

Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975
End of Season QPR Football Club Safety Advisory Group (SAG)
17th November 2021
Minutes of Meeting (part 1)
Via MS TEAMS

Attendees:

NAME	INITIALS	ORGANISATION
Stephen Hollingworth – SAG Chair, Assistant Director Leisure, Sports and Culture	SH	LBHF
Joshua Scott – Head of Operations	JS	QPR
Daniel Spilsbury - Operations Manager	DS	QPR
Paul Sutton – Facilities Manager	PS	QPR
Jim McNeill – Safety Officer	JM	QPR
Anna Pater– Health and Safety Officer, Lead Officer QPR	AP	LBHF
Christiaan Uys – Principal Traffic Orders Officer Highways	CU	LBHF
Graham Souster – Interim Lead Health and Safety	GS	LBHF
John Gerard – Met Police DFO QPR	JG	MPS
Geoff Galilee - Regional Inspector	GG	SGSA
Mohammed Basith – Law Enforcement Team	MB	LBHF
David Graham	DG	SJA
James Berry	JB	LFB
Pat Hickey	PH	LAS
Jamie Smith	JMS	LAS
Lee Hoos – Chief Executive Officer	LH	QPR
Ken Katende – Works Coordinator, Highways	KK	LBHF
Moolan Thiru – Head of Building Control	MT	LBHF

Apologies

Stephanie Needham – Head of Environmental Health
 Janet Nairne (Lead Works Coordinator - Highways, LBHF)
 Matt Shute – LAS
 Will Kpikpitse (CT - MET)
 Brett Loft- Station Commander LFB- Hammersmith and Fulham
 Ahmad Rafique – LET -LBHF

Alex Fish – Deputy Safety Officer (QPR)
 Trevor Jenner (Event Liaison Manager – London Underground)
 Neal King (Network Contingency Planning Manager – London Underground)
 Neil Thurlow (Head of Community Safety, LBHF)

ITEM	MINUTES	ACTION
1	Welcome from Chairman	SH
	Apologies for the lateness of the meeting from the end of season. SH welcomed everyone.	

	<p>reviewed annually and signed off. GG also confirmed for Safety Certificate – the certificate didn't need changes, but following review of the legislation in 2018 QPR needs to have more documents in place to cover the 'wider definition of safety' (safety of all, not just spectators) For example, the need to have an Event Management Plan, CT policy, Disorder Policy. ACTION POINT - JS will send the docs through which had been updated. ACTION POINT - JS/AP need to review P&S and have ready for SAG in February.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geraldine has moved on; Anna is the new officer looking after SAG. AP asked for all the documentation to be sent through so AP can go through and see what's missing for the certification. • P&S factors – put on July agenda for action. 	<p>JS</p> <p>JS/AP</p>
2	Notable Fixtures	
	Nothing discussed.	
3	Season End Review	
	<p>JS gave a review of last season. Played majority behind closed doors. 2 fixtures on 12th and 15th December had up to 2k spectators. Operating with 20-25 staff. Very few issues. Gave us an opportunity to review/plan ahead for variations of new season. JM gave an update of a very boring season from an operational point of view. Came out of lockdown, due to lockdown, we lost lots of trained/experienced staff. Struggling with agencies providing staff with no experience. Apparently, it's an issue across all clubs. Fanbase has had 18 months away from football. Currently a large proportion of additional drug taking, more violence, aggression towards to stewards, throwing objects at officials, verbally aggressive to opposition players. The worst season for crowd behaviour in the last 8 years' work of JM . Worst season for crowd behaviour even for over 16/17/18s. I think we are up to a very hard season now managing crowd. JG has been active in supporting us. The season behind the closed door was a total boredom and we managed with minimum staff who remained very switched on to the terrorism issue.</p>	
4	Police – JG	
	<p>COVID season was low key for the police, all the games policed by JG, policed very low. Didn't have any issues. Nothing to report on QPR front.</p> <p>This season, fans have come back 18 months older, braver, wiser. Caused multiple issues. Started off this season as a challenging season: doubling in alcohol and drug use, steward assaults, multiple pitch runners home and away, throwing items towards the pitch to a disorder report we are working on with Peterborough Constabulary to identify multiple faces from QPR supporters.</p>	

The youths although low risk on their own, but when mixing with older supporters in Block X then the risk can increase to medium- the older fans don't want to put their settled lifestyle at stake and tend to put the youngsters up to do the 'dirty work'.

