

**SUCU Emergency General Meeting**  
**Mon 16<sup>th</sup> April 2018**  
**Student Union Auditorium**

**Chair: Jess Meacham, Branch Education Officer**  
**Minutes: Jane Rodger, Branch Administrator**

1. Welcome and introductions

Jess Meacham welcomed all members to the meeting.

2. USS dispute and democracy review motion

2.1. The USS ballot closed last Friday and the result was 64% of members voted to accept the UUK offer. The ballot turnout represented the highest in UCU history. The two statements made by UUK (the pre-ballot statement and the response to the ballot outcome) were compared. There has been much social media discussion about how to compare the two statements. The use of the word “conclude” in the second statement reframes what had been said previously:

- UUK response to the ballot result:  
“Reviewing the methodology and assumptions in the current valuation will build confidence, trust and increase transparency in the valuation process.”  
“Current pension benefits are guaranteed until at least 1 April 2019, so the panel will need to conclude its work in time to put in place a sustainable way forward for USS from that date.”
- Compare and contrast to pre-ballot statement:  
“A formally agreed Joint Expert Panel, comprised of actuarial and academic experts nominated in equal numbers from both sides will be commissioned, to deliver a report. Its task will be to agree key principles to underpin the future joint approach of UUK and UCU to the valuation of the USS fund.”

2.2. The UUK proposals did not commit the joint expert panel to look at the more radical options (for example, comparing the Teachers Pension Scheme and USS and the role of government in relation to USS). We need to be vigilant about “mission creep” and a strong statement should be made about this by the national leadership.

2.3. Questions and comments from the floor included:

- At what point will UCU decide there has been too much mission creep and what would happen then?  
Ans. There needs to be a collective decision about this and we need to be vigilant.
- How important is the 30<sup>th</sup> June date, which was the deadline by which USS needed to demonstrate to the Pensions Regulator that the scheme was sustainable?  
Ans. USS may have a number of options with regard to this date. Looking at the timeframe the joint expert panel will have about six months in which to carry out its work.
- I am disappointed by the lack of comment from senior leadership concerning the reduced employer contributions that were agreed in 1997.  
Ans. We agree.
- What is the point of a democracy review if there was one five years ago?  
Ans. There are far more members involvement now and changes will be demanded.
- We need to balance the existing democracy with how we go forward.

- A number of members raised the possibility of taking a vote of no confidence in the General Secretary. This was debated and the general feeling was that the membership should be given advance notice of this should such a vote be considered.
- An amendment was suggested to include a point that the General Secretary should not recommend which way members should vote.

Ans. We need to keep within the 150 word limit for Congress motions, but motions can be amended at Congress. We can also expand on the motion when it is passed. The suggested amendment was withdrawn.

The following motion was proposed by Sam Morecroft and seconded by Emma Nagouse.

### **Democracy Review Motion**

Congress notes:

- concerns from many branches and members about the processes behind the consultative ballot on the USS offer of 23rd March.
- the lack of inter-election mechanisms by which to recall or hold elected union representatives to account.
- most senior full time officials of the union are appointed rather than elected

Congress resolves:

- to undertake a review before Congress 2019 of UCU's democratic structures via a democracy commission, including but not limited to discussion of the appropriate number of full time elected officials and how elected representatives are to be held to account.
- that the commission should be elected by and from branches, regional committees, devolved nations and advisory committees of the union.
- to empower the commission to recommend changes to UCU's democratic structures at a one-day special Congress, for discussion and voting on by branch delegates

A vote was taken and the motion was passed. Two members abstained.

2.4. All members were thanked for a positive meeting. It was pointed out that although we have ongoing issues we have had a fantastic period of strike and industrial action which has forced concessions from the Employer.

### 3. AOB

3.1. The teach-outs are continuing.

3.2. Members are invited to attend a student/staff solidarity meeting on Friday 20 April 5.30 in the Octagon.

3.3. UCU Regional Committee will be held in Sheffield on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> April. SUCU will send delegates and there will be an informal meeting open to all members following the Regional Committee at 3pm in the Bessemer Pub.

3.4. A public meeting about casualization in Higher Education will be held on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 7pm in the Arts Tower LT04. Guest speaker include Louise Haigh MP.

3.5. The SUCU Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1-2, Council Room, Firth Court. All members are encouraged to attend and consider volunteering for Committee positions.