

**SUCU General Meeting Thurs 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017, 1pm**

**Council Room, Firth Court**

**Chair: Craig Brandist, SUCU Branch President**

**Minutes: Jane Rodger, SUCU Branch Administrator**

1. Welcome and introductions

Craig Brandist introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the meeting

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the SUCU General Meeting held 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016 were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Brief round- up of news

3.1. Our local anticasualisation campaign continues to seek improvements for people on temporary contracts, graduate teaching contracts, and for bank workers. The campaign started with a questionnaire of casually engaged staff which elicited some heart breaking stories and was followed by a twitter campaign with support from local MPs. University management are open to discussing the issues and SUCU is looking at next steps. We are formulating a list of demands.

3.2. We continue to support the local students union in their campaign against the National Student Survey (NSS) and TEF. SUCU is also backing the boycott of the NSS and a joint statement has been agreed and circulated. Student Union leaflets also include our SUCU logo. There is national guidance from UCU and local guidance for members will follow shortly. The aim of the campaign is to interfere with the Teaching Excellence Framework (of which NSS is a part), as the TEF process allows for student fees to be raised. A high NSS score can lead to increased fees, and a low score devalues the degree.

3.3. The University claims that the staff survey fulfils its health and safety obligations with regard to stress. The campus unions believe this is not a valid tool. It's also noted that casually engaged workers are not included in the survey. Colleagues are encouraged to ask their Department for their staff survey results.

3.4. Senior management job titles have changed. The campus unions were notified of this. Our position is that the use of corporate titles is disappointing. A query was raised also that this change may be against the University Charter.

3.5. SUCU has written to Shearer West, Deputy Vice Chancellor about her recent post on the university's finances to express our displeasure with the way the university is writing about its accounts to staff. Given a recent branch motion calling for transparency on such matters, we were particularly upset at the selective reporting and, in some cases, factually incorrect information. We will be asking more questions. Comments and questions from the floor included:

- Where have these changes come from?

Ans. There are a number of changes in accounting methods. Previously only "total results" were reported, but now University management are using "underlying results". However, only the total results are reported to HEFCE.

3.6. We understand the recruitment pause will stop at the end of the month.

3.7. The next USS valuation is due in March this year. A UCU Pensions Officer meeting took place yesterday and there are hopeful signs that alternative view points will be considered. The Universities are being asked for their views on how the fund should be valued. The University of Sheffield is now committed to draw on expertise from the University to formulate a response.

3.8. Thanks to the members who responded to our plea for help. We will be getting in touch soon.

4. University Transport Policy – guest speaker, Darren Hardwick

Craig Brandist introduced Darren Hardwick, the University's Travel Plan Co-ordinator. He is responsible for managing the integrated University transport policy and ensures that income from parking is spent on sustainable transport, such as, cycle huts and bike hire. The aim of the policy is to influence how people travel to the University to reduce the use of cars. Public transport is promoted in partnership with South Yorkshire Transport. The University operates a "needs based" car parking provision. The University Transport Policy Group is responsible for setting the price of car parking and a cost level similar to public transport was agreed.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- What relationship has the University with Qpark?

Ans. The buildings on Durham Road and Solly Street are owned by the University and the car parks are run by a University owned subsidiary – TUOS Parking Ltd.

- The provision for bikes is inadequate.

Ans. The University has surveyed the provision. 1 in 10 staff cycle to work and the student number is increasing. There are plans for 2 indoor bike parking facilities which include showers – one near the Graves Building and one on Portobello. These will hopefully be ready for the next academic year. There

will also be provision for 200 cycles on the Northumberland Road development.  
There is also recognition that short stay cycle parking is still needed.

- We should all campaign for better public transport provision.

5. Sheffield Needs a Pay Rise – guest speaker, Bob Jeffrey

Craig Brandist introduced Bob Jeffrey, a UCU Convenor at Hallam Branch of UCU and part of Sheffield Trades Council. The Sheffield Needs a Pay Rise Campaign (SNAP) came out of a TUC initiative two years ago. No city could be more apt for this campaign as South Yorkshire has suffered the largest drop in pay since 2008, and Sheffield has the highest proportion of workers on low pay. The aim of the campaign is to achieve a £10 minimum wage, a pay rise for all and the collective voice of trade union membership. The campaign launched two months ago and has had two rallies. Campaigners have been talking to young workers to map their issues. The next steps include the production of a leaflet detailing basic employment right information and a list of trade unions. More volunteers are needed to talk to young people, and Bob asked that colleagues would consider a donation of £200 towards the production of the leaflets. Craig put the request to the vote. There were two abstentions and all others were in favour. A donation of £200 was therefore agreed.

6. Stand up to Racism Branch motion

Craig Brandist proposed the following motion on behalf of SUCU Committee which was seconded by Sam Marsh.

**SUCU Branch Motion – Stand up to Racism 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

This branch notes:

- The attempts by some politicians and the right-wing media to stoke division through the scapegoating of migrants, refugees and Muslims.
- That anti-migrant rhetoric has led to violence and opens the door to the growth of racism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.
- The election of Donald Trump as US president on a platform that including vicious racism towards Mexicans, Muslims and black people, which will give further encouragement to racists here
- That since the EU referendum there has been a rise in ‘hate crime’ principally directed at migrant workers.
- Whichever way trade unionists voted in the EU referendum, it is vital that we stand in solidarity with migrants and refugees.
- That Muslims are being targeted by the government as an ‘enemy within’ through the Prevent agenda.
- The emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, reminding us that institutional racism is still prevalent.

- That UCU affiliated nationally to Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) at our congress in June 2016.

We believe:

- That we must combat attempts to divide ordinary people and defend the positive role migrant workers play in Britain, and in HE in particular.
- It is not migrants and refugees that undermine wages and public services, it is cuts and austerity.

We resolve:

- To affiliate to Stand Up To Racism (£50) and donate an additional £100.
- To support and to publicise to our members SUTR's national and local initiatives.
- To pay for tickets and transport for up to 4 delegates to the Stand Up to Racism Trade Union Conference on 4 February 2017 in central London (tickets £8).
- To support the TUC backed Stand Up to Racism demonstration on 18 March (UN Anti-Racism Day).

Proposed: SUCU Committee

There were no comments from the floor and the motion was carried nem con.

#### 7. University Strategy Delivery Group

Shearer West, the Deputy Vice Chancellor will be attending the next Joint Union Consultation Committee to provide an update on the SDG. The recruitment pause may finish at the end of the month but we know the University still intends to be stringent. We are waiting for the results of the review into research support. This is the first of the SDG's work stream reviews. The results were due to be announced at the end of January but this has now been delayed. We are particularly keen to monitor how the outcome of the Staff Release Scheme impacts on the workload of staff remaining. The campus trade unions also continue to be consulted and help staff subject to institutional reviews and restructures.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- There are discrepancies in how decisions were made on individual requests to the Staff Release Scheme, and staff are not receiving adequate feedback.

Ans. We are highlighting discrepancies to University management.

#### 8. AOB

None.