GG confirmed it's the same across the board. Safety officers/police noticing an upgrade in behaviour with drugs/alcohol/violence. 'Coke' mixed with alcohol a serious issue because people become manic and it takes several people to deal with them. Poor behaviour across various age groups.

LH – number of people currently involved in the pitch invasions have no previous purchase history, put down to lockdown. Some stupid people (with history) will be easier to manage than the people who have come out of nowhere.

JS mentioned historically the average age of football fans trends upwards. This year its trending downwards. (20-30 bracket).

JS sat down with 9 fans that ran on the pitch. Mostly young people but also some older ones with unexpected behaviour.

SH queried what interventions can be done and will the change in fan behaviours impact the S Factor?

JS – QPR stewarding numbers have been hit satisfactorily. Been able to continue the knowledge we are safe to operate. Some clubs have had to reduce crowd capacities. Have introduced another supplier to help with quality staff for the Luton game.

Difference in age of people stewarding - younger and less experienced. Caused some concerns how we are managing stewards. Increased focus on away stands and X-block areas, making sure experienced stewards are focussed in these areas. We can then think of training more of in-house stewards or offering increased pay rates in the future. Solving this issue will take some time.

JM – we've lost the experience and won't get back due to changes in SIA rules. Experienced staff not renewing their badges. Discussed fan behaviour away from home. Identified a huge number of youngsters that are not wanted in the ground. No simple answer to the stewarding issue. We are lucky with our management team – our supervisors - who and are keeping the team afloat by making sure that our staff are well briefed. The new staff we are getting are very committed but not experienced and this is not gonna come overnight.

Luton match this week will be a big test because Luton fans will push the boundaries. Thankfully not too many high-risk games to play. Agencies supplying stewards are honest to us in terms of what they can and cannot provide.

JS added fan behaviour – we have constant social media/big screen/programmes, we've put out our expectations of expected

