

NEWS REPORT



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FBU CALLS ON DAVID CAMERON TO SACK DISGRACED LFEPA COUNCILLOR

THE FBU has written to the Conservative party leader, David Cameron, to demand he sack the disgraced LFEPA Tory councillor, Bertha Joseph.



DISGRACED: *Bertha Joseph*

Joseph—who is deputy on the fire authority to chairman Brian Coleman—was recently found guilty by a standards committee of financial impropriety, after she used charitable donations to buy expensive clothing for herself. She received the maximum sanction of a six-month suspension in her home borough of Brent and, according to the *Evening Standard*, also now faces a police investigation. But

a legal loophole means the ban is not automatically extended to her activities with LFEPA.

Conservative mayor Boris Johnson and LFEPA chairman Brian Coleman have rallied to Joseph's defence and rejected calls for her sacking.

In a letter to Mr Cameron, the FBU's executive council member for London, Ian Leahair, demanded Joseph be removed immediately from her role with LFEPA. "The failure of the London Conservative party to act on this matter is causing much consternation among London's 6,000 firefighters," wrote Ian. "We in the FBU find it beyond comprehension that a politician can be found guilty of financial impropriety, and be declared unfit to serve in her home borough, yet retain her place on a strategic London-wide body. Into the bargain, she continues to draw allowances amounting to thousands of pounds from the local taxpayer."

Ian went on, "If a firefighter had been found guilty of a similar offence, he or she would almost certainly have been sacked. Why should it be that a politician is

above scrutiny or censure for such serious misconduct?

"The Conservative party's refusal to act makes a mockery of your own pledge to 'clean up politics'."

The union is urging members to protest directly to Mr Cameron, by emailing him at: david.cameron@conservatives.com

ASSETCO LAVISHES MORE HOSPITALITY ON BRIAN COLEMAN

LFEPA CHAIRMAN Brian Coleman is facing fresh questions, after it was revealed that he continued to receive hospitality from a company that had been awarded a £12m contract by the fire authority even after a public outcry last year over claims that he was "wined and dined" repeatedly by the same firm.

Last July, the FBU disclosed how Coleman had benefitted from hospitality laid on by the chief executive of AssetCo, John Shannon, on three occasions. Coleman also received a gift of a £350 Harvey Nichols hamper

(continued overleaf)

from Mr Shannon. The hospitality was lavished on the authority chairman shortly before AssetCo were awarded the lucrative contract to provide a private strikebreaking workforce.

It can now be revealed that Coleman was wined and dined



WINED AND DINED: *Coleman*

again by Mr Shannon on 14 January this year. The two met at the upmarket Green's restaurant in Westminster, and the bill—the precise details of which were intriguingly omitted from the official LFEPA gifts and hospitality register—was picked up by AssetCo.

FBU regional organiser Ben Sprung said, "The relationship between Brian Coleman and AssetCo seems to be becoming increasingly incestuous. The whole thing doesn't look good, and it calls into question Brian Coleman's judgement as a politician. It's ironic that Councilor Coleman has never once asked to meet with the FBU to discuss the concerns of London's 6,000 firefighters, but is obviously only too happy to receive hospitality from a company which was awarded a multi-million pounds contract by the authority he runs. "Evidently he is more

pre-occupied with listening to the demands of the directors of AssetCo than he is about hearing the concerns of firefighters."

UNION DEMANDS REINSTATEMENT OF OFFICIAL

THE FBU has written to senior LFEPA managers to demand the reinstatement of suspended official Paul Embery.

Paul was suspended following a row with LFEPA chairman Brian Coleman at January's fire authority meeting, and has been banned from entering any authority premises, negotiating on behalf of the union, and speaking with any authority employees.

Regional discipline official Laurie Brightman said, "This suspension is looking increasingly



SUSPENDED: *Paul Embery*

politically-motivated. Paul has a record of confronting managers who are seeking to attack his members' conditions of service, and we are not going to sit idle while a senior union official is scapegoated in this way. Paul has effectively been placed in a straitjacket by LFEPA.

"I have urged managers to lift Paul's suspension immediately. If they don't do so, we will have no hesitation in mobilising the forces of the union to defend him."

FBU REFUSES TO LIE DOWN ON UNSAFE RECLINERS

THE LONDON Fire Brigade is still refusing to budge over its insistence that firefighters use resting equipment that has been declared unfit for purpose by the Health and Safety Laboratory.

The dispute flared after bosses, under pressure from authority chairman Brian Coleman, placed the unsafe reclining chairs into the new Harold Hill fire station, thereby ripping-up a previous agreement with the union.

Union officials have fiercely condemned the brigade for renegeing on the agreement and compromising firefighters' safety. The union has also accused the brigade of making a highly-misleading presentation to a safety panel.

Health and safety co-ordinator Gordon Fielden said, "We will not let the matter drop. We are pursuing it vigorously and will continue to do so until either all avenues have been exhausted or agreement on a safe system of work is reached."

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