

report

meeting	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AUTHORITY PERSONNEL COMMITTEE		
date	26MARCH 2004	agenda item number	3

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

RIDERSHIP REVIEW

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To report to Members of the Personnel Committee the findings of the Ridership Review Group relating to the implementation of the new Ridership Management System.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Ridership levels have been a major concern within the Service for a number of years. As a result and following considerable consultation, a new system for managing the number of firefighters available for operational deployment at any given time was developed for implementation for the 2003 leave year.
- 2.2 At the meeting of the Authority on 30 May 2003 Members were made aware of the formation of the Ridership Review Group which consists of representatives of the Safety Services Department and the Fire Brigades Union under the chairmanship of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.
- 2.3 The Ridership Review Group was formed in response to a Personnel Committee resolution that required the following in relation to the implementation of the new Ridership Management System:
 - i. Regular reviews, to include submission to the Personnel Committee, of quarterly and annual reports;
 - ii. Referral to the Personnel Committee of any matters affecting the successful operation of the scheme;
 - iii. That appropriate Brigade Orders should be introduced as soon as possible.
- 2.4 The following report updates the Committee on progress for the period January 2003 to December 2003.

3. REPORT

- 3.1 The following report has been compiled following a joint process of review undertaken by management and the Fire Brigades Union. It is pleasing to note that formal input into the process by the FBU provides an opportunity for ongoing productive engagement with management and has provided the opportunity for the general concerns of the FBU to be incorporated into the review process.
- 3.2 Whilst both management and the FBU agree that confidence levels for 2003 have improved compared to the previous year, the contents of the report also identifies a range of continuing concerns the Fire Brigades Union would wish to address.
- i. Concern regarding the amount of temporary promotions that continue to have a detrimental effect on ridership.
 - ii. Concern regarding the effectiveness of IT leave record management system available for use at station level and a desire for such systems to reflect a more robust opportunity for the local allocation of leave.
 - iii. Concern that there may be an imbalance across watches with regards to the number of individuals who have been moved away from the ridership establishment as a result of temporary promotions, thus making it more difficult on certain watches to get leave.
 - iv. Concern that the main objective of the leave system was to ensure that fire appliances are crewed at a level of 5 and 4, and this is clearly not always the case.
 - v. Concerned that there are more difficulties for their members to get leave when they would wish to take it.
- 3.3 Management agrees that an excessive number of temporary promotions will have a detrimental effect on ridership and there is a clear need for the level of temporary promotions to be carefully controlled. However it is important for Members to recognise that a great deal of reliance has been placed on our present temporary arrangements as a result of the significant modernisation agenda the Service is addressing. Unfortunately this has resulted in a lower than expected improvement in ridership levels during the review year.
- 3.4 This situation is fully recognised by management and is being actively addressed by more robust temporary management control measures. In addition, it is expected that the Safety Services restructuring programme that will be initiated from April 2004 will provide the opportunity to embed all resource issues required as a result of modernisation into the substantive structure of the Service, which will significantly lessen the present reliance on temporary promotions. It is envisaged that the problem of imbalance

across watches will also be addressed as a result of the restructure programme.

- 3.5 It is emphasised that although management would agree that the availability to take leave when staff wish to take it has been restricted as an inevitable consequence of the implementation of a more robust leave management system. It is apparent that all leave can be readily accommodated within the system.
- 3.6 Leave management and record keeping is recognised as an important element of successful implementation. Via the joint review process consultation has been established at a practical level to look at how localised control and management of the system can be enhanced. Opportunities for improvement are presently being investigated by Information Services, who now have full control of the ridership management system. It is expected that such practical engagement will be fruitful and will provide the opportunity to improve the management of the system to the greater satisfaction of the FBU membership.
- 3.7 Members will note that the Ridership Management System is designed to achieve a minimum number of operational "rider posts" being available at the commencement of each shift; that number being 84. Having 84 riders available ensures that each of the wholetime appliances throughout the Service will carry the optimum number of firefighters.
- 3.8 The Ridership Review Group has identified a number of methods of evaluating the new system. The following have been identified as being appropriate:

