

SUCU General Meeting Wed 11 March 2015, 1pm

Council Chamber, Octagon Centre

Chair: Jane Simm

Minutes: Jane Rodger

1. Welcome and introductions

Jane Simm welcomed members to the meeting and introduced herself as Acting Branch President, Jane Rodger Branch Administrator, and Geraldine Egan UCU National Pension Official.

2. Minutes of last meeting

Minutes from the meeting on January 28th were agreed.

3. UCU National Pensions Official – Geraldine Egan

Geraldine gave members a thorough overview of the proposed changes to USS and the process for consultation. [Read her slides in full here](#), which include suggested points to consider in formulating your response to the consultation. She explained that UCU in the JNC on 29th January 2015 accepted the employers' proposals for changes to the scheme benefits. The Board set the technical provisions and has to consult with the employers on the recovery plan and is putting a statutory consultation in place to consult with active members of USS. In addition to the employers and members of the USS scheme, UCU nationally will also be consulted. This consultation will start on 16th March 2015 and USS will issue paperwork to all participating employers in the scheme. Employers will be asked to circulate material which will include links for members to provide individual responses on a dedicated USS website. Members will need their membership number but can select to be confidential.

The process of consultation will involve the following stages:

- Pre- consultation phase - Consultation website becomes available www.ussconsultation.co.uk for employers to provide information to affected employees.
- Planned consultation phase – starts 16th March and responses must be submitted by 22 May.
- Planned post-consultation phase – employers can submit their responses by 31 May. During June and July the scheme trustee considers responses and passes any potential modifications to JNC, which finalises decisions on the proposed changes. Further information on the final agreed benefit structure will be made available for affected employees during the Autumn, and the earliest proposed date for implementation is 1 April 2016.

In summary the proposed changes are:

- Closure of final salary section - it is proposed to close the final salary section on 31st March 2016.

- NEW CRB section - from 1st April 2016 final salary members and CRB members will move into the new CRB which has a salary cap of £55K.
- Defined Contribution Fund - for those earning more than £55K, that part of the earnings contributions level by the employees will go into the defined contribution fund and the employer will pay 12% into this fund. There is little information at this time.

Geraldine gave examples of the impact of the proposed changes on the CRB scheme, defined benefits and the defined contribution sections. She also explained additional changes to be made to contributions, Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs), Revalued Benefit AVC's in CRB, Money purchase AVC's, transfers into the scheme, and cost sharing.

[Geraldine's slides](#) include points for members to consider when formulating responses to the consultation.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- The fundamental problem is the proposals are based on a fabricated deficit. Is the union going to continue to challenge this?
 Ans. Yes there will be a campaign developed ready for Congress in May – one aim of which is to encourage members to challenge the employers.
- The proposals will also have a negative effect on the wider economy.

4. USS update

Sam Marsh SUCU Pension Officer gave a brief update following his meeting about the USS proposals with University Management, and on the national picture. The Universities are already divided about the proposals with many prestigious institutions opposing them. Individual branches are now lobbying their employers to do the same, as the proposals are not in their interests either. The valuation will continue to be challenged. All staff who are members of USS must be encouraged to engage with the consultation. We have a local webpage dedicated to the USS proposals which will be regularly updated to give members the latest information and links.

5. Anti-bullying and harassment

Negotiations for a new Dignity and Respect at Work Policy which sets out how University Management will deal with bullying and harassment is ongoing but nearing completion.

6. Reward and Recognition

Pablo Stern Branch Treasurer gave a very brief update. Following pressure from the campus unions in negotiations University Management have withdrawn their proposal to remove automatic pay increments for staff.

7. AOB

Members were advised of vacancies for Sheffield UCU delegates to Sheffield Trades Council which is a network of local trade unions, and co-ordinates and supports local campaigning, industrial action and promoting the trade union movement.