

Civil Disturbances: The Fire and Rescue Service response

Purpose of report

To highlight the Fire and Rescue Services' strong response to the civil disturbances in August 2011 and inform Members about the launch of the £10m Recovery Scheme Grant.

Summary

This paper highlights the circumstances around the recent civil disturbances and the way the Fire and Rescue Service responded. The paper also provides information on the release of the Recovery Scheme Grant to assist local authorities and fire authorities with direct costs incurred as a result of the public disorder of August 2011.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Commend the work of brigades in responding to the civil disorder in August; and
2. Note the £10m Recovery Grant Scheme and take forward bids locally, if appropriate.

Action

Officers to take forward any actions agreed by the Committee.

Contact officer: Helen Murray
Position: Head of Programmes, LG Group
Phone no: 0207 664 3266
E-mail: helen.murray@local.gov.uk

The Fire and Rescue Services' response to the civil disturbances of August 2011

Background

1. The period of civil disturbance began in Tottenham, north London on 6 August and extended to other areas of London and outside the capital during the following week. Between 6–10 August there were widespread civil disturbances across the UK. This disorder affected over 1,800 businesses, and a significant number of residential properties.
2. Brigades in London, West Midlands, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Wiltshire, Avon and other cities and towns were mobilised and deployed to tackle fires resulting from riot activity. The speed and quality of the response of the brigades as well as the commitment and professionalism of firefighters attending was outstanding, despite the great personal risks firefighters faced. The severity and number of fires was unprecedented in recent times and it is very evident that the level of preparation, timing, planning and operational competence of a very professional service has saved lives, prevented serious injuries and prevented damage as far as possible. These sentiments were registered during the emergency parliamentary debate on 11 August where numerous MPs as well as the Prime Minister paid tribute to the emergency services. Firefighters were praised for their courage and putting themselves in danger to protect their communities, even when they were in some instances directly attacked.
3. Chairs of FRAs played a vital role in reassuring communities and providing strong community leadership. Given the intense media reporting of the disturbances, local politicians kept abreast of stories, clarifying and challenging reports with the result that the majority of media reports were overwhelmingly positive. A number of high profile visits took place including visits by the Prime Minister, and messages of support and thanks have been received in recognition of the sector's response. The Secretary of State for Communities and Bob Neill have contacted Chief Fire Officers to thank them for their efforts.
4. The Local Government Group has been involved at a national level in response to the disturbances in Cabinet Office Briefing Room meetings, and has been in contact with authorities (including fire authorities) to offer support. This involvement is on-going through the Group Chairman's place on the Ministerial Recovery Board chaired by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. In addition to the Secretary of State's Leaders'

Summit on 8 September, the LGG will be hosting a Chairman's Summit on 27 October.

Local Fire Brigade responses

5. Fire brigades across the country were deployed to deal with a range of incidents. This section provides an overview of the breadth of activity and a sense of the extent of damage inflicted.
 - 5.1 In **London**, fire crews dealt with 10 major fires over four nights. Between 1800 hours Monday (8 August) and 0500 hours on Tuesday (9 August), an exceptional 2,076 calls were received into Brigade Control (London-wide). Data shows that some 170 fires were attended across London during this period with serious fires in Barking and Dagenham, Brixton, Clapham Junction, Croydon, Ealing, Edmonton, Enfield, Greenwich, Newham, Merton and Southwark. Forty fire engines and 160 firefighters were deployed in response to this. Incidents included fires to commercial and residential buildings, cars and rubbish bins. Most notable commercial building damage was done to the Sony building in Edmonton and the historical Reeves furniture store in Croydon. Three fire engines were damaged in the violence from Brixton, Edmonton and West Norwood. Two London fire stations had to be evacuated due to threats by rioters but fortunately no firefighters were injured in the disturbances.
 - 5.2 Two firefighters were injured and six fire appliances damaged as **Merseyside** Fire and Rescue Service responded to emergency calls overnight. Crews responded to 101 civil disturbance incidents between 6pm and 7am on 10 August – 18 vehicle fires, 11 property fires and 72 secondary fires such as wheelie bins and skips. It has been estimated that £12,000 worth of damage was inflicted on fire engines as rioters threw bricks at them. This necessitated two crews being sent to each incident – one to tackle the fire whilst the other protected themselves and fire appliances against attackers.
 - 5.3 In addition to the operational side of their work, Fire Services such as **Merseyside** and **Leicestershire** carried out community reassurance work in the direct aftermath of the disturbances. In Leicestershire the Fire Service promptly provided 'target hardening' advice to businesses to prevent arson attacks and protect properties.
 - 5.4 In the **West Midlands**, one appliance attending an incident in the city centre was subject to an attack from a group of approximately 30/ 40 youths throwing missiles. No one was injured during this event. A total of 14 incidents can be attributed to civil disturbances between 9-11 August. Resources were deployed to further incidents, under police escort, to two

Police Stations in the Handsworth and Wolverhampton areas where there was also evidence of petrol bombs.