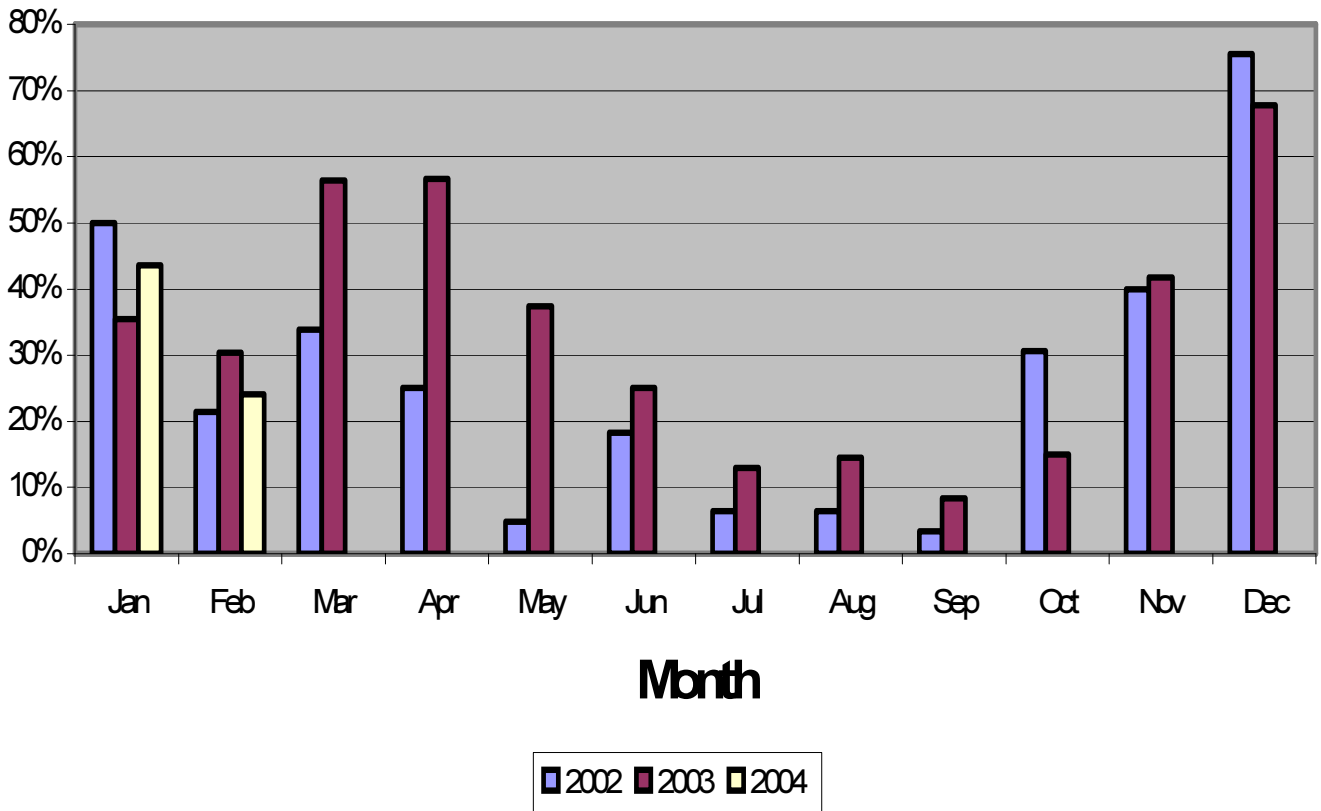
START OF SHIFT AVAILABILITY

- 3.9 This report identifies the number of occasions that the Service achieved a start of shift availability of 84 or more personnel during each of the months, January 2003 to December 2003, compared to the same month in the previous year. This method of reporting forms the basis for the Best Value Performance Indicator report submitted to the ODPM. The following provides the monthly performance comparison. Although the level of the base line improvement is significant, the remaining percentage achievement within the confines of this indicator are disappointing during the last three months. Most notably, it appears that the historical reduction of ridership availability during the summer months is still causing significant problems. It should be noted that the actual level of working shifts lost during July, August and September are significantly high creating very specific problems in relation to rider availability during the summer months. Present managerial action in this regard appears insufficient to address this underlying problem within the limitations of the national indicator.

