

16 January 2012

Item 4

Riots Communities and Victims Panel's Interim Report

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

Following the widespread public disturbances in August 2011, the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition established the Riots Communities and Victims Panel. The panel was asked to address a number of issues including why some people became involved in the rioting, and why some areas had riots but others did not.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

Contact officer: Mark Norris
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3241
E-mail: mark.norris@local.gov.uk

Item 4

Riots Communities and Victims Panel's Interim Report

Background

1. The Riots Communities and Victims Panel was set up by the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition to reflect on the local experience, impact and lessons from the civil disturbances in August 2011.
2. The panel was charged with presenting a final report by March 2012. It was given freedom to structure its work as appropriate, but has primarily been a grassroots exercise listening to the experiences of communities affected by the disorder, including the views of residents, shopkeepers, parents and young people.
3. The panel was specifically asked to look at:
 - 3.1 what may have motivated the small minority of people who took part in rioting;
 - 3.2 why the riots happened in some areas and not others;
 - 3.3 how key public services engaged with communities before, during and after the riots;
 - 3.4 what motivated local people to come together to resist riots in their areas or to clean up after riots had taken place;
 - 3.5 how communities can be made more socially and economically resilient in the future in order to prevent future problems; and
 - 3.6 what they think could have been done differently to prevent or manage the riots.
4. The Board met the Chair of the panel, Darra Singh, the former Chief Executive of the London Borough of Ealing and Luton Council, on 7 November to discuss the panel's work, what it had found and for Board members to set out their views on the questions the panel had been asked to address. Subsequent to that meeting the LGA submitted its views on some of the issues that needed to be addressed to prevent similar disturbances occurring in the future. Darra Singh then met the LGA Chairman shortly before the panel published its interim findings at the end of November.

The interim report of the panel

5. The panel published its interim report to prompt discussion about the riots, and generate ideas from which recommendations could be developed for inclusion

16 January 2012

Item 4

in the final report (views can be submitted online at www.5daysinaugust.co.uk or emailed to riotspanel@communities.gsi.gov.uk). The panel also felt that voices of victims and communities could contribute to the ongoing thinking and debate in government and society about the disturbances. The report additionally aimed to capture some overarching findings common to all of the areas affected by the riots.

6. The report is divided into three sections. The first sets out the facts around the disturbances outlining what happened where and who was involved. The second section looks at what triggered the riots, and in the final section there are some immediate recommendations along with areas of work the panel will be working on in its next phase.

Facts and figures about the disturbances

7. The conclusions of the panel reflected the views put forward by Board members at their meeting with Darra Singh. The panel agreed that the riots were not committed by children, but largely by young adults, they were not race riots, most of those convicted had not been involved in gangs, and there was no single cause of the riots or a single group responsible for them. The panel also reported that many people believed the sole trigger for trouble in their area was a belief that the police could not contain the rioting and those involved thought they could loot and cause damage without police intervening. The social and broadcast media contributed to this by allowing those involved in the disturbances to organise themselves quickly, while television coverage reinforced the image the police would not be able to intervene.
8. The Panel also pointed out that there appeared to be a link between where the riots happened and deprivation and cohesion. Of the 66 local authority areas which experience riots 30 were in the top 25% most deprived areas in England, 58% of the riots took place in areas ranked the worst 10% for crime, 55% of the riots were in the worst 10% areas for vulnerability to long term unemployment, and 71% of the riots occurred in the areas ranked in the worst 10% for social cohesion.
9. There were two issues where Board members and the LGA submission had made the point for further action, but which the report remained silent on. Board members at the meeting with Darra Singh pressed the importance of community budgets in bringing local agencies together, and continuing to fund joint activity at a time of reduced budgets. This is particularly important when working with families with complex needs, where pooling budgets in this way creates greater coordination and makes more sense than having different parts of the State engaging with families, but never seeming to talk to one another. The panel was again silent on the issue of working with families with complex needs.

16 January 2012

Item 4

The public service response to the riots

10. The second section to the report looks specifically at the public service response to the riots and there is a section dedicated to local authorities. The panel's view was that there were some excellent examples of good practice from councils, though local authorities also felt they had lessons to learn. Emergency planning systems generally worked effectively and contingency plans were timely. The panel felt that multi-agency street based teams had been particularly effective at providing a street presence that talked to groups and persuaded them to disperse.
11. Councils were felt to have engaged in a range of innovative ways of communicating with their communities such as outlining the consequences of rioting to younger adults, and sending messages to parents advising them to keep children indoors. Effective use of CCTV systems by councils in conjunction with the police helped mobilise resources and deal with emerging hotspots. The speed of the clean up was also felt to be impressive given there was on-going rioting and there was a need to preserve crime scenes. Set against this councils' use of social media was felt to be an area of weakness by the panel that needed addressing. Additionally while councils had also responded well to help families and businesses affected by the riots there were some elements of dissatisfaction, and the panel felt councils needed to look at the way they assisted families and communicated with businesses.

Recommendations for immediate action

12. The report concludes with a number of immediate actions, some of which are addressed to councils. These include:
 - 12.1 Public services including local government need to provide support to offenders sentenced for involvement in the riots once they are released and to achieve this councils need to be provided with information about release dates. Ahead of the panels report the LGA had already agreed a protocol with the Association of Chief Police Officers and the National Offender Management Service to ensure that councils are in the future provided with timely information on when offenders are going to be released, having raised this issue at the Ministerial Recovery Group established after the riots.
 - 12.2 Local emergency plans should include a full threat assessment and review of town centre layouts, should be reviewed to ensure they properly cover public disorder of the scale seen in August, and should include plans for

16 January 2012

Item 4

evacuating residents and designating particular sites as potential 'safe havens'.

- 12.3 Local CCTV coverage should be reviewed and consideration given to extending it.
- 12.4 Councils should utilise all their frontline workers when there is a risk of rioting for example to patrol the streets. They should also involve local communities by creating 'community gold commands'.
- 12.5 Councils and the police should draw up plans to reach key target groups when trouble is brewing for example via detached youth workers. Communications also need to be spread swiftly in an emergency, and councils and the police should review how they use social media to communicate.

Conclusion and next steps

13. At the end of the report the panel set out the forthcoming areas of work it would be involved in ahead of publication of its final report in March. These include addressing the level of despondency and anxiety in young people, building personal resilience so young people are more responsible, ambitious and determined, what can be done to improve parenting, how commercial brands can use their influence positively for communities, what more can be done to improve the rehabilitation of repeat offenders and what more can be done to improve relationships between the police and the communities they serve. Given the links to young people the views and input of the Children and Young Peoples Programme Board will be sought before any further submissions are made to the panel.

Financial Implications

14. Further work in relation to the panel's recommendations and preparation of its final report will be met from existing LGA resources.