	<p>behaviour. Recently used a safety PA system during a game to manage home supporters' behaviour. Discussed with several spectators around bans but also taking an educational approach in terms of less serious offences.</p> <p>SH queried whether the behaviour was impacting categorising matches?</p> <p>JG stated every away match there have been issues. Behaviour pattern across the board has changed. Hard to grade a game low when you know there will be issues. For example, during Everton game (family club) and rated as low risk there were 13 pitch runners. Like JS said, we do a lot of work with fans to explain issues, especially that a lot of them are new fans – explaining the impact that their behaviour has on the club, policing and stewarding.</p> <p>GS observations QPR V Fulham – behaviour was OK. Early kick off which did help (less drinking time). Overall, there have been issues with fan behaviour across the board and GS agreed with what's been said.</p> <p>LH – liquidated damages clause being worked on. JS trying to work out a monetary figure.</p> <p>Using frustration of fans to report poor behaviour of other fans.</p> <p>GS - mentioned a text messaging service used at Chelsea where fans can anonymously report issues directly to the Safety Officer at the Control Room during the match. It is working well. It is harder to pick up issues after the match, so a great idea to sort during the match.</p> <p>JS would be interested to hear how Chelsea have got on with the texting option. QPR have had such system in place for years but removed it as fans didn't seem keen to use it. Replaced it with e-mails and social media account.</p> <p>GS said Chelsea have pushed this option via social media and explained what the text is really for. He recommends that JS speaks to Chris Baker at Chelsea to advise of pros and cons of using the system.</p> <p>JG mentioned the match after Fulham – further disorder.</p> <p>GG mentioned the violence and aggression often found after the match outside.</p> <p>Spoken to local authorities on stewards' issues – they reported difficulties and progressively getting worse. Even when the numbers are adequate, they don't have experience. We have also spoken to SIA on numbers, they've said the numbers they are dealing with and getting the certifications are high. Obviously not going on to work in the football industry then and must be working elsewhere. Need to keep an eye on this.</p>	<p>JG</p> <p>JS</p>
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	<p>We have instructed local authorities to monitor the grounds closely to see what the personnel numbers and quality are. When the quality or numbers drop too low you may have to look at adjusting your S factor and the capacity accordingly.</p>	<p>AP JS/JM</p>
5	Medical Provision	
	<p>PH had to leave the meeting, but asked if Stuart Lane is permanent doctor now? JS confirmed QPR didn't have a full-time doctor last season. Dr Meng resigned last season due to increased pressures he had as a GP. Currently using Dr Lane and he is able to make all matches this season – now employed by QPR, looking for another applicant to help in case Dr Lane not available.</p> <p>DG – St John's Ambulance. Nothing to raise from last season as SJA wasn't around to cover any games. This season – some games a bit understaffed, not by much and it is an industry issue.</p> <p>JS thanked Dawn & David at SJA. Only 1 game this season had to bring in some additional first aiders from outside, we're grateful to SJA on communications and numbers getting in.</p>	<p>JS</p>
6	Local Authority Officer Update – AP	
	<p>Shadowed Geraldine O'Grady on an annual inspection. Inspection was focussed on the physical environment of the stadium, all issues noted and verbally conveyed to PS during the inspection. A full report has not been produced as yet. Will be working on this shortly. Report to be sent to the club.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of general housekeeping of stadium noted but some items still kept inside electrical rooms – these should be removed. • Redundant equipment left around which should have been removed. <i>JS confirmed they've been cleaning up the areas with a skip.</i> • Fire extinguishers checked, some labels showing out-of-date inspections. AP would like to bring the annual inspection forward to can get up to date with works and ensure that the club is given full advice in a prompt manner. Would like to complete in Springtime rather than August. <i>JS confirmed he was disappointed as external firm that does all the testing on the fire extinguisher. Needs to be brought up with the firm. Need to review the quality of inspection.</i> • Document checks – took place recently. Looked at the wide range of safety certificates. Required on the conditions of the general safety certificate requirements. Couldn't locate some certificates – fire alarm system and AFD testing, lift inspections and emergency telephone system testing which I understand is undertaken in-house but still the spreadsheet administered by Paul did not have any notes on it to state that this was actually checked and tested. 	<p>AP JS/PS</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firefighting equipment – no record of this being checked. Needs some information on whether this has been done. • Some other inspections resulted in a list of works that needed to be completed afterwards. Discussed the battery check on the emergency lighting – although the system worked, many luminaries did not pass the 3 hours’ battery check. The inspecting engineer recommended changing the system to a modern one as the current one was described as obsolete and very difficult to test for battery faults between the official inspections. Boiler gas safety inspections – thorough but some follow-up works recommended as well, the same about the electrical inspection. AP requested for the club to give her an update on the current works’ status. AP/JS to go through separately on any outstanding issues. JS/AP need to sit and discuss all the certificates. • <i>JS confirmed some of the turnstiles inspection docs were missing as they had new electronic turnstiles installed and can provide a commissioning document for these.</i> • <i>JS advised that 25% electrical installation tested once yearly, only need to test 20% according to the Wiring Regs. In this way, the whole installation gets covered within a four-year period. JS will work through the report and confirm back to AP.</i> • Attended some match day inspections (Everton game), a full report has been circulated. Blackburn game – focus report was submitted. Management of games was good, sufficient medical/police presence. Good number of stewards per game. Staff morale was good. Actions from each report were discussed with the club and the latter created a spreadsheet to trace which actions were completed and which still outstanding. As per SGSA’s recent suggestion, these follow-up actions should also be discussed at the Partnership meetings with the club. Can JS please ensure that this is included as an agenda item for each such meeting. • AP mentioned the management of persistent standing. Still notices this is an issue, especially in blocks X and Z. <i>JS discussed persistent standing and QPR are looking to rail seating. Stewards are trying to stop persistent standing. May be eased by rail seating – make people stand in those areas. Try to manage as best as possible.</i> • Pitch invasions – AP mentioned the methodology needs to be looked at for pitch invasion. Has the pitch team been reviewed as planned? <i>JS replied to this that during the Everton game stewards did a great job to get all the 13 people who invaded the pitch. There was learning taken away from this incident. There is now a pitch team consisting of 4 stewards- positioned in the corners of the pitch. They were previously not coming further into the</i> 	<p>JS/AP</p> <p>JS</p> <p>JS</p> <p>JS</p>
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	<p><i>pitch but now they do come right into the middle. It does not matter if QPR put 300 stewards in place- if people are determined to come onto the pitch, they will do it anyway. One game when the club has been successful at stopping this has been the end of season when stewards were lined around the whole perimeter of the pitch with rope and there was messaging about not coming onto the pitch. The main thing we want to focus on is not prevention of incursion but dealing with the pitch invaders safely and effectively once the incursions occurred. This is why we have a team of police and stewards ready to deal with them, banning people if necessary.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>LH discussed safety issue with persistent standing. LH said this is a customer service issue rather than a safety issue. Why can the same stadium be used for a concert with people jumping around and it's not a safety issue only because it's not part of the terms and conditions but with football it becomes a safety issue? Hopes that the introductions of safe standing (rail seating) is going to help in managing this issue.</i> <p><i>GG disagrees and thinks that persistent standing is a safety issue, not just a customer service issue. GG offered to send LH copies of independent research reports which show why persistent standing is dangerous. Unfortunately, behaviour of football fans tends to be different from this of people attending other types of events and needs to be managed. It is often impossible to get people to comply with advice to sit down – this is why SGSA has run the pilot for rail seating and will be contacting all the clubs with 'all seated' policy give them the option to either manage persistent standing by taking a cut in their capacities in the areas where its likely to happen or, alternatively, put appropriate infrastructure in place, such as rail seating or independent barriers in front of the existing seating in according with the standards we have laid out. In this way, people who want to stand would be able to do so safely.</i></p> <p><i>GG gave some examples of accidents that can happen if persistent standing isn't properly managed e.g. crowd collapses, individual fans with gushes in their heads due to falling forward from the top of the away end while celebrating a goal. At friendly Manchester United match, there were photos of people seating on the front rail with their backs there – it would not take for them to go over the top and that' happened with Millwall game when they had someone go over the top of the away end. GG stressed that QPR has to take appropriate measures to manage persistent standing and if this isn't done then reducing capacities should follow.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>LH – still cannot understand why people are allowed to stand during concerts, drinking like a fish, while the same isn't allowed when a football game is taking placing at the same</i> 	<p><i>GG</i></p> <p><i>JS/JM</i></p>
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	<p><i>stadium, only because this is in terms and conditions for football. That's why if there is a cut in capacity, we will be going to court about this.</i></p> <p><i>GG – we are talking about football and not concerts and about the licence you get from us to allow people to go in there to watch football safely. The SGSA's rail seating project is run to assist the clubs with managing this aspect and more and more clubs will be included. In the meantime, the club must manage persistent standing. If there is an accident the club would be held responsible for not managing it.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• JM – can see where LH coming from. Discussed the big teams such as Manchester United – it is very challenging to manage these. Football fans want to stand. GG confirmed we know people want to stand and we are putting a process in place to help this – the 'big teams' such as Man United are already putting their rail seating in place to reduce the risks resulting from persistent standing. However, GG reiterated that the club has to manage the issue in the meantime – cannot just say that nothing will be done because people want to stand.</i> <i>• JM discussed the pitch incursions, QPR have spoken about stewards and lack of experienced stewards. Provided a presence, the only time we can stop people coming on the pitch is the last home game of the season, takes a huge amount of qualified trained people.</i> <i>• JS mentioned people don't raise issues at the time, discussed point mentioned earlier by GG of footage of people injured in the away stand who did not report to the medical team on the day. Did this occur in the moments of celebrations or during standing outside of these moments? GG confirmed they were in the away section where people were consistently standing – compared with people in the home stands who were just standing up occasionally to celebrate. GG to send some information to JS to review the footage.</i> 	GG
7	Stadium Works	
	<p>JS discussed rail seating and confirmed QPR have done a survey of fans (started in Feb 2020 started), over 3k completed the survey. Most agreed would improve the experience. 15% of fans would be unhappy if rail seating was added.</p> <p>Need to consult with fans across the board. Board keen to look at rail seating and getting it installed but need to continue with consultation with fans.</p> <p>As a club we are very keen on rail seating and hope to have it installed in the Summer of 2022.</p>	JS

