

Local authority audit – Single ground

Local Authority: LB Merton

Meeting with: Chris Nash/Trevor McIntosh

SGSA Inspector: Ann Ramage



Local authority audit record

Ground	Plough Lane	Club associated with ground	AFC Wimbledon
Date audit carried out	21 July 2022	Date audit due	15 July 2022
Reason audit late (if applicable)	This is a few days late due to summer leave scheduling		
Date report sent to LA	10 August 2022		
Type of Safety Certificate	Risk-based	Date Safety Certificate Issued	6 May 2021

Local authority audit summary

This is the first full season with fan attendance that the LB Merton have overseen the Safety Certification of Plough Lane Stadium in SW17. The relationships with the Club, stakeholders including the SGSA over the past 12 months has been excellent.

The SAG Chair Nick Steevens (NS) embraced the role and supported the lead officer. The SAG meetings and DPI monitoring visits were carried out to a good standard. There was meant to be some dedicated secretariat for the administration of the SAG meetings but this did not happen. CN informed me that this will now happen going forward and this will assist with minor housekeeping shortfalls that were found during the audit. The officer carrying out this work is a senior building control officer and is used to enforcement work so confidence in capacity and capability to enforce should it be required is high.

Key documents such as the safety certificate and capacity calculations have recently been reviewed and updated. Policies and procedures are in place. There is a comprehensive folder on Sharepoint that is dedicated to Sports Grounds and is well organised.

The monitoring arrangements in place were good but NS left the Council at Christmas and the lead officer has had to take on the SAG Chair role while recruitment took place. SAGs have been regularly held both remotely and in-person and minutes produced with clear recommendations or decisions made by the LA. The Annual Inspection has been carried out with no significant issues raised and several DPIs took place during the 2021/22 Season which were all sent to the SGSA.

The LA is responsive to Club requests in a timely manner. The overall safety culture in respect of regulatory duties is very good and I am confident that at the next audit the identified actions if completed will move the authority into the lower risk category.



Audit Score		
Section	Agreed Score	With multiplier
1 Compliance with actions from previous audit (Multiplier- 1)	5	5
2 Safe Capacity (Multiplier- 4)	5	20
3 SAG Governance and Performance (Multiplier- 3)	4	12
4 Safety Certification (Multiplier- 3)	4	12
5 Monitoring (Multiplier- 3)	4	12
6 Enforcement (Multiplier- 1)	4	4
7 Training and Expertise (Multiplier- 2)	5	10
8 Business Continuity and Resilience Arrangements (Multiplier- 1)	3	3
9 Confidence in LA discharge of duties & Safety Culture (Multiplier-2)	4	8
TOTAL	38	86
Risk Rating (High Risk 0-65, Medium Risk 66-89, Low Risk 90+)	Medium Risk	

Recommended actions from audit		Responsible person	Review date	Completed date
1	Generally review of internal documents to ensure that they have an amendment date.	CN	01/10/22	
2	Populate the Agenda folder on the Sharepoint area with the agenda sent out for SAG meetings.	TM	01/10/22	
3	Incorporate the role of the SAG into the Safety Certification Policy and Procedures.	CN	01/12/22	
4	Improved resilience for enforcement is necessary with personnel changes.	CN	01/12/22	
5	Work with the Club to carry out some emergency exercising.	TM	01/12/22	
6	Develop a list of authorised staff and any training under Sports Grounds legislation.	CN	01/12/22	



