



Environment and Residents Services Select Committee Minutes

Monday 20 February 2012

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Rachel Ford (Chairman), Robert Iggulden, Wesley Harcourt (Vice-Chairman), Lisa Homan, Matt Thorley and Gavin Donovan

Other Councillors: Nicholas Botterill (Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Environment and Asset Management and Greg Smith (Cabinet Member for Residents Services)

Officers: Nick Austin (Director for Environmental Health), Ian Hawthorn (Head of Network Management), Dave Page (Bi-Borough Director for Safer Neighbourhoods), Jardine Finn (Sports Development Officer) and Gary Marson (Principal Committee Coordinator)

Others in Attendance: Chief Inspector Rod Charles (Metropolitan Police), Jenny Winstanley (Operations Manager, Queens Park Rangers FC), Graham Gilmour (Venue Operations Director, Fulham FC), Eddie Simpson (Fulham FC), Steven Day (Chief Executive, Fulham FC Foundation), Simon Taylor (Chief Executive, Chelsea FC Foundation) and Michael Cole (Chelsea FC Foundation).

42. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

RESOLVED that -

- (a) the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16th January 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record; and
- (b) progress with the acceptance and implementation of recommendations be noted.

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Ali De Lisle and Jane Law.

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Rachel Ford, Lisa Homan and Matt Thorley declared personal interests in each of the football related items on the agenda. In the case of Councillor Ford this was because she lived adjacent to Fulham FC's Craven Cottage ground. Councillors Homan and Thorley's interests arose as they were season ticket holders at Chelsea FC and Fulham FC respectively. Since the interests were not prejudicial each of the Councillors remained in the meeting and participated in the debate throughout.

45. FOOTBALL POLICING OPERATIONS AND PUBLIC ORDER

The Committee received a detailed presentation from Chief Inspector Rod Charles on the policing operations relating to matches at the borough's three professional football clubs, Chelsea, Fulham and Queens Park Rangers. Representatives of the clubs were also present to answer questions from Members.

Members noted the very significant impact of football on policing resources in the borough. Hammersmith & Fulham was the only borough in the country to host three professional clubs, all of which were in the Premiership. This meant that, subject to progression in cup competitions, a total of around 80 matches attracting approximately 2 million spectators needed to be policed each season, with the greatest challenge presented by cup matches which, unlike routine league fixtures, were scheduled at short notice. Sometimes resources were further stretched by two clubs playing at home simultaneously.

Chief Inspector Charles outlined the detailed planning and review arrangements undertaken by the Police in conjunction with the clubs and Council for each fixture and the risks of both pre planned and spontaneous disorder. Matches were normally categorised on a scale of risk from A-C on the basis of prior intelligence, the history of the clubs and fixture, the anticipated size of the attendance and the ticket allocation to visiting supporters. The lowest risk Category A matches were policed by approximately 100 officers with 200 at category C games, including specialist personnel, and potentially more at the very highest Category C IR games. The majority of fixtures fell into Category B.

The Committee was informed that the vast majority of supporters were peaceful and most matches passed off with no public order problems. Significant progress had been made since the peak of football related hooliganism in the 1970's and 1980's with the policing approach, stadium facilities and security arrangements such as closed circuit television all vastly improved. The Police, clubs and local authority worked together successfully in partnership.

Nevertheless, the potential for disorder from a hard core anti social element of adult males remained and Chief Inspector Charles briefed the Committee on the policing strategy. This concentrated on the management of on street offences related to disorderly and anti social behaviour, organised violence,

unlicensed trading and illegal ticket sales, safety and security inside the stadia including crime and breach of ground regulations and the conduct of players and supporters on the field of play. The Committee was shown a video of the police management of an incident of disorder in 2010 and noted the tactics employed and the need for the long term investigation of such incidents by specialist teams of officers.

Members took the opportunity to raise a variety of questions relating to the cost of policing matches and the deployment of officers. It was noted that the majority of fixtures could not be policed entirely from local resources and officers were drawn in from across London. Overtime payments were occasionally necessary in respect of short notice cup fixtures but demand was generally met at no additional cost by careful planning and redeployment of officers.

The police presence inside stadiums varied between clubs and individual matches but had been substantially scaled down since the 1980's and the clubs made what Chief Inspector Charles described as a fair contribution to the costs. They were not, however, obliged to meet the cost of policing in the area around the grounds. In every instance the decision on policing numbers and distribution was made by the Police following consultation with the clubs and the Council on the basis of available intelligence rather than cost. Current proposals for increases in ground capacity would not necessarily automatically lead to the commitment of greater police numbers. Where trouble did occur it was usually outside the grounds but police resources inside the stadia could be quickly escalated when necessary by the Police Matchday Commander.