	Minimal other works. No capital works last Summer due to budget constraints. Minimal decorating works.	
	Local Authority	
	CU – discussed getting the signs up in time to give local residents a notice of match-day suspensions. CU to speak with JS before the end of the week. Electric vehicle parking bays planned at the Junction of Ellerslie Road and Bloemfontein – CU asked council to stop and hold on until he has spoken to the club. Need to look the plans to see whether this does not interfere with matchday arrangements such as ambulance parking or police cordons during Cat C games. CU will send over the drawings but there should be notices of this displayed in the street. CU To send JS a drawing.	CU/JS CU/JS
8	Annual Sports Ground Inspection	
	Discussed during other agenda items.	
9	PNS factors Review	
	Discussed during other agenda items.	
10	London Fire Brigade	
	JB – Nothing to report, checked with BL also. Happy from LFB part. JS offered to LFB that they are welcome to QPR for any visits, to run exercises if required. JB - will take it on board and speak to his team. London Underground – nobody on call. MB – Law enforcement Team Manager. Started in April, trying to hire 72 officers and on the way to completion. Ahmad Rafique and his Team (LET North) patrol before the matches, identify areas to be swept (discussed bins). This includes Imre Close area which has been previously mentioned to be of concern. Officers look out for items which could potentially be used as weapons. Working with the licencing team to identify illegal street training. Most vendors outside are licensed (food or merchandise). Participated in pub watch, make referrals to the Police teams to highlight people taking part. Staff work on 24/hour rota. Do as many matches as possible. MB shared contact details if you need staffing. MB/JS to discuss outside of meeting – issue with people cutting through the estate – noise/rubbish. If you need any help advice from MB – please contact him – Mohammed.basith@lbhf.gov.uk	JB MB/JS