Section 1: Compliance with recommendations from the previous audit

All recommended actions		Yes/No	Date comp
Completed P and S factor documents using the indicative questions.		Yes	19/01/22
Add 'all people' numbers, stand by stand, to the Safety Certificate when it is next issued.		Yes	06/05/21
Develop a Policy and associated procedures for Safety Certification and include a procedure for issuing and reviewing a safety certificate.		Yes	22/10/21
A dispute resolution paragraph to be added to the SAG Terms of Reference.		Yes	22/10/22
Develop a separate action log that rag rates actions coming out of the SAG meetings and records that that they are completed (or not). This will be sent with the agenda/minutes going forward.		Yes	27/01/22
All relevant follow-up action that is monitoring the safety certification process to be saved in the Monitoring folder on the SharePoint area.		Yes	20/07/22
Risk assessment for any monitoring (DPI/focused visits) to be added to the Safety Certification Policy and incorporated into the DPI/Focused Visit template.		Yes	22/10/21
Develop a standard template for Prohibitions under Safety at Sports Grounds legislation.		Yes	22/10/21
Ensure all relevant staff are authorised under Sports Grounds and a record kept on SharePoint.		Yes	15/10/21
Inspector's score			5
Evidence to support score			
All of the recommended actions many of which were housekeeping/records have been completed.			
All email correspondence around monitoring is stored on a Sharepoint folder and I was shown some of the recent email correspondence. The Sharepoint area is very well organised.			
Appendix 1 on risk assessment has been added to the safety certification policy to assist with selecting DPI visits.			
Guidance notes for evidence			
0	No progress has been made with any previous recommended actions.		
1	No action has been made with any previous recommended actions. Good reasons have been provided as to why actions have not been progressed and a plan has been identified as to how actions will be completed.		



2	Made progress on some recommended actions but some priority actions have not been started.
3	Made good progress on priority recommendations, but not fully completed them.
4	Made good progress on all of the recommended actions, but not fully completed them. Good reasons have been provided as to why not all recommendations have been fully completed.
5	Completed all recommended actions.

Section 2: Safe capacity

Document	Yes/No	Date on doc
Capacity calculations using Green Guide methodology	Yes	01/02/22
(P) and (S) Factor assessment using indicative questions	Yes	19/01/22
Inspector's score		5
Evidence to support score		
All of these documents were reviewed earlier this year with SGSA input and they were also on the SAG agenda. There is a clear audit trail with previous versions kept.		
There is a 265 seat reduction for all home EFL and domestic cup fixtures due to persistent standing in the Away area. This also went to the SAG on 28 January 2022.		

Guidance notes for evidence	
1	No evidence or knowledge as to how the current capacity was calculated. Local authority not conversant with how to calculate capacities or the use of (P) and (S) Factors. (P) and (S) Factors not applied to capacity calculations.
2	Some knowledge of capacities calculations using the entry, holding and exit figures. Evidence of capacity calculations produced but does not follow Green Guide methodology. No recognition of the relevance of (P) and (S) Factors or reduction of capacity applied even though defects have been identified.
3	Good understanding of the relevant parts of the capacity calculations but calculations are not accurately applied to conditions at the ground. Evidence that the relevant indicative questions have been used in identifying the (P) and (S) Factors, but there is no record how the factors have been applied. No evidence of review process.
4	Clear evidence and experience of calculating capacities in accordance with Green Guide methodology. Clear evidence that the (P) and (S) Factors have been used in calculating the capacity and are in line with indicative questions and Green Guide methodology has been recorded.



5	Clear and concise capacity calculations including all people have been recorded and are regularly reviewed by experienced local authority staff. Evidence that the (P) and (S) Factors have been validated and reviewed by a competent member of staff. Documented evidence of any contraventions which may affect the (P) and/or (S) Factors together with details of the action taken. Detailed procedures in place which process map the actions to be taken by the local authority and that these procedures are regularly reviewed by senior management. A clear audit trail for the whole process.
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Section 3: Safety Advisory Group (SAG) governance and performance

Document	Yes/No	Date of Doc
SAG terms of Reference including wider definition and dispute resolution process	Yes	22/10/21
SAG agenda	Yes	27/06/22
SAG minutes	Yes	27/06/22
SAG action log	Yes	27/06/22
Inspector's score		4
Evidence to support score		
<p>The SAG Chair Nick Stevens was very competent and ran the first part of the 2021/22 meetings efficiently. He left the Council at Christmas and the Lead Officer has picked up these meetings since in the interim with no issues.</p> <p>The meetings are regular and in addition further ad-hoc meetings take place as required with key partners to discuss specific issues e.g. the improvement of pitch side barriers.</p> <p>A dispute resolution paragraph has been added to the SAG Terms of Reference.</p> <p>Minutes and agenda are in place and are always circulated to partners in a timely manner. I have added an action to create an agenda folder to file the circulated agenda.</p> <p>The LA have an action log that is a part of the minutes and that is updated at each meeting for progress. Actions that are outstanding remain on the log. The log is sent out with the agenda.</p> <p>The LA administrative support to the SAG Chair was planned but has not materialised in a permanent way. There has now been a reorganisation and a manager Selma Ouaguena has been appointed and so there should be some support for the 2022/23 Season and going forward. There is also a new Commercial Manager coming in who has football SAG experience and will take up the SAG Chair role.</p>		



