

# Council leaders turn up heat on British Gas



## Pressure mounts over fire and rehire threats

Pressure is mounting on British Gas as local authorities demand Centrica remove fire and rehire threats and return to the negotiating table

GMB, the union for workers in British Gas, is calling on the company to publicly acknowledge that a major part of the fire and rehire plans are for substantial cuts in the pay per job for gas and electrical engineers and that this group of workers have voted overwhelmingly to reject the plans.

This is a direct response from GMB to the company statement commenting on the announcement of five days of national strike action from Thursday 7 January.



British Gas wrongly said that dispute is about “flexibility” and they misled the public that only a minority of gas engineers had voted to reject the cut in pay and for strike action.

The reality is the exact opposite. Cuts in the pay per job is at the heart of what the dispute is about. An overwhelming majority of gas and electrical engineers have voted to reject the cuts in pay.

This comes as the energy giant has begun receiving letters from some of Britain’s biggest local authorities and customers demanding that they drop the ‘fire and rehire’ threats hanging over their employees and return to the negotiating table.

A host of local authorities including metropolitan centres like **Birmingham**, Trafford, Newcastle Upon Tyne, who are also British Gas customers, have voiced their concern at the companies negotiating tactics.

According to research commissioned from Tussell, a data provider on public sector contracting and spending, Birmingham City Council has spent well over £18million over the last four years alone.

It is the latest blow to the company after more than 140 cross-party MPs sent an **open letter** to the CEO Chris O’Shea and the Welsh First Minister that Centrica would be ‘very well advised’ to get a negotiated outcome. The Welsh Government has a £200m **contract** with Centrica. [4]

On Monday (21 December), the union announced the **first 5 strike dates** scheduled for early January after the company issued an ultimatum for workers to “agree” to cuts to pay and terms and conditions by today.

**Justin Bowden, GMB National Secretary said:**

“British Gas need to start acknowledging that this dispute with gas and electrical engineers isn’t just about flexibility, but also about plans to unilaterally cut their pay per job.

“That is why they have overwhelmingly voted down the company’s proposals by 86% in a high turnout ballot of 87%.

“It’s clear from the positions of some of Britain’s biggest local authorities that British Gas are alienating key customers with their behaviour.

“Birmingham council alone has spent over £18million with the company over the last four years. Alongside Newcastle upon Tyne, Trafford, Plymouth and many others it’s clear that the public and their own customers just don’t agree with their reckless plans.

“Until Mr O’Shea acknowledges reality there is no path available to resolve this dispute.”



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