

Pressure builds on Centrica CEO ahead of select committee hearing



Multimillion pound customer Birmingham City Council calls on company to withdraw fire and rehire threat

The council leader of a local authority which has spent £18 million pounds with British Gas has put pressure on the company ahead of tomorrow's select committee hearing.



Birmingham City Council leader Ian Ward has demanded answers from Centrica boss Chris O'Shea after the failure to prevent industrial action by engineers has led to significant disruptions for customers.

According to research commissioned from Tussell, a data provider on public sector contracting and spending, the council spent at least £18 million with Centrica and its subsidiaries 2016-19.

GMB has accepted an invitation to appear at the BEIS Select Committee tomorrow [February 2, 2021] as MPs call British Gas boss Chris O'Shea to give evidence over his fire and rehire plan.

GMB Union claims that after 12 days of strikes, more than 170,000 homes are in a backlog for repairs and 200,000 planned annual service visits have been axed.

In his letter, councillor Ward asked for a breakdown of how many British Gas customers in Birmingham had had appointments cancelled, been left without heating or who had been offered money to postpone appointments.

The letter comes after Metro Mayors Sadiq Khan, Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham all pledged their support for the strike and before a grilling of Chris O'Shea by the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Select Committee.

Ian Ward, Birmingham City Council leader, wrote:

"British Gas engineers in Birmingham have been important key workers during the pandemic, keeping homes warm and people well.

"I know that many have also volunteered to deliver food parcels with the Trussell Trust, and Baby Aid Birmingham, while some even went into the homes of known Covid-19 patients to carry out their work.

"Sadly, while British Gas workers were carrying out these jobs the senior leadership were seeking to enforce changes to their terms and conditions through the threat of fire and rehire.

"Through the Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility, Birmingham City Council is committed to supporting and working with good employers that treat their employees with dignity and respect.

"It could be argued that Centrica is currently failing to treat its employees with dignity and respect."

Justin Bowden, GMB National Secretary, said:

"It's not too late for Centrica bosses to come to their senses.



“Their head-in-the sand approach is letting individual customers down and now putting major contracts like Birmingham City at risk.

“This can all be resolved through negotiation, but we’re negotiating with a gun to our heads if fire and rehire remains on the table and the company systematically refuse to remove that threat.”



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