

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Safety at Sports Grounds Sub Committee.
Date: 3rd February 2025
Report for: Information.
Report of: Corporate Director, Place

Report Title

Report on the Safety Advisory Group Meetings for Manchester United Football Club held since June 2023 – December 2024

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 -Lead Practitioner Environmental Health & Safety at Sports Grounds.
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 2023-24, 24-25 (Up to 31/12/24).

3.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting

- 3.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held on the Tuesday 17th October 2023 to debrief Manchester United V Galatasaray Fixture.

In attendance at the meeting on were representatives from Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), and Local Authority representatives.

- 3.2 A discussion was held in relation to the issues which were seen at this fixture, particularly a large proportion of away fans in home areas. The protocols and procedures involved in the ticketing process were discussed, as well as possible causes to the issues.
- 3.3 The club proposed several actions in relation to ticketing which would be explored at upcoming fixtures to prevent issues arising in the future. This included feedback on exploring physical barriers to segregate fans in certain areas of the ground.

4.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting 30th January 2024

- 4.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held on 30th January 2024. This meeting was attended by: Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service

(GMFRS), Northwest Ambulance Service (NWAS), Trafford Council Services (TMBC) including Sports Grounds and Regulatory Services,

- 4.2 This meeting was raised to discuss a specific communication issue.
- 4.3 No further information will be made publicly available in relation to this matter for safety and security reasons.

The members of the Safety Advisory Group agreed to follow up on the actions created by this meeting.

5.0 A Safety Advisory Group Meeting 8th May 2024

- 5.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held on 8th May 2024. This meeting was attended by representatives from Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS), 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
- 5.2 MUFC provided a presentation on the summer works being carried out at the stadium.

A comprehensive presentation was provided to the group by MUFC covering:

Safe standing – MUFC provided an overview of the plans to install 1367 safe standing seats in the NW Quadrant in Blocks N2412 and N2413 and enquired about the requirements of undertaking a test event. TMBC asked for the reasonings as to how this area was determined for the seating to be installed over other higher risk areas, MUFC advised that some of the determining factors were due to availability of material and the limited time frame for the works to be undertaken. MUFC advised that it is only possible to install a certain number of seats during the year, but other areas have been looked at to implement safe standing with the club looking to install in west lower ASAP. MUFC advised that there is a drive by the club to have the whole of the west stand as safe standing, however, the NW Quadrant was identified as the most appropriate location based on restrictions.

Hospitality – discussed the new routes for ingress and egress that are being created as part of these works but that they are mirroring other stadium configurations. Confirmed that building regulation submissions have taken place for 440 seats.

Gangway infills – MUFC discussed the works taking place to install 199 new seats and will mirror existing configurations within the stadium. There are no changes to ingress and egress or concourse. TMBC asked about the reasons for the radial gangways being installed. MUFC advised that it was to provide access to the sports bars further up the terrace, but they are now accessed conventionally.

Vomitory works – MUFC provided an overview of the works taking place. TMBC asked about the vomitory width, seat installation and construction. MUFC advised that E138 and E133 would be made of steel construction so can be adapted if needed and will send information through.

5.3 A discussion was had in relation test events for the new spaces which had been created. Test events are required by the Green Guide. A discussion was had around the requirement for completion certificates and structural sign off. MUFC requested further information of likely capacities at test events, so that they could plan events. The local authority requested a plan from MUFC on suggested test events which would replicate usual fan behaviour and movement, suggested capacity was 80% in the areas being tested.

5.4 The local authority advised the Safety Advisory Group that a Special Safety Certificate had been applied for in respect of an event being held at the Stadium on the 19th May 2024. The Event Management plan would be circulated, and a noise management plan was requested of the club.

6.0 Special Safety Certificate Issued 16th May 2024:

6.1 A Special Safety certificate was approved and issued by the local authority on the 16th May 2024, in respect of an event planned for 19th May 2024.

6.2 Members of the local authority Environmental health team attended the event 19th May 2024. The event went well and no safety related issues were highlighted.

7.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting 14th August 2024

7.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held 14th August 2024, in attendance were representatives from: Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS), 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

7.2 MUFC provided a review of the 2023-24 Season.

7.3 The Safety at Sports Grounds Authority provided an update to the SAG regarding the licence issued by them to Manchester United. It was advised that the licence has been issued for this year, but a letter has been sent with it saying the club is still high risk in relation to persistent standing and so dates need to be arranged to have a meeting in relation to this.