Guidance notes for evidence	
1	A SAG has not been formally established. SAG meetings are not held or are very infrequent appropriate to the risks. Lack of interest in process.
2	No terms of reference have been produced. Lack of audit trails. Meetings are held but many core members of the group are not regular attendees or send deputies who are not empowered to make decisions on their behalf. Low levels of interest.
3	Terms of reference established. Agendas for meetings. No real compliance with the identified roles and responsibilities. Lack of clarity in identifying issues in minutes or on action notes. Although meetings are held, with regular attendees, the ability of the group to influence the performance of the club is diminished by not identifying actions that need to be taken. Ineffective leadership of the group by the Chair.
4	SAG meetings are regularly held appropriate to the risks. Request agenda items before meetings. Timely minutes reflect the identification of required actions that need to be taken, records the findings but does not ensure that actions are followed through to completion. Effective leadership by the Chair and effective participation from members of the group. Written SAG terms of reference which are reviewed at least annually or if any changes in circumstances have been identified
5	Constituted SAG which is aware of its responsibilities, meet with appropriate regularity with attendance of all relevant organisations of enough seniority to take decisions. Written terms of reference and procedures in place including a documented dispute resolution process. All documents including terms of reference, agenda, policies and procedures reviewed in line with wider definition of safety. Appropriate secretarial support provided, timely and accurate agendas, papers and minutes produced. Arrangements in place for confidentiality of meetings and documents, where necessary. A clear audit trail is maintained of any recommendations or decisions made to the local authority and the outcome.

Section 4: Safety certification

Document	Yes/No	Date of Doc
Safety certification policies and procedures	Yes	22/10/21
Safety Certificate that includes consideration of all people and red line drawing	Yes	06/05/21
Operations manual (controlled copy or access to)	Yes	N/a
Any proof of Safety Certificate review e.g. SAG minutes, annual inspection etc	Yes	27/01/22
Record of deviations to Green Guide	Yes	01/11/21
Special Safety Certificate	N/a	
Inspector's score		4
Evidence to support score		



Safety certification procedures are in place but there is a gap around the role of the SAG which is not written down and this has been added as a follow-up action.

A red line drawing is contained in the Safety Certificate and the 'All people' is detailed in Safety Certificate.

The Club have provided a Sharepoint area with all of the documentation in their Operations Manual and the LA have access to this via a link. The LA also save the key documents on their Sharepoint areas and they showed me this e.g. Capacity Calculations and P and S factor documents.

SAG meetings have talked about safety certification as the stadium developed their procedures for dealing with the Away area and this is recorded in the minutes.

Guidance notes for evidence

1	Although a safety certificate is in force the conditions, or the procedures in any operations manual required under the Safety Certificate, are out of date in respect of current circumstances. For example policies on Pyrotechnics or Drones.
2	The certificate conditions, and operations manual where one is required under the Safety Certificate, has/have been reviewed on an ad hoc basis, but no amendments have been issued where changes have been identified. Changes have been made to event day procedures without reference to the local authority or SAG.
3	The certificate conditions, and operations manual where one is required under the Safety Certificate, are the subject of an annual review but any amendments are not immediately made, or changes recorded.
4	Annual review of certificate conditions, and operations manual where one is required under the Safety Certificate, with amendments issued immediately to ensure that the certificate is up to date. Clear terms and conditions reflect the circumstances at the ground. Written amendments are made immediately after any changes at the ground or to the club's safety management systems. Public notices are issued advising of any changes to the Safety Certificate.
5	The certificate wording updated in line with the wider understanding and additional conditions considered e.g. event safety policy, infectious disease clause (Covid-19), crowd disorder and anti-social behaviour, and counter terrorism plan. Certificate states time of its operation and a plan of certified condition area is attached. Updated list of deviations to the Green Guide. All SAG members involved in the ongoing dynamic review of the safety certificate. Where an operations manual is in place the local authority is kept aware of any proposed changes and maintain a controlled accurate copy. Clear audit trails are maintained including any contraventions together with details of the action taken. There are detailed policies and procedures in place which process map the actions to be taken by the local authority and that these policies and procedures are regularly reviewed by senior management. For example agreed policies on Pyrotechnics or Drones.