Start of Shift Availability

Jan 2002	50.00%
Jan 2003	35.48%* (*percentage takes account of days lost to strike action)
<i>Jan 2004</i>	<i>43.54%</i>
Feb 2002	21.43%
Feb 2003	30.36%*
<i>Feb 2004</i>	<i>24.13%</i>
Mar 2002	33.87%
Mar 2003	56.45%
Apr 2002	25.00%
Apr 2003	56.67%
May 2002	4.84%
May 2003	27.42%
Jun 2002	18.33%
Jun 2003	25.00%
July 2002	6.45%
July 2003	12.90%
Aug 2002	6.45%
Aug 2003	14.52%
Sept 2002	3.33%
Sept 2003	8.33%
Oct 2002	30.65%
Oct 2003	15.00%
Nov 2002	40.00%
Nov 2003	41.70%
Dec 2002	75.58%
Dec 2003	67.74%

Start of Shift Ridership Comparison



The above chart clearly indicates the 2002 / 2003 / 2004 comparison.

SICKNESS

3.10 The extreme levels of sickness amongst rider posts during the early part of the reporting period have a disproportionate effect on ridership. The following figures are for actual working shifts lost to sickness.

Jan 02	367	Jan 03	570
Feb 02	446	Feb 03	648
Mar 02	469	Mar 03	577
Apr 02	351	Apr 03	409
May 02	430	May 03	401
Jun 02	349	Jun 03	416
Jly 02	452	Jly 03	665
Aug 02	503	Aug 03	648

Sept 02	643	Sept 03	687
Oct 02	499	Oct 03	475
Nov 02	466	Nov 03	449
Dec 02	588	Dec 03	424

- 3.11 It should be noted that there are a considerable number of issues that can have a direct bearing on the overall sickness levels; not least corresponding periods of industrial action and an increased level of short and long-term sickness during summer periods. It is pleasing to note the very considerable improvement in sickness levels that has been recorded in the last five months.

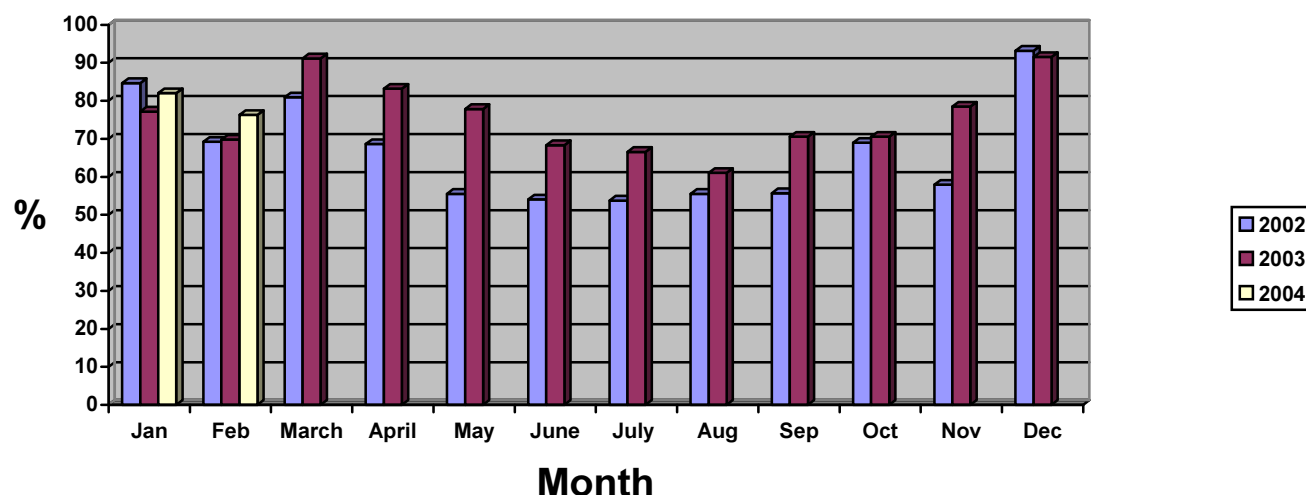
LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

- 3.12 The Local Performance Indicator identifies the achievement (by percentage) of the standard crewing figure of 84 (based on 12 stations x number of shifts in the month). This indicator provides a far more realistic and reliable indication of performance based on global availability of rider posts.