7.4 Greater Manchester Police provided a review of the last season: Throughout the season there were 7 low risk, 14 medium risk and 4 high risk fixtures with 90 arrests, 457 ejections and 78 refused entry. Ownership Protests took place at 4 fixtures with the last one being the fixture vs Luton Town Football Club on 11/11/2023. A 'City United' Gaza protest took place at 6 fixtures. An overview of partnership working with the local authority was provided which looked at pedlars, parking, taxi enforcement and ticket touting.

An overview of Counter Terrorism reports was given to the Safety Advisory Group, actions were recorded and monitored to ensure that any outstanding issues were completed. No further information will be provided publicly in relation to this.

7.5 North West Ambulance Service gave an update to state:

A Medical Advisory Group (MAG) is needed to talk through the plans with new medical providers.

A blue route site visit has been undertaken by NWAS which has resulted in changes in routing to calls on match day.

There are 5 double crewed ambulances to be on site during match days.

Major incident work has taken place with medical providers at the ground and there are written proposals as to what is required by providers.

Discussions were had in relation to previously mentioned communication issues. No further information on this matter will be provided publicly: The Safety Advisory Group is monitoring outstanding issues.

7.6 Transport for Greater Manchester advised that the post-match shuttle has been withdrawn but it will be re-instated in January as part of franchise work and requested that any changes of TRO's / ATTRO's are communicated.

7.7 The local authority provided an update:

Trafford Council Highways advised that the red route implementation starts on the 19th August. Communications have gone out and this would be provided to club.

It was advised that there are ongoing issues with illegal parking and that the number of staff has increased on a match day as a result.

AMEY advised that barrier testing was needed for the new rail seating installation and that there are gaps between seats on level 7 which require infills. Safety at Sports Grounds team advised that area will be monitored during the visit on the 16th August 2024 but repairs are required in these areas.

A review of the premises licence through the Primary Authority Partnership is underway. This involves the club and the local authority working together to agree conditions which the club will work to. This licence is being reviewed in line with other licences for similar premises in Trafford.

Illegal parking at Pomona is still an issue and a meeting with legal and Community Safety to look at powers available to tackle this issue.

The local authority is looking to continue days of action to tackle wider issues in the community on match days in the coming season. These days of action will include looking at taxi enforcement, illegal street trading and peddlers, as well as food hygiene compliance.

A discussion around the clash between the rugby league event being held at the club in October and the half Marathon. The club has not been contacted by the event organisers for the half marathon. It was discussed how future clashes of events in the area can be managed or avoided.

MUFC requested opinions from the SAG in relation to a licensing proposal at an up coming fixture. The local authority and Greater Manchester Police advised they believed the proposal did not meet the licensing objectives, and a

concern was raised about the fixture being a test event may pose additional risks. MUFC advised they would consider the comments and feedback later.

The local authority advised that the Council is ready to re-issue the General Safety Certificate once sign off has been received for all works. A test event would take place on the first fixture of the season.

8.0 Safety Advisory Group Meeting 11th December 2024

8.1 A Safety Advisory Group meeting was held on 11th December 2024. This meeting was attended by representatives from Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS), 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

8.2 MUFC gave a presentation to the Safety Advisory Group on a review of the season so far, some of the highlights included a review of the fixtures which had occurred, incident data, ejection and arrest data. The presentation also highlighted the fixtures which were due to happen in the next 3 months, which included the planning for Europa league fixtures such as Rangers. The presentation identified the changes in the safety management team structure and gave an overview of the stewarding provision in the stadium. focusing on the changes to the allocation of stewards to certain areas of the stadium. There was an overview of the persistent standing policy and the steps that the club take to tackle the issue. They reported that they had met with the local authority and the Sports Grounds Safety Authority to discuss the future of rail/barrier seating in the Stadium. The Sports Grounds Safety Authority had requested a plan by December 31st 2024 which would identify plans for high risk areas. Details on the medical plan and changes were also discussed.