Section 5: Monitoring

Document	Yes/No	Date of Doc
Procedures for inspection and monitoring	Yes	22/10/21
Record of during performance inspections (DPIs) (provide all dates of DPIs completed during current season)	Yes	05/03/22
Record of annual inspection	Yes	23/05/22
Proof of feedback/actions as a result of inspections	Yes	various
Risk assessment for frequency and selecting of DPIs	Yes	22/10/21
Focus checks on monitoring visits such as steward training records, matchday records etc	Yes	various
Proof of monitoring persistent standing	Yes	05/03/22
Any reviews, tests and exercises the local authority has undertaken/observed to validate the emergency preparedness of the ground, including each ground's Contingency Plans (including Evacuation Plans) and integration with the Major Incident Plan (latter written by the emergency services)	No	n/a
Inspector's score		4
Evidence to support score		
<p>Monitoring procedures are in place and written down with good record keeping.</p> <p>All relevant follow-up action is filed and stored in the Monitoring folder in the SharePoint area.</p> <p>The Lead Officer is very experienced at prioritising and risk assessing what monitoring to carry out.</p> <p>DPIs and the Annual Survey both cover persistent standing.</p> <p>There have not been any recent emergency exercises and this has been raised with the Club and has been added as a follow-up action. A Medical table top could also be suggested as well as some smaller specific exercises during events.</p>		
Guidance notes for evidence		
1	The local authority does not undertake any form of monitoring of compliance with the safety certificate.	
2	No risk assessments undertaken to inform frequency of inspections. Inspections limited to single statutory visit. No prescribed forms for inspections and no record of results conveyed back to the club or retained on file.	



3	Risk assessed match DPI's are undertaken but no planned annual inspection, covering all aspects of sports ground safety. Forms are used to record results with some feedback conveyed to the club. Engagement in the club's emergency preparedness but reviews/exercises not carried out.
4	A programme of risk assessed DPI's are planned and an annual inspection undertaken, with issues being identified, fed back to the club and followed up to completion. A procedure in place which process maps the actions to be taken by the local authority and that this is regularly reviewed. Engagement in the club's emergency preparedness with reviews/exercises carried out.
5	DPIs are determined by risk assessment which takes into account; required frequency, safety management culture, and ground management's compliance with the safety certificate. An annual inspection carried out by competent persons. Comprehensive reports using updated documents including wider understanding considerations. Outcome of inspections communicated to the club and other members of the SAG, followed up to completion. Records maintained of any contraventions together with details action taken. Regularly reviewed procedure in place which process maps the actions to be taken by the local authority. The DPI includes persistent standing information. Engagement in the club's emergency preparedness with reviews/exercises carried out and proactive involvement in the wider major incident plan written by the emergency services.

Section 6: Enforcement

Document	Yes/No	Date of Doc
Enforcement policy covering the suite of available options	Yes	01/07/21
Enforcement procedures for staff to follow	Yes	01/07/21
Prepared notices	Yes	Various
List of authorised officers/deputies	Yes	
Delegated authority for serving notices	Yes	
Procedure for reporting to relevant local authority committee if required	Yes	
Inspector's score		4
Evidence to support score		
The Department is part of Environmental Health who regulate and carry out enforcement on a day to day basis. An Enforcement Policy is in place for the regulatory work and standard notices are available for prohibitions under Health and Safety. There is also a standard template for Prohibitions under Safety at Sports Grounds.		



The Scheme of Delegation is fit for purpose. The Director for Environment and Regeneration is the lead for this work and a newly appointed Director is Adrian Ash who started in July 2022. Adrian is the delegated Executive Director and his portfolio covers Building Control and Regulatory Services who carry out this work. Any major issues would go to Adrian who reports to the CEO and relevant committees.

The Lead Officer authorisation is in place and there is some resilience which should improve as some new staff have been appointed and start in the autumn of 2022.

No formal enforcement action has been taken during the past year under Sports Grounds legislation. There are no concerns about enforcement being carried out should it be required as the legal infrastructure of the department is there to support this.

