

**SUCU General Meeting Minutes Wed 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017, 1pm**

**Council Room, Firth Court**

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

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

1. Welcome and introductions

Craig Brandist welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the General Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> October 2017 were accepted as a true record.

3. Brief round-up of news

3.1. Saturday Open days. Following the motion passed at the last General Meeting, and negotiations between the unions and University management all our demands have been met on this issue.

This is a great success and highlights what trade unions can achieve. We are still pushing management to demonstrate the efficacy of Saturday Open Days, and members were asked to send through local intelligence. The importance of using the crèche facility was also emphasised. Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Will Saturday open days be reflected in the Workload Allocation Model?

Ans. Yes it will, so a staff member would accrue an additional day of annual leave.

3.2. University reviews and restructures. SUCU is hearing about potential changes in the Faculty of Science which we are monitoring. Members are asked to send any intelligence in confidence.

3.3. Sexual harassment awareness training. A two-hour training session delivered by our Regional Support Official is to be held on Thurs 7th Dec 10.00-12.00 is being opened up to all SUCU members. Members are encouraged to get in touch if they would like to attend.

3.4. SUCU Women's Network. We are working on setting up a local network for women members.

3.5. Harassment Policy. We will be relooking at the University policy in the light of a new national template

3.6. Members' attention is drawn to our local gender pay gap flyer which graphically depicts this important issue.

4. Education Support Partnership speaker

Craig introduced Maggie Hurd from the charity Education Support Network which is dedicated to improving the health & wellbeing of the entire education profession. Maggie explained what the Network does and what UCU members have access to. This includes specific support for reps, 24-hour

helpline, financial grants, a training and development fund, a range of different life guides, and various paid for services.

#### 5. University Disability Network speaker

5.1. Craig introduced Mark Morley from the University Disability Staff Network who spoke about its role, work, and where it fits in to University structures. The network reports to the University's Equality Diversity and Inclusivity Committee along with other staff networks with protected characteristics. Mark explained that increasing numbers of individual staff members are approaching the network for confidential support, but resources are limited as support is provided in network members' own time.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Is the Network consulted on new developments?

Ans. Not routinely although the network has been proactive.

5.2. Craig thanked Mark and said that SUCU would return to this issue in a later meeting. He also added that SUCU Committee had concerns about the unresponsiveness of the Equality Diversity and Inclusivity Committee.

#### 6. USS Pension

6.1. Matthew Malek explained that a ballot of members for industrial action has started and ballot papers will arrive very soon. The USS issue is complex and developing quickly, but we are on top of it. UCU negotiators need a vote of yes (for strike action) and yes (for action short of a strike) as strong leverage in negotiations. It is also essential that we achieve a 50% turn out of voters.

6.2. Despite what we see in the media - the USS fund is sound with a best estimate surplus of 8 billion pounds. However, the Government's Pensions Regulator is applying pressure to devalue the fund, and the Employers (UUK) have proposed the removal of the defined benefits element of the scheme.

6.3. The local Branch has been active for a number of months; participating in a very productive University working group, engaging with members in two Action Groups, and we plan another in January.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- Has the VC made a statement on this issue?

Ans. Our VC has been silent so far and we are in the process of writing to him.

#### 7. International staff issues

7.1. The campus unions have been pressing University management to provide better information, legal support, and meaningful financial support to international colleagues. The local Branch is launching our campaign this week which includes the internal release of our recent questionnaire outcomes.

7.2. Over the last year we have been engaging with members and having ongoing discussions with management. University Executive Board took the decision not to provide financial support until the terms of Brexit are known, and an advisory group has been established.

7.3. Since the launch of our campaign webpage there has been some improvement in information provided to international colleagues, and legal support, but we believe this is not enough.

The following motion was proposed by Rita Hordosy and seconded by Mick Ashman.

### **Sheffield UCU Branch Motion: #WeAreInternational**

In light of heightened and rather polarised discussion of policies on immigration in the UK, and uncertainty over EU colleagues in particular, Sheffield UCU is concerned whether the University is supporting our international colleagues appropriately.

This Branch notes that the University provides the following support provision to its non-UK EU and non-EU international staff:

- 1) Information and guidance: comprehensive guidance on starting a life in the UK for international staff
- 2) Dedicated staff pages for non-UK EU since the EU Referendum, with the availability of legal advice on their immigration status following the EU Referendum.
- 3) The University reimburses the cost of Tier 2 visa extensions for non-EU staff.
- 4) The University reimburses the cost of Permanent Residency cards for non-UK EU staff.

This Branch further notes that the outcomes of its staff survey circulated in October and November 2017 showed serious concerns amongst both non-UK EU and non-EU international staff in regards to several areas. These issues raised cover a wide range of topics, such as:

- 1) Lack of communication on post-arrival compliance with visa rules;
- 2) Lack of legal support for non-EU international staff;
- 3) Lack of financial assistance with the ever-increasing visa costs for non-EU international staff;
- 4) The impact of the EU Referendum and the resulting legal uncertainties on the sense of belonging of non-UK EU colleagues.

**Therefore this Branch calls for the University of Sheffield to become sector leading in its support to non-UK EU and non-EU International colleagues to honour the principles of its award winning #WeAreInternational campaign.**

More specifically, this Branch calls on the University to support its non-UK EU and non-EU international staff adequately and equitably via the following procedures:

- 1) Comprehensive information and support provision and corresponding legal advice to non-EU international colleagues, or inquiring on behalf of family members and dependents.
- 2) Continue to inform and support non-UK EU staff as the Brexit negotiations continue, acknowledging the emotional pressure that the uncertainties cause.
- 3) Reimburse initial visa costs and Indefinite Leave to Remain costs to non-EU international.
- 4) Reimburse costs for colleagues with international dependents in meeting visa, indefinite leave to remain, or permanent residency costs.

A vote was taken and the motion was passed nem con.

8. New Branch Rules

UCU National Congress 2016 approved model branch rules to be adopted by all local Branches. Members were asked to consider the new SUCU rules (provided) which are consistent with the UCU model rules but have been amended to formalise certain Branch Officer positions. A vote was taken and the rules were approved nem con.

9. AOB

9.1. Health and Safety update. Sheffield UCU and the other campus unions have recently conducted a health and safety inspection of two large University building. The report identifies a number of physical issues, but also workplace stress. The report will go to the University's Health and Safety Committee and regular health and safety inspections will continue to be undertaken by the campus unions. This is the union's strongest tool.

9.2. Announcement from the floor. Staff at Westways Primary School have announced strike action for four days in December. The Branch will send a message of support.

9.3. A colleague raised the issue of health and safety issues with regard problems with the windows at Jessop West. The unions are aware of this.