The Committee enquired about the extent of disorder and the best means of dealing with the hard core hooligan element. It was informed that pre planned violence was rare, partly due to the rigour of the preparations by the Police, clubs and local authorities and the contributions of club stewards and safety officers. Banning Orders were considered to be the most effective means of controlling hooligans. The Courts were generally prepared to issue them if a conviction for a relevant offence was secured.

Members also raised questions in respect of the management of alcohol and ticket allocations and touting. It was noted that the Police adopted a proactive approach to the control of alcohol, deploying Officers to pubs in order to monitor drinking and ensure no alcohol was taken from the premises to the match. All Officers on duty were also briefed about the Controlled Drinking Zone and the need to enforce it. Premiership and Football Association rules stipulated the ticket allocations for away fans but the numbers could be varied for specific matches if necessary. The Police were content that they had an opportunity to influence the size of allocations where necessary in the interests of public order. The control of illegal ticket sales was not a major focus for the Police but resources were devoted to the problem proportionately and a specific operation to tackle touting was currently underway. The Clubs were able to help the Police trace tickets to source and supporters who passed them on in contravention of the regulations were subject to bans from future home fixtures.

46. FOOTBALL STADIA SAFETY AND LICENSING ISSUES

The Committee gave consideration to a report concerning the safety management arrangements for professional football matches in the borough.

Members noted the Council's statutory functions and responsibilities for safety certification of the grounds under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 and other legislation, together with the process of inspection and assessment of each stadium for the purposes of calculation of capacity and the issue of safety certificates. The Council had been one of the first to introduce new style safety certificates issued on a more risk based approach following the introduction of revised guidance in 2010.

The Committee also received details of the composition, function and operation of the Safety Advisory Groups established by the Council for each club and the role of the Safety Ground Sports Authority (SGSA) which oversaw the Council's discharge of its safety responsibilities. It was noted that the safety management of the grounds was resource intensive – Hammersmith & Fulham was the only local authority in the country with as many as three large professional football clubs – and there were limited opportunities to recover costs. All safety issues had, however, been managed within the legislative framework to the satisfaction of the SGSA.

Members enquired about the feasibility of evacuating the grounds within the target of 8 minutes in the event of emergency and testing procedures for such an eventuality. The Committee was informed that flow rates of spectators were monitored and each club undertook safety exercises, including practice evacuations in whole or part. Graham Gilmore, Fulham's Venues Operations Director, confirmed that a practice evacuation of one stand had been undertaken at a match in December within 5 minutes, close to the target for wooden stands. As iconic venues of national importance each ground also had contingency plans in place for emergency incidents and undertook exercises in preparation for such an eventuality. Fulham confirmed that supporters were consulted on safety issues through fans forums.

The Committee also addressed the issue of standing at matches. A number of supporters continued to stand despite the introduction of all seater stadia in the 1990's and fans pressure groups nationally were campaigning in favour of a return to terraced areas for those who preferred to stand. It was noted that the Safety Advisory Groups regularly reviewed the issue of persistent standing and although it occurred at every match it was not on such a scale as to present a major problem. All three clubs actively managed the issue through well trained stewarding and when supporters of visiting clubs with reputations for persistent standing were in attendance the issue was incorporated into the match action plan. Action was taken against supporters who breached ground regulations.

Questions were also asked about road closures and residents access to their properties immediately before and after matches. Until recently road closures had been the responsibility of the Police but traffic management was now

undertaken by the clubs with trained stewards under police supervision. A Memorandum of Understanding was being developed to clearly define the respective roles of the club, Police and Council in the management and enforcement of traffic arrangements.

Members noted that each club had a different traffic management design and extensive work was undertaken to minimise disruption to residents. The arrangements were generally very smooth with, by way of example, positive comment on the re-opening of Fulham Road within minutes of the end of each match. Jenny Winstanley, Operations Manager at QPR, emphasised that road closures were applied on Police advice in the interests of public safety and were kept as short as possible. Attempts would be made to provide access to residents if urgently required. Communication was vital to inform residents of the closures as far in advance as possible.

Members asked about the extent of the matchday involvement of the St Johns Ambulance Brigade. Very few injuries were sustained at matches and the clubs medical facilities were more frequently used by people seeking advice and assistance with minor pre existing ailments, for sudden emergencies such as heart attacks and occasionally for passers by taken ill in the streets and brought into the ground for assistance.