11	Forthcoming Season – Anticipated Challenges	
	As above	
12	General documentation/safety certificates/anti-social behaviour/Counter terrorism issues	
	As above	
13	Supporters Groups/SAG membership	
	Not discussed.	
14	Chairman’s Update	
	Nothing further to add	
15	AOB	
	<p>GG discussed the pilot for licensed standing in seating areas. 5 clubs involved. SGSA sent letter/guidance to clubs/local authorities. GG can send this again if not received, along with the earlier research outcomes regarding persistent standing (which had then led to the decision to pilot the rail seating). Important to note that rail seating cannot be just for the home part of the ground, must include away stand.</p> <p>Spectator safety consultant – changes that need making with regards to the wording – due to the qualification changing. Needs to be reflected by the safety certificate if not done yet.</p> <p>Qualified persons – Manchester Enquiry – document with people named on it – need to check names.</p> <p>COVID 19 – Plan B from Government. Plan B is in effect in Scotland and Wales at the moment – checks in place on entry for people’s COVID certification status. We have written a guidance for the Government should they invoke Plan B. We have not received any feedback yet. Premier leagues have a voluntary system – all grounds to adopt to communicate with fans, sample checks on fans’ COVID status. Some EFL grounds, such as Ipswich, volunteered a 100% check of people going on, GG said it worked well with just under 20,000 people attending. It’s all about good communication with the fans prior to the match on what they will need to do to be able to get into a match.</p> <p>SGSA recently issues a Supplementary Guidance (SG03) to the Green Guide. All clubs licenced by us and Local authorities should have the access to a free digital copy- let us know if you can access it. Some of the annexes from the online copy are printable. Hard copies also available to purchase. Training courses on this new guidance also currently available. Local Authorities Certification Training course will also be run (next one on 10th March). There will be a conference in 2022 but date yet to be confirmed.</p> <p>JS discussed Plan B. Issues connectivity/small footprint, attended Fulham match and they were checking 100%, JS had issues getting COVID Pass up on phone when trying to enter the match. JS asked for assistance/guidance for small-footprint venues.</p>	JS

	<p>GG hasn't got these details yet. Could be only a certain attendance rate over 10k for example.</p> <p>250/100,000 Covid rates in the borough and vaccines rates are improving.</p> <p>AP mentioned ventilation in the boxes – no improvement has been made. Staff exposure is a worry. No fresh air access, air is just circulating.</p> <p>AP looked at the risk assessment – JS looking into the changing the ventilation system. AP asked for an update. <i>JS Paul the facilities manager could have updated. Looking into alternatives, it's been noted. We are encouraging face coverings and informed all our agencies. Working out methodology and will get an update to AP.</i></p> <p>JS mentioned inhouse staff undertaking qualifications, by next year the club will have 3 inhouse - staff NEBOSH qualified. JS and a few others in the Control Room undertaking level 4 qualifications. Chris in the control room also taking this qualification to be able to support Jim and Alex from the managerial aspect.</p> <p>Looking at with Dr Lang at having a vaccine pop up area and better messaging to encourage booster jabs.</p> <p>AP – planning some changes for safety officer post – will the post will be covered in the near future? JS stated JM is the Safety Officer, and Alex Fish deputy. We were looking at full time post for a Safety & Security officer, it was more about full time, wasn't able to find anyone. No planned changes this season.</p>	<p>JS/PS</p>
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Meeting finished 14:20