

NEWS REPORT



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On Saturday morning, Brian Coleman told radio listeners new shifts would not lead to cuts in fire cover... 24 hours later, after the release of a secret document, he was forced to come clean, thus revealing...

LFEPAs HIDDEN CUTS AGENDA

LEADERS OF THE London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) are facing a serious backlash after the release of a secret document which revealed plans for reductions in fire cover throughout the capital in the event that new shift patterns are introduced.

Details of the highly-confidential proposals were leaked to the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), and their exposure came just 24 hours after the authority's Conservative chairman, Councillor Brian Coleman, assured listeners to a radio show that new shifts would not lead to reduced fire cover in the capital.

Coleman even went so far as to pledge to resign in the event of cutbacks. His comments came in a discussion with former mayor Ken Livingstone on LBC

Radio.

The following day, Coleman took part in a studio debate on *The Politics Show* on BBC One, alongside the FBU's executive council member for London, Ian Leahair. The programme revealed details of the secret

document, in particular how proposals to "withdraw personnel from night shift" by reducing the number of available appliances were being actively considered.

The document, which was marked "In Confidence" and was intended only for the eyes of the

most senior authority figures, went on to affirm that the new night-time schedule could be implemented "six months after the conclusion of the working patterns project."

Pressed by the show's presenter to deny there would

In Confidence Strategy and Performance Department

ID	Description of work researched	Options for consideration	Advantages
S&E002 (B) Work stream 2	Provide a capability to withdraw personnel from night shift and move them on to days in order to aid the achievement of specific corporate initiatives.	<p>1. Produce a night-time schedule for the removal of 10 appliances on a rotational basis. Staff on this system would spend both of those nights conditioned to day-duties (as we currently do for some courses). These staff would not have appliances available but could undertake collective or individual training or CS work. In addition to the SR schedule.</p> <p>2. Produce a schedule for the removal of 10 appliances on a fixed basis (same 10 appliances always removed). Then provide appliance standbys to those locations to optimise emergency cover.</p> <p>3. Produce a schedule for the removal of 10 appliances on a fixed basis (same 10 appliances always removed). Those removed would have little or no impact on emergency cover, thus removing the need to provide standby appliances.</p>	<p>Could provide additional staff to receive trained training at stations (S&E004).</p> <p>The additional available staff (removed from night-duty) will allow T&D more flexibility in achieving their targets. They could also be used for community safety activities such as targeted HFSV activities.</p> <p>Both schedules will provide more availability and flexibility for borough led activities.</p> <p>Option 3 would provide cost savings as these stations would be day crewing. They could be staffed by personnel only willing to do days and so would lead to cost savings.</p>

DAMNING: Leaked evidence showing how plans for cuts are under active discussion

be fire station closures by 2012, Coleman said, "I can't guarantee that." He added, "The fire service...will be delivering its services in a different way, driven by spending cuts." Asked whether plans to reduce fire cover at night were under active consideration, Coleman replied, "Professional officers, led by the commissioner, are considering all options."

The chairman's comments were in marked contrast to the guarantees he gave on the radio 24 hours earlier, and before the release of the secret document.

THE FBU today accused LFEPA bosses of trying to introduce "cuts by stealth" and said that the authority's agenda was now laid bare.

The union's regional secretary, Joe MacVeigh, said, "Since the authority first made the case for 12-hour shifts back in 2005, we have been warning our members and the public that the plans would be a Trojan horse for reductions in night-time fire cover. Authority leaders denied this, and tried to pretend it was just about increasing productivity. The web of deceit is beginning to unravel before our eyes. In the space of 24 hours, Brian Coleman shifted the authority's position from one extreme to the other. It's about time he and his senior LFEPA colleagues started being straight with us."

The union also condemned proposals contained in the document to reduce the minimum crewing level at one-appliance stations from five to four, arguing that the

proposals, with 'no hidden agenda', but then what happens? We discover that they have secretly hired a private strikebreaking workforce at enormous cost to the taxpayer; one of the union's lead negotiators, Paul Embery, is suspended following a row with Brian Coleman; and now we learn of confidential plans to use

COLEMAN:
On Saturday morning, he told radio listeners he would resign if there were cuts in fire cover. On Sunday morning, he told a TV programme he could give no guarantee



new shift patterns as a back-door method to make cutbacks. Not surprisingly, there is a real lack of trust. Things cannot go on like this. That's why the FBU is saying very firmly that no change is not an option."

Joe MacVeigh also rubbished claims by Brian Coleman that most FBU members did not agree with the stance of the union leadership on shift changes. "If Councillor Coleman believes that, he really is delusional. If our members are against what we are saying, why is it that, in a consultative ballot, 98% of them voted against shift changes? The fact is, we are at one with our membership over this issue, and that's why so many of them turned up to protest at Harold Hill fire station last week. I believe that our members are much more inclined to put their trust in us than they are the Tory freemasons who control the fire authority. Any attempt by Brian Coleman to drive a wedge between the union's membership and elected officials will fail."

In Confidence Strategy and Performance Department

ID	Description of work researched	Options for consideration
S&E001 (C) Work stream 1	The minimum crewing level for an appliance at a one appliance station. The current level is set at 5. The advent of SR has shown a number of anomalies, an appliance providing a standby in support of SR at a 1-appliance station will often hold a crew of 4, usually with a CM in charge. Similarly if the appliance at the 1-appliance station is 'off-the-run' at change of watch then the appliance providing a standby (if required) will often hold a crew of 4 and again will usually have a CM in charge.	1. Reduce the crewing level to 4, but maintain the establishment level at 7. The appliance could continue to operate with a crew of 5, but would not attract a standby if it reduced to 4. 2. Reduce the crewing level to 4, reduce the establishment to 6. Loss of either a CM or FF post.

DAINGEROUS: Proposals to reduce crewing levels laid bare

move would imperil firefighters' safety as well as that of the public.

"Authority leaders claim publicly to want to make London a safer city, yet behind the scenes they are examining ways to make savage cuts," added Joe MacVeigh. "LFEPA does not do what it says on the tin." He went on, "The exposure of these secret plans ups the stakes further. Bosses claimed to want an open and honest dialogue with the union on shift change

AMOTION calling for industrial action—up to and including strike action—in response to recent attacks is currently being circulated at FBU branches across London. The union says it will have no choice but to hold an official ballot if changes to shifts are introduced without agreement.

There can be no question that morale at fire stations is currently at rock bottom. The exposure of the secret document will add to that groundswell of anger, as the FBU gears its members up for action.