5.5 **Hertfordshire** Fire and Rescue Service sent 13 appliances, one aerial ladder platform, 61 crew and five officers to the fire at the Sony Distribution Centre in Enfield. It required 55 firefighters to control the blaze. The Fire Service also attended the Police Gold and Silver commands at Police HQ between 9 and 10 August, attended by a total of 17 officers. There were several other incidents attended across the County area that included deliberate car fires specifically in the south of the County.

5.6 An increased number of calls to **Greater Manchester** Fire and Rescue Service's Control Centre followed sporadic and isolated pockets of civil disturbance. A total of 155 fires across Manchester City Centre and Salford were tackled with one fire engine suffering minor damage as a result of the disturbances

Recovery Scheme Grant

6. In the aftermath of the disturbances, in addition to local recovery activity, Ministers have put together a one-off package of measures to help rebuild communities, open shops, rebuild damaged building, re-house those made homeless and assist councils and fire authorities in returning their areas to normality. Government is also keen to harness the enthusiasm of communities that turned out to help with the clean up.
7. One of these measures is a £10 million recovery fund to help councils and fire authorities with the immediate costs of making their areas safe, clear and clean. As well as being used to make repair damage such as roads, it can also be used to cover the costs offering council tax discounts or relief to homes that have been damaged.
8. Eighteen Fire and Rescue Services are eligible to apply for a share of the £10 million Recovery Scheme Grant alongside local authorities for affected areas to assist with direct costs. Examples of expenditure that could be relevant to Fire and Rescue Services include:
 - 8.1 repairs to (uninsured) vehicles;
 - 8.2 the hire of additional vehicles, plant and machinery that are not those already in use by the authority, and incidental expenses;
 - 8.3 additional temporary employees or contractors, to work on the emergency or replace permanent employees diverted from normal work;

- 8.4 special overtime for employees, either during the emergency for overtime worked on the emergency itself, or afterwards to catch up on work from which they were diverted by the incident;
- 8.5 legal, clerical and other charges incurred on the above work.
9. To qualify for the scheme expenditure must have been incurred as a result of having to take *immediate* action to safeguard life or property or as a result of incidents which involved the destruction of or danger to life and property. The costs must have been incurred by 5 October.
10. DCLG requested that incidents to be claimed for are reported to the department by 5 September and any eligible work must be completed by 5 October. Applicants have up to 5 November to submit a claim form and payments will be made as soon as practicable.
11. Further information and details on how to apply have been sent to Fire Authority Chairs in a letter from Bob Neill, MP (copy attached and list of qualifying FRAs at Appendix A). Qualifying application criteria is set out here <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1969368.pdf>

16 September 2011

Item 2

Dear Cllr

SUPPORT PACKAGE TO REBUILD COMMUNITIES

We have all been appalled by the criminal behaviour on our streets last week. I must congratulate you and all affected local authorities for the way in which you have responded so quickly and efficiently to the disturbances. Firefighters fulfil a vital role to protect our communities and we all acknowledge the debt that we all owe to the dedication and commitment of the men and women in your fire and rescue services.

You and your communities will be facing short term pressures arising in the immediate aftermath of the disturbances. The Prime Minister announced last week that the Government will be supporting affected local authorities by providing a multi-million pound package of measures with which you can help support your communities and businesses recover.

I am now writing to provide details on how you can claim against the support package through the £10m Recovery Fund:

- **£10m recovery fund** to help you with the immediate costs of making, their areas safe, clear and clean again. This fund can be used, for example, the hire of additional vehicles or equipment and overtime for firefighters and retained duty system firefighters called upon to respond to civil disturbances.

The details on how to make a claim against the Recovery Scheme, the eligibility criteria, and your responsibilities for accountability is set out in the attached set of guidance. Claims will need to be submitted by the scheme closing date set out in the guidance, but we will make payments as soon as we get claims from authorities. You will, of course need to have systems in place to assist with transparency and to prevent double-counting.

I am keen to work closely with you over the coming months. Our first priority has been to support you in the immediate recovery effort. If you would find it helpful, my officials will be available to discuss the details of the process with you.

BOB NEILL, MP

Appendix B

FRAs that reported attendance at a fire relating to a civil disturbance, and therefore eligible to apply for funding:

- LFEPA
- Greater Manchester
- Merseyside
- West Midlands
- Nottinghamshire
- Avon
- Buckinghamshire
- West Yorkshire
- Gloucestershire
- Berkshire
- Oxfordshire
- Essex
- Hertfordshire
- Leicestershire
- Tyne and Wear
- Bedfordshire and Luton
- Cheshire
- Northamptonshire