Guidance notes for evidence	
1	No enforcement policy and enforcement processes developed. No local authority staff guidance issued, or training given. No willingness to enforce relevant sports ground safety standards.
2	Local authority staff lack experience in their role. Unsure of policies to follow through poor communication. Poor documentation. Lack of process to issue prohibitions.
3	Policy and process on enforcement is widely understood. Local authority staff not fully trained or supported in their roles. Documentation is not in accordance with regulators code.
4	Safety at sports grounds policy and process communicated to local authority staff. Local authority staff are experienced and confident to carry out enforcement. Documentation, including audit trails in place but has scope for improvement. Enforcement options include informal warning, prohibition notices, reductions in capacities, formal caution, prosecution.
5	Local authority has an enforcement policy with enforcement procedures in place which process map the actions to be taken by the local authority. These procedures are regularly reviewed by senior management and there is access to legal advice. Enforcement options include informal warning, prohibition notices, reductions in capacities, formal caution, prosecution. All enforcement documentation has been updated in line with the wider understanding advice produced by the SGSA and has been reported/endorsed by the relevant council committee if so required. Staff have the necessary experience and training to implement the policy. Documented evidence of any contraventions are recorded with a clear audit trail.

Section 7: Training and expertise

Document	Yes/No	Date of Doc
Training policy/procedure	Yes	n/a
Staff training records including any qualifications and CPD	Yes	n/a
Management structure in place to support safety at sports ground function	Yes	n/a



Job/role descriptions including safety at sports ground function	Yes	n/a
Staff have ability to easily access expertise from other departments/external bodies/organisations when required	Yes	n/a
Inspector's score		5
Evidence to support score		
<p>The Regulatory Services training requirements are part of officers annual appraisal and relevant CPD to secure competency is discussed regularly to ensure any gaps in knowledge or experience identified are planned for. SGSA training on SG02 and Local Authority Audit were attended by several staff.</p> <p>Any relevant training carried out under Sports Grounds or related legislation is held on the Sharepoint area and individual CPD/training is retained by Learning and Development. Two Building Control Officers are able to do Sports Grounds visits and in an emergency there are further officers authorised. Chris Nash will ensure authorisation is in place for any new staff who join the Council. A review to ensure all relevant staff are authorised and have suitable training under Sports Grounds and a record kept on SharePoint has been added as an action. This follows the re-organisation of the department and ensures a competent team.</p> <p>Expertise from key partners has been very good at the SAG. The Environmental Health network is helpful, with other Local Authorities agreeing to mutual aid. The Lead Officer attends the LDSA regional meeting.</p>		

Guidance notes for evidence	
1	Local authority staff lack experience/formal training/knowledge.
2	Local authority staff have received training, but lack of relevant experience does not give them confidence to act with authority. Therefore, they are unable to make effective judgements.
3	Identified that local authority staff are inexperienced with only limited training. Resources are allocated, including time, to ensure that more guidance and support given to local authority staff. Some records are maintained of individuals' development, training and experience.
4	Local authority staff who have several years' experience in the role and have received appropriate training. They receive a good support to undertake roles. Regularly monitored by way of performance and quality of reports. Satisfactory records are maintained of individuals' development, training, and experience. Commitment from local authority to support person to do role and provide continued professional development.
5	Staff have the correct competence, experience and the necessary practical and theoretical knowledge to undertake their roles and responsibilities. Procedures are in place to ensure that staff operate within the limits of their competence. Staff can access appropriately qualified specialists when dealing with highly technical issues. Good records are maintained of individuals' development, training, and experience. Commitment from local authority to support person to do role and provide continued professional development.



Section 8: Business continuity and resilience arrangements

Document	Yes/No	Date of Doc
Service or Departmental Business Continuity Plan	Yes	12 March 2021
Specific contingency/resilience arrangements for the safety at sports ground function should the lead officer be unavailable	Yes	n/a
Exercise testing of LA business continuity or resilience arrangements	Yes	
Regional working protocols	Yes	various
Inspector's score		3
Evidence to support score		
<p>The Business Continuity Plans for the Department follow a Corporate template that was last reviewed in March 2021. This incorporates regulatory inspection.</p> <p>The resilience in terms of qualified and competent officers to enforce this legislation is low. The SAG Chair – also a competent officer - left the Council in December 2021 and the Lead Officer is performing the SAG Chair role in the interim. The LA have gone through a restructure and have appointed staff at several levels and this will improve resilience from the Autumn when the appointed staff start to arrive in post. The existing Lead Officer has held the fort well and there have been no issues of concern other than the lack of support to him. It will be important to see this resilience improve going forward.</p> <p>LB Merton is a part of the Pan London emergency exercise programme and with the pandemic and excessive deaths this was tested in the real. Merton are also a part of regional networks and their relations with Wandsworth and Richmond are good for specific questions on Sports Grounds as Richmond has Twickenham.</p>		

