

FINAL AS SENT

Councillor Claire Holland, Leader of Lambeth Council
Councillor Maria Kay, Cabinet Member for Better Homes
Councillor Rezina Chowdhury, Cabinet Member for Sustainable Lambeth

Cc.

Bayo Dosunmu, Chief Executive
Fiona Connolly, Corporate Director of Housing and Adult Social Care
Lambeth Tenants Heat Campaign

18 March 2024

By email

Dear councillors,

I am the coordinator of the End Fuel Poverty Coalition and I am writing to understand your position regarding the recent issues faced by residents in Lambeth, particularly the threat of eviction due to challenges in meeting the escalating costs of heat networks.

We are particularly concerned to understand the implications of the current situation on the social housing sector and if wider consideration may be needed in how charges for rent and services are combined for tenants.

With Ofgem taking on regulation of heat networks, there is an opportunity to learn from what is happening in Lambeth.

While we understand the complexities of managing such systems, treating heat network bills as "rent" for eviction purposes is a matter of great concern. We acknowledge the efforts Lambeth Council may be making in extending payment plans, but it would be useful to understand if this is the most practical solution for those facing financial difficulties?

We acknowledge the media reports indicating collaboration between Lambeth and affected residents. However, we have also heard from campaigners who suggest that the current approach is instead causing distress and feelings of being unsupported. What lessons in engagement can be learned from your situation?

As broad supporters of heat networks and the role they will play in decarbonising our homes, we are also concerned about the damage of this case on encouraging the take up of this potentially beneficial system of heating nationally. What more can be done to ensure heat networks are fit for purpose?

Of course, we are aware of the ongoing challenges faced by Lambeth Council and we hope you will pursue a compassionate and collaborative approach in resolving the issues you are facing, such as discontinuing eviction threats and actively engaging with the Lambeth Tenants Heat Campaign to find mutually beneficial resolutions.

We look forward to your response.

Best wishes

Simon Francis, coordinator

The End Fuel Poverty Coalition is a broad coalition of more than 70 anti-poverty, health, housing and environmental campaigners, charities, local authorities, trade unions and consumer organisations. It is also supported by academics, social enterprises and those working on the front line of fighting fuel poverty.

We believe that everybody has the right to a warm, dry home that they can afford to heat and power.

For more information, please visit <https://www.endfuelpoverty.org.uk/>