weights and measures visit at the ground have been positive.

7.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting 14th December 2022

- 7.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held on 14th December 2022. This meeting was attended by representatives from Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMF&R), Northwest Ambulance Service (NWAS), Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), Trafford Council Services (TMBC) including Sports Grounds and Regulatory Services, Emergency Planning, Highways and Legal and Democratic Services

- 7.2 The chair of the SAG gave an overview of the meeting which was held in relation to the Burnley FC fixture which was due to be held on the same day as the planned ambulance strikes.

- 7.3 A presentation provided by the club detailed the medical provision which would be available and significant discussion was held in relation to plans for a full or reduced capacity fixture. It was determined that adequate provision was in place for a full capacity fixture, but the picture was changing all the time and a definite decision would not be made until nearer the time.

8.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting 14th March 2023

- 8.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held on the 14th March 2023, attended by Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Manchester United Football Club (MUFC) and representatives from the local authority.

- 8.2 The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the use and sale of tickets to Block s229. This was in direct response to concerns raised by the local authority and Greater Manchester Police in relation to some incidents of disorder at the Real Betis fixture. The meeting explored the management of ingress and egress of fans as well as physical changes to segregation lines. The threat and risk assessment would be reviewed ahead of the next fixture or use of the area for home fans.

9.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting 29th June 2023

- 9.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held on 29th June 2023, this meeting was attended by representatives from Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMF&R), Northwest Ambulance Service (NWAS), Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), Trafford Council Services (TMBC) including Sports Grounds and Regulatory Services, Emergency Planning, Highways and Legal and Democratic Services

9.2 The purpose of this meeting was to look at an application for barrier seating/ safe standing area which was planned for the southwest corner of the stadium. A detailed presentation was given by Manchester United Football Club, in relation to the construction of the area, time scales and planned management of the area. This work was hoped to be completed before the start of the 23-24 season. It was agreed that 2 test events should be carried out before the area was able to operate at full capacity. This would bring the total number of barrier seats to 6000. An agreement in principle was given pending the issue of the licence from the SGSA and structural sign off.

10.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting 25th July 2023

10.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held on 25th July 2023, attended by representatives from Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMF&R), Northwest Ambulance Service (NWAS), Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA), Trafford Council Services (TMBC) including Sports Grounds and Regulatory Services, Emergency Planning, Highways and Legal and Democratic Services

10.2 The purpose of this meeting was the review the season which had gone before and look towards the 23-24 season. MUFC gave an overview of the year ahead, stating that the Old Trafford Stadium was likely to be used more frequently for Women's Super League fixtures. They reported the success of inspections and audits which had been carried out by the Premier League, UEFA, and owner security audits. They reflected on the success of training and tabletop exercises with partner agencies to improve responses to incidents on match days. Updates were provided on stewarding, recruitment, audits, and retention, as well as changes which were due to be made to the medical provision in the stadium on a match day, which had been agreed by the medical advisory group.

10.3 GMP provided an update on the number of arrests for the previous season, and updates on work being carried out to prevent disorder and community impact of European fixtures.

10.4 TfGM provided an update on planned travel arrangements for the season ahead.

10.5 The local authority provided an update on the P & S factor audits which had been carried out ahead of the review of the safety certificate. The club had been provided with some action points to work on in relation to integration of safety management systems and information gathering and reporting. The local authority reported they would monitor the progress and report back to the safety advisory group in the new year.

10.6 The local authority also reported that a new condition had been included on the General Safety Certificate in relation to the ticketing strategy for Block s229. This condition was agreed with other members of the SAG.

10.7 Conditions were also added and updated in relation to stewarding qualifications, which had been recommended by the SGSA.

10.8 It was agreed that the General Safety certificate would be updated and reissued following the outcome of the test events for the new safe standing areas, ahead of the start of the next season. Capacity for the test events would be agreed once the works had been completed and the accurate number of safe standing seats had been calculated.

11.0 **RECOMMENDATION.**

11.1 That the report be noted.