Guidance notes for evidence	
1	No business continuity or resilience arrangements in place for safety certification process.
2	No formal planning in place although local authority staff have some resilience.
3	A plan is in place, but it has never been tested. Local authority staff not given the opportunity to act at a higher level to test the resilience of the system or their own abilities. There is no process for learning lessons from any incidents and developing contingency plans.
4	Plans are in place and have been tested. Local authority staff are trained and experienced to ensure service delivery continues but formal processes are not in place. Local authority staff flexibility leads to a higher degree of resilience. Continual improvement and review is limited.



5	Business continuity plans are documented and regularly reviewed and tested to ensure resilience. Plans are regularly reviewed by senior management with an emphasis on continual improvement. Staff resilience planning is in place to ensure continuity of the function. Staff are aware of what will be required of them to ensure continuity and staff have the necessary training and experience to undertake the roles they could be expected to perform. Staff respond well to the additional requirements needed at sports grounds following an epidemic e.g. COVID 19.
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Section 9: Confidence in local authority discharge of duties and safety culture

Inspector's Score	4
Evidence to support score	
<p>The experience of the Lead Officer is extensive in Sports Grounds, he has been overseeing the Wimbledon Tennis Championships for almost 50 years and he is a senior Building Control Officer. The SAG Chair who covered up till Christmas 2021 was a senior Regulatory Services Manager and was competent and knowledgeable in running the SAG meetings and finding solutions to issues that were raised. Unfortunately, he moved on from the Council and this has left a continuity gap so the Lead Officer has stepped in. This does show some resilience as business as usual has continued but this would not be a solution beyond the short term.</p> <p>The LA enforcement and safety culture is very robust and confidence in carrying out the statutory duties and any required enforcement is high in that this is a regulatory service and they are used to enforcement which they carry out on a daily basis. The staff are experienced and knowledgeable and prioritise issues well, there is just a lack of staff who have the specialist knowledge under Sports Grounds.</p> <p>The resilience has not improved as the deputising officers to assist with DPIs have been distracted with pandemic enforcement. A recommended action has been added and will improve this significantly if implemented. The LA respond to SGSA and Club requests very timely.</p> <p>The SAG Chair put improvements in place in the first part of the 2021/22 Season which have embedded well. The actions identified in this audit are generally a few bits of housekeeping/records and resilience. The LA has only been involved with AFCW for one full season and has made excellent progress in developing the SAG and collaboration to ensure the Club is compliant in all areas.</p>	

Guidance notes for evidence	
1	No resources allocated to discharge local authority functions. No backing from senior management. No response to SGSA or club. The overall safety culture of the local authority in respect of regulatory duties is very poor.
2	The sports ground safety team is inadequately resourced with insufficient staff appropriate to the size of the club and the tasks faced. No backing of senior management. The local authority is limited in responding to SGSA engagement and requests for information/action



	when pushed. Local authority slow in response to club requests. The overall safety culture of the local authority in respect of regulatory duties is limited.
	The sports ground safety team has limited resources who are pushed to their limit. There is minimum backing of senior management. The local authority is responsive to SGSA engagement and requests for information/action. Local authority responds to club requests. The overall safety culture of the local authority in respect of regulatory duties is satisfactory.
4	The sports ground safety team is satisfactorily resourced with enough staff appropriate to the size of the club and the tasks faced. There is acceptable backing of senior management. The local authority is responsive to SGSA engagement and requests for information/action. The local authority responds to club requests in a timely manner. The overall safety culture of the local authority in respect of regulatory duties is good.
5	The sports ground safety team is well resourced with the number of staff appropriate to the size of the club and the tasks faced. There is good backing of senior management. The local authority is quick to respond to SGSA engagement and requests for information/action. The local authority responds to club requests quickly and pro-actively. The overall safety culture of the local authority in respect of regulatory duties is high performing.

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