	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
Jan	84.68	77.15
Feb	69.20	69.79
Mar	80.91	91.13
Apr	68.61	83.19
May	55.51	77.82
Jun	54.03	68.33
July	53.76	66.53
Aug	55.51	61.02
Sept	55.69	70.56
Oct	68.95	70.56
Nov	57.92	78.47
Dec	93.15	91.53

(*Traditionally under the old leave management system no leave was plotted in December – this month was only used for leave unable to be taken during the leave year as a means of minimising leave carry-over)

Local Performance Indicator



3.13 It should be noted that there has been a year on year improvement in 10 of the last 11 months displayed. This indicator also provides greater clarity to the poor percentage figures identified within the national start of shift indicator mentioned in section 3.9 above. It can be seen, that in real terms, globally there has been a significant improvement over the previous years' figures, even when the significant increases in sickness levels of the early months are subsumed into the calculation.

3.14 A further area of consideration has been whether there was sufficient capacity within the system to ensure that all actual leave entitlement up to 31 December 2003 can be satisfied.

3.15 In order to confirm the position, a count was made on 31 May 2003 which revealed that at that time a total of 1,432 days of leave were outstanding and 3,108 days were available.

3.16 The end of year position confirmed that all leave entitlement had been satisfied other than for individuals who were on long term sick leave and that a surplus of 331 available shifts was identified.

SCALE B UNALLOCATED LEAVE FOR 2004

3.17 Personnel were permitted to apply for Scale B leave for 2004 from 1 October 2003. Early indications are that no major problems have been encountered with booking of this leave.

LOCAL RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (LRMP)

- 3.18 Members will be aware that the draft LRMP, will potentially have a significant impact on the management of ridership. The review of crewing levels, methods of response, and potential changes in work patterns, longer term, will require a complete review of the present arrangements. However, management is confident that the fundamental approach is correct and the underlying principles of robust control and management of leave will be transferable to any future arrangements within the LRMP.

SUMMARY

- 3.19 Since the last report on the new Ridership Management System the improvement in start of shift ridership availability has continued within the context of the global indicator, with the exception of December 2003, which previous to the implementation of the new leave system was a non-leave month. However it is recognised that improvements have not been as significant as anticipated in relation to both national and local performance indicators. Although improvement has resulted in steadily increasing levels of rider availability, since the inception of the new system temporary promotions and cross shift movements of personnel continues to create a problematic situation. Enhanced managerial control has been implemented and it is anticipated that the impending Safety Services re-structure resulting from LRMP implementation will significantly alleviate the problem.
- 3.20 The end of year position confirmed that all leave entitlement had been satisfied other than for individuals who were on long term sick leave. Therefore as a result of the first year's implementation of the new leave management system, management are satisfied that the availability of leave is not compromised. It is recognised that the opportunity to select leave within the system is reduced. However, it is argued that in the context of operational need, compromise will always be necessary.
- 3.21 Although it is apparent that the FBU have ongoing concerns regarding the efficiency and management of the system, it is pleasing to note that management and the FBU have constructively discussed all pertinent issues regarding implementation. As a result, this report has incorporated the concerns of the FBU and through the process of joint review, has established opportunities for improvement. The opportunity for joint review will now be incorporated into the joint consultative panel arrangements so that the benefits of joint monitoring of leave and ridership can be maintained.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The need to ensure adequate levels of operational rider availability throughout the year will continue to be an essential prerequisite. The effective management of leave, sickness and training together with careful control of temporary promotions will need to be maintained. Throughout the process of review, temporary promotions have generated the most problems for managerial control, compounded by the modernisation programme. Robust management of temporary promotions has been implemented recently. However the benefits of increased managerial control are yet to materialise, hence this area of personnel management will continue to be a priority following the conclusion of the review period.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no equal opportunities implications arising from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The new Ridership Management System has been introduced primarily as a means of improving daily levels of operational crewing. The effective implementation of the system should ensure that front-line whole time pump crewing levels are maximised. Increased crewing levels will benefit operational and public safety and will generally enhance the effective utilisation of the operational establishment.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report and formally conclude the review process.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION

Recruits Training Options – CFA Paper 22 March 2002

Special meeting of the Personnel Committee – 26 September 2002 – agenda, background papers & minutes.