

SUCU Extraordinary General Meeting Friday 7th September 2018, 1pm

Hicks LT7

Chair: Sam Marsh, SUCU President

Minutes: Pablo Stern, SUCU Treasurer

1. Welcome and introductions

Sam Marsh in the chair welcomed members.

48 members were in attendance.

2. Pay Dispute and USS Update

A timetable was displayed showing all the dates relating to the pay ballot and also USS dates.

There is a lot happening, with overlapping timescales.

2.1. Pay

- The employers' offer is again below inflation. UCU also wants progress on workload, gender balance, casualisation and other issues.
- UCU nationally and locally is recommending a Yes vote to both strike action and action short of a strike.
- SUCU is setting up a 'Get the Vote Out' committee, which could become a strike committee in the event of industrial action happening. Members are invited to join the committee - they should email ucu@sheffield.ac.uk or phone.

2.2. USS

- There is currently a USS consultation ongoing regarding changes in contributions for next April proposed by USS. SUCU has circulated advice, and it would be useful if members took part in the consultation, though these changes will hopefully be made unnecessary by the JEP process.
- The JEP (Joint Expert Panel) on USS has been meeting - Sam Marsh from our branch is a member. This panel will report soon.
- There will then be a consultation by UCU re the JEP report, then a special conference in November to decide how to proceed.

3. UCU Congress/Conference delegates

SUCU Committee proposed to the meeting that our four national Conference/Congress delegates for the coming year should be:

- Emma Nagouse
- Jess Meacham

- Sam Marsh
- Sam Morecroft

Passed Nem con

SUCU Committee also sought approval for it to be able to nominate any Committee member as a substitute delegate if one of the above delegates should be unable to attend.

Passed Unanimously

The next conference is on October 18th.

4. Branch motion: No confidence in the current approach to organisational change

Proposed Motion

No confidence in the current approach to organisational change

Branch notes:

- *the University of Sheffield is undergoing a period of unprecedented organisational change that is negatively affecting hundreds of staff and currently includes large-scale reorganisation of our professional services teams, with potential knock-on impact for academic workloads and future restructures in academic departments*
- *that an emergency meeting of the Joint Union Campus Committee was held on Monday 6th August to discuss ongoing concerns that the campus trade unions have over these changes*
- *that the rationale and/or business cases behind the changes that are being implemented have not been fully communicated to staff or the campus trade unions*

Branch resolves:

- *to affirm that it is fast losing confidence in the senior management of the university in managing organisational change*
- *to express its commitment to and belief in the excellent specialist work undertaken by colleagues in professional services roles across the University*
- *to seek a meeting between Koen Lamberts and the campus trade unions at the earliest available opportunity to discuss this and other matters relating to the strategic vision of the University's senior management team*
- *to agree amendments on the agreed change management policy and processes in order for them to be fit for purpose for large-scale restructures, and to press for greater transparency in communications relating to organisational change*
- *that until such negotiations are concluded, or until there is greater transparency around the rationales for change, to call for a pause on the implementation of any further restructures*

Proposed: Jon Benson

Seconded: Emma Nagouse

Discussion

- The proposer gave some background and then discussion followed.

- There has been a lot of restructuring of Professional Services, including Research & Innovation and APSE. SDG decided on a review of all Professional Services, including staff in faculties and departments. Management's stated aims included more consistency and a closer alignment of services with business need. What we are actually seeing is a downgrading of staff and a loss of jobs.
- More areas are coming, possibly including Student Recruitment and Admissions, Accommodation Services and more. There seems to be no end in sight. There is also a concern that the Student Lifecycle Project may be used to reduce staff in some areas whilst workload increases in other areas.
- The new VC may of course have views on this which could reinforce or change the approach, and the motion seeks to have an early meeting with him regarding this and other strategic matters.
- The Professional Services restructures also have an impact on academic staff, who will be expected for instance to take on some of the work currently done by APSE.
- There should be a clear roadmap - SDG while it existed at least had a plan and structure.

Amendments

The discussion resulted in a number of proposed amendments:

i) In the first Resolves bullet point, replace 'is fast losing' with 'has lost'.

Proposed: *Daragh O'Reilly*

Seconded: *Sam Marsh*

- It was proposed that 'has lost' is stronger and reflects the actual situation.
- The argument against the amendment was that we are negotiating to improve the change procedures, which might improve matters.

Lost: For 13, Against 28, Abstain 7

ii) In the first Resolves bullet point, append after 'senior management of the university', 'including that of HR'

Proposed: *Vicky Crewe*

Seconded: *Jess Meacham*

- Senior management of the university do have a collective responsibility for what is happening, but part of HR's specific remit is to ensure the process works well, and this isn't happening.
- There are strong concerns around issues like lack of transparency and negligence of procedural and other obligations.

Passed: For 34, Against 5, Abstain 9

iii) Additional bullet point in the Notes section saying "that HR procedures have not been followed correctly, particularly with regards to maternity leave."

