

# Leader of council with major British Gas contract urges company: stop fire & rehire



## The Leader of Leeds City Council 'shocked' at behaviour of British Gas bosses

The leader of a council that has spent more than £9 million with British Gas over the past five years has urged the company to withdraw its fire and rehire plan.

Councillor James Lewis, Leader of Leeds City Council, has written to Chris O'Shea, Chief Executive of Centrica, calling for him to remove the threat of fire and rehire hanging over British Gas workers.



The letter says councillors 'were particularly shocked to hear about threats to hire and rehire workers in Leeds if they do not accept the changes proposed'.



Mr C O'Shea  
Chief Executive  
Centrica  
(via email: [chris.oshea@centrica.com](mailto:chris.oshea@centrica.com))

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Date 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear Mr O'Shea

We have been contacted by residents in Leeds who work for Centrica who have raised concerns regarding your negotiations with their trade union GMB.

At Leeds City Council we have a commitment to social value. We expect employers to recognise trade unions and offer good terms of employment and good rates of pay. As an organisation over the last five years we have spent £9.1 million with Centrica. As such, we feel we must highlight our concerns about your ongoing dispute with British Gas workers in our city.

We were particularly shocked to hear about threats to fire and rehire workers in Leeds if they do not accept the changes proposed. It is also concerning to hear about the potential impact of strikes on British Gas customers in Leeds, with increasing delays to repair and service visits.

We would urge you to continue negotiations with the GMB trade union and reach a deal with the workforce instead of imposing one on them.

We hope that you can change course, withdraw the fire and rehire threat, and resume meaningful negotiations to ensure a shared recovery for the company.

Yours sincerely

**Councillor James Lewis**  
**Leader of Leeds City Council**

**Councillor Debra Coupar**  
**Deputy Leader of Leeds City Council**

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They are concerned about the 'potential impact of strikes on British Gas customers in Leeds, with increasing delays to repair and service visits,' it adds.

The councillors ask Mr O'Shea to 'change course, withdraw the hire and rehire threat, and resume meaningful negotiations to ensure a shared recovery for the company'.



Leeds City Council is the latest in a line of council leaders who have intervened in the long running dispute which has led to 30 days of strike action so far by GMB members at the company.

Talks between GMB and British Gas are taking place at ACAS, but GMB says the company must drop its fire and rehire plan if a deal is to be possible.

After 30 days of strikes, more than 250,000 homes are in a backlog for repairs and 350,000 planned annual service visits have been axed.

**Jake O'Malley, GMB Organiser, said:**

"Leeds City Council have made it quite clear the failure of British Gas to withdraw the threat of fire and rehire and come to an agreement is alienating key customers – as well as being morally repugnant.

"If Mr O'Shea ploughs ahead with his cruel fire and rehire plan, he not only hurts customers and workers, ultimately he will hurt the company and shareholders too.

"GMB entered into recent ACAS brokered talks in good faith, but a deal is only possible if the company takes its fire and rehire plan off the table."

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