The Committee also noted details of football related issues concerning the sale of alcohol. The Council and Police had a programme of joint inspections and enforcement action in respect of licensed premises surrounding each ground and football related conditions were attached to licences where appropriate. A borough wide Controlled Drinking Zone and additional signage around the grounds helped prevent supporters drink alcohol in the streets and thereby reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour.

47. FOOTBALL IN THE COMMUNITY

The Committee received presentations from Steven Day and Simon Taylor, Chief Executives of the Fulham FC and Chelsea FC Foundations respectively, about the work of their organisations in the community.

The Foundations were the charitable arms of the football clubs and, along with the Queens Park Rangers equivalent, the QPR Football Trust, provided a wide range of outreach services and programmes designed to build better lives through the power of sport, and principally football. Members noted details of the size and scope of the Foundations operations, their geographical coverage, initiatives specifically delivered within Hammersmith & Fulham and the benefits realised.

Activities delivered included coaching in schools, social inclusion programmes, mens health schemes, sporting opportunities for people with disabilities, literacy and educational initiatives and the Kikz scheme, which was run by both Foundations with a view to breaking down barriers between the Police and young people and reducing youth crime and anti social behaviour. The Premier League into Work programme had helped 23 long term borough residents back into paid employment after a 10 week course.

The Foundations worked closely with schools, including a number in Hammersmith & Fulham. The Chelsea scheme delivered community programmes and projects within the borough worth approximately £282,000pa. Both the Chelsea and Fulham Foundations were strongly supporting the development of a new initiative, London United, which sought to bring together the community work of all 14 professional football clubs in the capital.

The Committee asked a series of questions covering topics including the selection of scheme participants and locations, sources of funding and progression on through the schemes into professional careers. Members noted that young people sometimes self referred to the programmes but were often identified through partnership work with the Police and youth offending agencies. The mens health initiative was a medical referral service. Very often once young people were drawn into the schemes through the attraction of playing football the opportunity could be taken to explore and identify their problems and refer them on to the relevant agencies and pathways. The Foundations' wide geographical spread were determined largely by need and historical ties and associations. Funding was derived largely from charging, the Premier League and the clubs.

Whilst there were occasional examples of young people who had benefited from the Foundations' work subsequently making a career in football it was emphasised that this was not the purpose of the programmes. Of more relevance was that a very considerable number of the participants went on to become coaches and volunteers with the scheme themselves.

48. FOOTBALL MATCHDAY ACTIVITIES

Members noted a report which set out the impact and cost of the borough's three professional football clubs on a range of Council services, in particular waste management, streetscene enforcement, traffic management and the Parks Constabulary.

The Committee was informed that matchday crowds generated significant amounts of additional litter in the streets round the stadiums and beyond and litter clearance and cleansing services were provided to the clubs at a total cost of £65,000 in 2010/11. A 2010 memorandum of understanding between London Councils, TFL, the Premier League and the Football League enabled litter clearance and street cleansing costs to be recovered from the clubs and the Council was working to achieve this.

All three clubs now undertook major parts of the matchday traffic management arrangements with qualified stewards setting closures and liaising with the Police. Apart from parking restriction enforcement the Council's role was now primarily that of monitoring. The current total costs of £37,000pa represented a significant reduction and were set to fall further in future.

Members noted that additional Parks Constabulary staffing was required on Fulham matchdays in order to manage the movement of spectators through

Bishops Park to access Craven Cottage. In winter this required keeping the park open beyond its scheduled closing time of 7pm so as to allow pedestrian access to and from local transport links for evening matches. Nominal costs were also incurred in undertaking the clearance of fly tipped materials in the proximity of football grounds and the inspection of licensed skips and other materials stored on the highway in order to ensure that there was no potential source of weapons for rival fans. Trading Standards Officers worked with the clubs to deal with the sale of counterfeit souvenirs near the stadia and the Council was also concerned with the management and enforcement of the street trading regime.

Overall the total cost of football related services, including waste management and traffic arrangements was estimated at approximately £117,000pa although the Committee highlighted that the clubs were also significant generators of income to the public purse with Chelsea's contribution via business rates estimated at £1.5m.

49. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2011/12 Municipal Year. The Chairman agreed to examine a suggestion that it receive a future report concerning sites requiring environmental improvement.

Members also noted details of forthcoming relevant key decisions which were to be taken by the Cabinet and would be open to scrutiny by the Committee.

50. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that its next meeting was scheduled to be held on 11 April 2012.

Meeting started: 7.00 pm
Meeting ended: 8.55 pm

Chairman

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