Proposed: *Trevor Brent*

Seconded: *Sam Morecroft*

Passed Nem con

iv) Amend the fourth Resolves bullet point, replacing the 'to press for' clause with:

to press for the following relating to organisational change:

- *Greater transparency in communications*
- *Ensure no restructure begins without proper planning and reflection on data gathered regarding previous restructures*
- *Priority is given to the duty of care of the staff*

Proposed: Sarah Stanlland

Seconded: Jo Grady

Passed Nem con

Final motion as amended

No confidence in the current approach to organisational change

Branch notes:

- *that the University of Sheffield is undergoing a period of unprecedented organisational change that is negatively affecting hundreds of staff and currently includes large-scale reorganisation of our professional services teams, with potential knock-on impact for academic workloads and future restructures in academic departments*
- *that an emergency meeting of the Joint Union Campus Committee was held on Monday 6th August to discuss ongoing concerns that the campus trade unions have over these changes*
- *that the rationale and/or business cases behind the changes that are being implemented have not been fully communicated to staff or the campus trade unions*
- *that HR procedures have not been followed correctly, particularly with regards to maternity leave.*

Branch resolves:

- *to affirm that it is fast losing confidence in the senior management of the university, including that of HR, in managing organisational change*
- *to express its commitment to and belief in the excellent specialist work undertaken by colleagues in professional services roles across the University*
- *to seek a meeting between Koen Lamberts and the campus trade unions at the earliest available opportunity to discuss this and other matters relating to the strategic vision of the University's senior management team*
- *to agree amendments on the agreed change management policy and processes in order for them to be fit for purpose for large-scale restructures, and to press for the following relating to organisational change:*
 - *Greater transparency in communications*
 - *Ensure no restructure begins without proper planning and reflection on data gathered regarding previous restructures*

- *Priority is given to the duty of care of the staff*
- *that until such negotiations are concluded, or until there is greater transparency around the rationales for change, to call for a pause on the implementation of any further restructures*

Passed Unanimously

5. UCU Democracy Review

- Our branch put forward to Congress a motion for a review of the union's democratic processes to increase member control. This was passed, and there will now be a Democracy Commission.
- The ballot for deciding on its general membership starts on 17th September. Jess Meacham from SUCU Committee is one of the candidates.
- Sam Morecroft, also from our Committee, will be on the Commission as a representative of casual staff.
- SUCU Committee will circulate recommendations for voting in the ballot.
- We are optimistic there will be useful outcomes from the review.

6. Branch motion: Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union organiser fund

Motion

Funding a South Yorkshire Organiser

Branch Notes:

- *That the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU), while small and lacking resources, has made huge progress in organising fast food workers in the UK, including leading strike action in McDonalds among workers fighting for a £10 an hour minimum wage, and end to zero hour contracts and the right to join a union*
- *That Sheffield Trades Council has recently agreed to donate £4000 towards the cost of BFAWU hiring a full time organiser for the South Yorkshire area, in order to organise low paid fast food workers in the region*
- *That Sheffield Trades Council are requesting donations from affiliate branch to help fund the employment of this organiser*

Branch Resolves:

- *To donate £1000 towards the cost of hiring this organiser*

Proposed: Sam Morecroft

Seconded: Jess Meacham

- BFAWU has been doing great work at unionising unorganised workers, eg at McDonald's, KFC and others. They have also done good work on challenging zero hours contracts.
- However BFAW has a fairly small and low paid membership, so Sheffield Trades Council is contributing funds towards the recruitment of a full time organiser, and is asking member unions to also provide support.

- We are one of the better off branches in the region and SUCU Committee proposes that we contribute £1,000. Branch funds are healthy and we can afford it.

Passed Unanimously

7. Branch motion: Campaign to reinstate Jim Newell and against the marketisation in HE

Motion

Campaign to reinstate Jim Newell and against the marketisation of HE

This branch notes that:

- *on 12 June, the University of Salford suddenly dismissed Jim Newell as professor of politics after 27 years' service allegedly on grounds of a failure to achieve a series of, essentially financial, targets set by the University unilaterally, and applied retroactively in that they were introduced only sometime after his promotion;*
- *a fundamental principle of the rule of law is that a person cannot be found guilty by applying laws introduced only after the event.*

This branch believes that the targets Jim Newell is alleged to have failed to meet reflect a business model of the university which is incompatible with academic freedom because it necessarily undermines academics' scope for disinterested criticism and enquiry by removing the security of employment academics must have in order to be able to engage in such criticism and enquiry, without fear or favour, in the first place.

This branch believes that recent years have seen higher education institutions that were once self-respecting communities of scholars dedicated to teaching and research for their own sakes, gradually hijacked by managers who see them as nothing more than businesses; that once students are treated as customers, placing the accent almost exclusively on the instrumental value of their programmes, their capacity to learn is undermined.

This branch demands that the University of Salford reinstates Jim Newell with immediate effect.

This branch resolves to call upon members to resist the on-going corruption of our profession and to wrest back the control of our institutions that we have lost by:

- *redoubling efforts to recruit members to the UCU aware that in the absence of collective action the current situation is likely to get worse; that Jim Newell's situation is by no means an isolated one; that it is severely damaging the health and well-being of University staffs throughout the UK (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/imperial-college-professor-stefan-grimm-was-given-grant-income-target/2017369.article>);*
- *writing to the Vice Chancellor of Salford University to demand Jim Newell's reinstatement;*
- *joining the hundreds of academics who have written on Jim Newell's behalf to the Guardian (<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/jul/24/in-support-of-goldsmiths-cleaners-and-prof-james-newell>), by signing the petition (<https://www.change.org/p/prof-helen-marshall-reinstate-jim-newell-to-his-job-as-professor-of-politics-at-the-university-of-salford>) demanding that he be reinstated.*

Proposed: Jess Meacham

Seconded: Emma Nagouse

Passed Unanimously

8. AOB

8.1. USS National Dispute Committee

- As a result of a Congress debate very much along the lines of this branch's proposals, a USS National Dispute Committee has been formed, with members elected by pre-92 University delegates to Congress.
- Jo Grady from our branch was been elected for our region. This is particularly impressive as the alternative candidate was UCU's national president, Joanna de Groot.
- Also on the committee from our branch are Sam Morecroft (for the national Anti-Casualisation Committee) And Themesa Neckles (for the national Disabled Members Standing Committee)
- The meeting showed its appreciation.