8.3 Persistent standing - The Safety Advisory Group discussed the issue of persistent standing and MUFC reported on the difficulty in ejecting whole stands if everyone is standing. The Club identified it is looking at several options to increase safe standing. West Tier 2 is of particular focus from the Sports Ground Safety Authority (SGSA).

MUFC must producing a plan which will be submitted to the SGSA by the end of December 2024. SGSA reported that they are looking for commitment from club to install more barrier seating in the areas of issue. The SGSA inspector outlined the possibility of enforcement action should a suitable plan not be put forward, but also highlighted that this was a last resort action and that the SGSA and the Safety Advisory Group would prefer to work with the club in achieving a safe resolution.

8.4 Communication issues - An ongoing issue with communication was discussed. No further information will be provided for the purposes of this report on this matter. The Safety Advisory group is monitoring the actions taken in respect of this ongoing issue.

8.5 Update from Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

GMP gave a breakdown of some statistics associated with the fixture. It was reported that 92 arrests (slightly higher than the club's data as include arrests outside associated with the match) compared to 131 for the whole of last season. The reasons around this increase were discussed and some factors which were identified were a change in legislation around drugs, better reporting on violence against women and girls, improved searching regimes and capabilities by the club. Conclusion of investigation into some incidents are likely to result in several football banning orders.

GMP are continuing to engage with the club hospitality, staff and officers around the issue of violence against woman and girls.

A discussion took place around some issues which may be associated with an upcoming European fixture, and the general issues caused when European fans want to walk up to the ground from the city centre. Planning for this fixture had already commenced and a multi-agency approach was being put into place to ensure that the event went ahead safely, both before, during and after the fixture.

8.6 Update from Northwest Ambulance Service (NWAS).

A Medical Advisory Group (MAG) was held with club on 10/12/24. Understanding issues with medical provision at the club. Reports improvements in provision although a single provider would be an ideal scenario. They reported that major incident procedure work needed to continue.

8.7 Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM)

TfGM reported that there was rise in ASB on trams, and warned of upcoming industrial action which may affect some fixtures.

8.8 Local authority Update:

Officers reported that a couple of match day inspections had taken place, one of the issues identified was smoking especially in away areas with no challenge by stewards. Operations had been carried out on activities outside of stadium one identified issue was food allergen sampling of street traders off footprint. Results obtained so far had identified an issue with food being sold which was not allergen free, when it was requested. The Environmental Health team are currently investigating and will take formal action where appropriate against traders who have received unsatisfactory results.

It has been identified that some hospitality area has been opening prior to the period of certified use, options were discussed on how this should be resolved and the implications on safety. It was also reported that there needed to be a more timely notification of erection temporary structure.

Officers reported they attended a meeting with the SGSA in relation to persistent standing and will work to support SGSA and the club in work around this issue.

Officers reported that they had held a meeting with BEC arena around the Rangers event.

Licensing officers had increased operations on peddlers, street traders and taxi enforcement and as a result were taking appropriate enforcement action.

Officers are working with club to ensure street trading offer of merchandise is in place in plenty of time. Taxi enforcement being progressed on plying for hire. Targeting licensed premises on routes for walk ups. Looking to plan in visit for age related sales within the venue.

Highways officers highlighted their commitment to work alongside the club in relation to the traffic management tendering process. It was reported red route work is progressing on Chester Road and it was likely to be early 2025 to enforce yellow box and red routes through fixed and mobile cameras. White City Way junction survey revealed large scale issue at this junction.

A discussion was had in relation to current traffic management plan and the need to extend the scope of road closures to ensure safe ingress and egress of fans from transport networks to the stadium. This matter would be picked up in a subgroup meeting involving the necessary stakeholders.

A discussion was had amongst the group in relation to the definition of Zone Ex, and that meetings had already taken place to start identifying an area and defining responsibilities. Further meetings were confirmed to take place early 2025.

8.9 Complaints and Correspondence to the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) and local authority:

Five complaints have been received since SAG, these included offsite issues in relation to litter from street traders in Trafford Wharf Road area. On footprint, there were complaints about Level 7 and the lack of stewards. Checks made and stewarding provision found to be satisfactory. There was a complaint regarding a broken seat, a complaint about the general safety of the stadium and concerns regarding rodent investigations. The local authority has followed up on all complaints and any actions identified have been actioned.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION.

9.1 That the report be noted.