WATFORD FOOTBALL CLUB

Stadium Operations Manual

Banners and Flags Policy

Season 2023/2024

Stadium Operations Manual

1. Audit & Review

The content and effectiveness of the policy, arrangements and guidance will be reviewed and revised as often as is necessary and as a minimum standard annually with any changes communicated as appropriate.

This and all other subsidiary policies and contingencies shall be subject to review on the basis of lessons learned following major events at Vicarage Road Stadium in addition to periodic reviews.

Safety reports will be provided to the Executive Management team post all major events.

Version control

Document Title:	Banners and Flags
Document Owner:	Kevin Stump
Reference:	KJS/04/23

Document review

Last reviewed	Position
14/04/2023	Kevin Stump
16/05/2023	

Version history

Version	Date Released	Originator	Authorised	Comments
0.01	14/04/2023	Kevin Stump		
0.01	16/05/2023	Kevin Stump		

Distribution list of authorised printed copies

Organisation	Position
Safety Advisory Group	Safety Advisory Group Members
Watford F.C. Ian Pope	Operations Director
Watford F.C. Andy Jenkins	Operations Manager
Watford F.C. Kevin Stump	Safety Officer

1. Audit & Review

2. Contents

Section1 Banners, Flags, surfers – General

Section 2 Flags

Section 3 Surfers and Banners

Section 4 Risk Assessment

3, Purpose

This policy supplements the Health and Safety Policy, Event Safety Policy and all other aspects of Stadium Operations Manual of Watford F.C.

There are several Statutory Provisions which have relevance to the operation of this policy. The main examples are:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Licensing Act 2003;
- Safety of Sports Ground Act 1975.
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- Equalities Act 2010
- GDPR 2018

4, Scope & Objectives

Watford Football Club is responsible for the management of Vicarage Road Stadium. Watford Football Club seeks to ensure that all events taking place at the venue are conducted in a manner that places safety including event safety as far as is practicable, above all other considerations. Watford Football Club employs staff and external contractors to manage its facilities.

Watford Football Club responsibilities for event safety are set out in the Premises Licences and Safety Certificate it holds, copies can be found in the Operation Manual. In addition, it has general duties towards visitors in common law and under legislation. This policy seeks to ensure that these obligations and Watford Football Clubs objectives for event safety are met.

This Event Safety Policy has been adopted by the Board of Watford Football Club as a supplementary statement of intent regarding event safety.

This Policy will be shared with all employees and will be made available for reference within The Stadium premises.

The Watford Football Club wants to encourage an exciting atmosphere at all games played at The Vicarage Road Stadium and encourages fans to bring flags, banners, and large ‘surfing’ flags – but these must adhere to the guidelines set by the Stadium’s Safety Team, as stipulated in the sections of this policy.

Section 1

Flags, Surfers & Banners - General

1, Watford Football Club reserves the right to refuse to allow flags, surfers, or banners to be displayed, particularly if content is offensive, discriminatory, defamatory, inflammatory, commercial, Political, contentious, or obscene nature.

2. Banners that are likely to cause alarm or distress to other Groups of supporters and/or either participating Clubs, its directors and/or staff will not be allowed into the Stadium.

3 Any item that Watford Football Club or any of its employees believe could potentially be used as a weapon and/or compromise public safety is strictly prohibited and will be confiscated.

4 All flags and banners must be flame retardant and have a fire safety certificate. This certificate must be provided at least three days in advance of the match day.

5 Supporters wishing to bring in surfers, banners, and flags into the Stadium, must contact Watford Football Club Stadium Operations Manager in advance via email. The surfer, banner or flag must be presented to the Watford Football Club at least three working days before the match day with the appropriate fire certificate.

Section 2

Flags

1. The flagpole should be no bigger than 7mm in diameter and 1 metre in length. The flagpole material should be plastic and be rounded at the ends.

2. Flags should be presented to stewards prior to entry to the Stadium where they will be inspected and approved prior to entry.

3. The Watford Football Club reserves the right to confiscate any flags brought into the Stadium without being approved prior to entry.

4. Supporters wishing to introduce flags on poles longer than 1 metre must contact the Watford Football Club in advance via email. Subject to advance agreement with the Watford Football Club, such flags on poles may be waved prior to kick-off but must not obstruct the view of others and under no circumstances are to be waved after kick-off.

Section 3

Surfers & Banners

1. On occasion, where Watford Football Club designates a sterile area (e.g., empty block of seats) as available within the Stadium, it may be possible for banners to be placed in the sterile area. Permission to do so must first be obtained from Watford Football Club Stadium Operations Manager in advance via email.

2. Banners will not be allowed where they may block advertising, signage, exit routes, restrict the views of other supporters or in any way compromise the safe operation of the Stadium.

3. It is the responsibility of supporters who bring banners and surfers into the Stadium to ensure they are securely fastened at all times. Watford Football Club reserves the right to remove any articles that have not been appropriately secured or become loose during a match.

4. The use of surfers or surfer-style banners designed to be passed over supporters' heads, will not be allowed after kick-off.

5. Supporters wishing to bring in surfers, banners, and flags into the Stadium, must contact Watford Football Club Stadium Operations Manager in advance via email. The surfer, banner or flag must be presented to the Watford Football Club at least three working days before the match day with the appropriate fire certificate.

6. Any surfers or banners brought into the Stadium without being approved by the Stadium Operator will be confiscated.

7. A register of banners and surfers which meet fire safety criteria will be kept by the Watford Football Club. A copy will be given to the Safety Officer to assist stewards in assessing approved articles.

8. Watford Football Club reserves the right to change this policy as it deems fit or as required by the Local Authority, Football Authorities or any other body that helps to determine the safety of spectators at the Stadium.

9. Whilst Watford Football Club endeavours to take good care of banners and surfers that are brought into the Stadium, it accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage that may occur at any time.

10. The maximum size of a banner that is allowed to be brought into the Stadium is 2 meters x 1 meters which is line with the maximum size permitted by the EFL Ground Regulations.

Section 4

Risk Assessment

1, Before any banner is removed a Dynamic Risk Assessment must be carried out by the Event Safety Officer or one of the Deputy Safety Officers. If by removing the banner it will inflame the situation or put a member of staff in danger, then the banner can remain in place.

2, At all times, the Event Safety Officers decision is final regards to any banner/flag being brought in and also the removal of any banner or flag