

SUCU General Meeting Minutes Thurs 25th January 2018, 1pm

Council Room, Firth Court

Chair: Jon Benson Branch Vice President

Minutes: Jane Rodger Branch Administrator

1. Welcome and introductions

Jon Benson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the previous General Meeting held 29th November 2017 were agreed as a true record.

3. Brief round-up of news

3.1. USS pension dispute. We have just tweeted a letter from the new Universities Minister in which he perhaps inadvertently saying that the USS was a secure scheme. We have also written to the Vice Chancellor (VC) asking him to speak out clearly against the proposed changes.

3.1. University of Sheffield Financial Report has been published and reveals that the VC received a pay rise of only 1.1%, but his bonus was more than many are paid in one year. An overall deficit was reported alongside a capital spend of £110, 000, 000, although the report states that capital expenditure will now be paused.

3.1. Reviews and restructures are continuing.

3.1. Academic career pathways are being discussed with the campus unions. Academic job titles are unlikely to change imminently and the proposed criteria for the pathways looks promising and positive.

3.1. Application to the “Bike to work” scheme can only be made during limited periods. We have raised concerns about this.

3.1. International staff. We had a positive meeting with the VC about the increasing difficulties faced by our international colleagues. Assurances were made concerning the provision of better information and support to both EU and non EU staff, and the reimbursement of financial costs such as those associated with Indefinite Leave to Remain.

4. Sheffield no cuts campaign motion

Sam Morecroft has been involved with this campaign locally which is also putting forward an alternative Council budget.

The following motion was proposed by Sam Morecroft and seconded by Jess Meacham.

Call for Sheffield City Council to Pass a “No Cuts” Budget

Sheffield UCU branch believes that Sheffield City Council’s proposal to extend its already 4 year reduction in terms & conditions of its council workforce by another 4 years is unacceptable. We

therefore pledge our support for any future action, including strikes, which Sheffield Council workers feel is necessary to defend their living standards.

We also note that:

- The Council is budgeting for a further £26 millions of cuts this year
- However, they are already £21 millions overspent mainly due to increasing demand for social care services
- More cuts in areas such as parks and libraries are suggested to pay for this
- PFI and outsourcing contracts will take an increasing share of reduced Council budgets (Amey's payments alone are set to increase by £1.8m every year)
- The Council is planning further cuts of £108 million by 2022
- But they had £135 millions in reserves available in March 2017.

We believe that Sheffield Council's policy of implementing Tory austerity cuts and privatisations is unsustainable, will lead to the wholesale destruction of Council services and runs counter to the anti-austerity and anti-privatisation policies of the Corbyn-led Labour Party nationally. We also note that Labour Councils jointly control budgets of £75 billion (more than the national state budgets of 16 EU countries) with reserves of £13.5 billion. They are therefore in a strong position against a weak and divided Tory Government.

We therefore call on Sheffield Labour Council to:

- Immediately stop any further cuts
- Use their reserves and prudential borrowing powers to balance the budget and begin restoring services, benefits and pay and conditions for its workers
- Begin the process of bringing PFI (Amey) and outsourced contracts (Veolia) back in-house
- Campaign in local trade unions and communities to build mass local support for such a No Cuts budget stand
- Call on other Labour Councils to set No Cuts budgets and mount a national campaign to force the Tory Government to restore grants for local authorities.

A vote was taken and the motion was passed with one abstention.

5. Branch motion in support of Ahmed Sedeeq

The following motion was proposed by Rob Stanton and seconded by Sam Morecroft.

University of Sheffield UCU Branch motion

This branch condemns the home office's detention of Ahmed Sedeeq, A PhD student at University of Sheffield over the Christmas period.

The branch notes Ahmed is an international fee paying student and has paid the university the appropriate fee for his study this year and approximately 55,000 pounds in total. The branch supports the right of Ahmed to complete his PhD and asks the University of Sheffield to maintain his student status and provide his extension without interruptions subject to the proviso that the university would not as a result be in breach of Home Office Tier 4 regulations.

The branch supports Ahmed's right to Live in safety and therefore the right to Asylum in the UK, following the destruction of his home city Mosul at the hands of ISIS.

The branch also requests that The University of Sheffield assures SUCU that it will not take rash or draconian measures in relation to international students who are detained by the Home Office, in particular that on no account will email access be suspended for students in such difficulties, and that the university will safeguard the welfare of its students by providing adequate support to any student under such conditions.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- The University had a moral duty to be more supportive.
- The main issue is the draconian visa regulations

6. Sexual harassment

Since the last General Meeting the Branch has held a well-attended half day training session delivered by our Regional Support Official Marianne Quick, and an Action Group which generated some great ideas. University management have now invited the campus unions to join a working group on sexual harassment. SUCU wants to hear from members about what they want to see in a University policy, and any other helpful feedback or information.

7. Casualisation campaign up date

The next negotiation meeting with University management is due to be held in two weeks. Slow progress is being made as management reveal data showing the picture of how casual contracts are being used. There will be a further update in SUCU Branch News.

8. USS Pension

Following the excellent ballot result in favour of industrial action a meeting of the JNC took place on 23rd January at which the independent chair voted for the UUK proposal. In the absence of any movement in negotiations strike action will be announced. A provisional start date of 22nd February has been set followed by sustained and escalating industrial action.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Will there be action short of a strike (ASOS)?
Ans. We expect to be working to contract but we have no more details.
- Will there be any local flexibility of when we strike?
Ans. The escalating action is nationally called, but we may have some local flexibility.
- Will part time members be unequally affected?
Ans. Strike action is planned for different days of the week to help obviate this, and we will circulate details of the strike hardship fund soon.
- The Teachers Pension Scheme will be much more attractive should the changes to USS occur.
- Why can we not boycott marking?
Ans. This may happen in the summer if a negotiated settlement is not reached.

9. AOB

None.