

**SUCU General Meeting Minutes Tues 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2015, 1pm**

**Council Chamber, Octagon Centre**

**Chair: Craig Brandist, Branch President**

**Minutes: Jane Rodger, Branch Administrator**

Craig Brandist introduced himself and welcomed members to the meeting

1. Minutes of the last meeting

1.1. Amendments to the minutes of the last General Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015 were; in item 6 “misuse” should replace “use”, and in the heading for item 5 “change” should be deleted. The rest of the minutes were passed as a correct record.

1.2. Matters arising from the minutes were: there is a Peoples March for Climate, Justice and Jobs rally in Tudor Square, Sheffield this Saturday and the national march in London is on Sunday. As agreed at the last General Meeting Deborah Corbett will take the SUCU banner. Also UCU members in the Open University will be on all out strike tomorrow. SUCU will send a message of support and more information will be in this month’s Branch News.

2. Brief round-up of news

2.1. Sam Marsh, SUCU Communications Officer gave a brief roundup of UCU activities on behalf of SUCU Committee.

2.2. Nationally, we are looking at the implications of the Higher Education Green Paper including the Teaching Excellence Framework. Overall we are happy with messages from the Vice Chancellor expressing scepticism about the effects of the proposals. Members with an interest in the Green Paper were asked to get in touch and input. UCU members in the Open University will start industrial action tomorrow followed by a rolling programme of regional strikes. They are fighting the proposed closure of regional centres which puts 500 jobs at risk. The national pay campaign has now started and will build towards the next pay offer in 2016. UCU will seek to claw back the 15% de-valuation of pay in recent years. The Daily Mail carried out an investigation into inequalities in HE pay and found that 96 individuals working for the University of Sheffield earned in total 12 million pounds. Leeds University have been writing good blogs about the pay campaign which we have been circulating.

2.3. Locally, we marked national recruitment week with an email to all eligible non-members inviting them to consider joining the union, and a recruitment stall in the

region of the Mappin Building. Many people said they were thinking of joining. SUCU Committee wrote to the Vice Chancellor about the flawed USS valuation as agreed at the last General Meeting. We are seeking a meeting with University Management with a view to establishing a working group. Also Jane Hutten has become a new member of USS Trustees and we are confident she will be a forceful critic. We continue to have concerns about the limited 2 day window allowed to redeployees under the new Redeployment Procedure, and we are pushing for this to be extended. Colleagues were asked to contact SUCU in confidence with their experiences of Performance Improvement Plans, both negative and positive. SUCU Committee has concerns for how they are being used, as they seem to be a means of circumventing the formal capability procedures. The University's Director of Human Resources is featured in Human Resources Magazine talking about the University's commercial subsidiary Juice, and how its services are now being offered to other organisations. He is also considering commercialising other HR services, such as leadership development. Colleagues were directed to Twitter to see regular news updates from SUCU.

#### 2.4. Questions and comments from the floor included:

- SUCU should in principal oppose out-sourcing of any kind. Members agreed that SUCU Committee make a statement opposing privatisation and outsourcing.
- What is the consensus on lack of transparency in professorial pay? Ans. There is a Professorial pay scale but the process of where you are on the scale is completely opaque and there is no monitoring of it. We want a transparent process and this has been raised with the Vice Chancellor.
- There are pay inequalities across all pay grades. To address this there is an argument for flat rate pay increases rather than percentage increases.
- This year's pay rise was tapered to a degree in that people on higher pay had less of a percentage increase than those on lower grades.

### 3. Speaker from Sheffield Students Union

3.1. Christy McMorrow University of Sheffield Student Union President was introduced to colleagues. He thanked members for SUCU's recent donation towards the cost of travel to the No Barriers to Education national demonstration in London. Sheffield had the biggest contingent of marchers outside London. Following on from the march local groups will be formed to address the three specific barriers to education: changes to the grants and loans system, rights of international students, and the marketization of

education including the dangers of the Green Paper. Three large meetings are planned for December.

3.2. Other campaign priorities are to improve involvement and representation of post graduate students, opposing continuation fees for PhD students, and promoting trade union membership (including students working in the Students Unions and its outsourced services).

3.3. Questions and comments from the floor included:

- How can SUCU help your campaigns? Ans. We need speakers for the three meetings planned for December.
- Are you looking at cuts to the Disabled Students Allowance? Ans. Yes we will work specifically with the Disabled Students Committee and link this to at least one of the meetings planned for December.

#### 4. Health & Safety and the role of Safety Reps

4.1. Mick Ashman, SUCU Health and Safety Officer, was unable to attend, so this item will be rolled to the next General Meeting on Tues 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016. Craig Brandist briefly outlined that use of the Health and Safety provisions is the best lever to address issues such as stress, workloads, and bullying. The union has used its rights under health and safety legislation to tackle specific concerns on a collective basis. Colleagues are asked to consider joining the team of SUCU Safety Reps, as this would strengthen our position in the University.

#### 5. SUCU branch affiliations

5.1. Colleagues considered the list of SUCU Branch affiliations currently listed on our webpage. There were no objections raised to continuing the affiliations.

#### 6. AOB

6.1. The Peoples Assembly have organised a rally outside Sheffield Town Hall on Wednesday 25 Nov at 5 pm to oppose the cuts expected in the Autumn Statement. Sam Morecroft will speak about cuts to Higher Education.

6.2. Post graduate student members of SUCU are organising to push for further improvements and ensure post graduate teaching contract is implemented in all Departments. The more student members who feed into this process the more we can achieve. A survey of post graduate students is being produced.

6.3. Jane Simm attended the Save our Steel rally at the weekend where amongst many rousing speeches Francis O'Grady spoke on behalf of all the trade unions.