

SUCU General Meeting Thurs 24th Jan 2019, 1pm

Council Room, Firth Court

Chair: Sam Marsh, Branch President

Minutes: Jane Rodger, Branch Administrator

1. Welcome and introductions

Sam welcomed all members to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the General Meeting on 29th November 2018 were agreed as an accurate meeting.

3. Brief round-up of news including USS

3.1. SUCU will be hosting two events on Tues 19th February; a UCU Vice President election hustings at 1pm, and a showing of Nae Pasaran in the evening. This is a film about the 1974 factory workers who refused to repair warplane engines in protest of the military coup in Chile. More information about both of these events will be sent shortly.

3.2. The SUCU Dispute Committee meets today at 3pm. This is an informally constructed group of general and committee members steering the Branch get the vote out plans.

3.3. The University continues the ongoing process of restructuring Departments and areas of work, and are currently looking at research support staff. The restructuring of Professional Services staff affects all our workloads, and generally the campus unions are not impressed with how the restructures are going.

3.4. Our collective grievance about the use of USS strike pay was submitted before Christmas and we hope to meet with University management soon. Four staff representatives, including two members of the UCU committee, continue to meet with University management on the USS Working Group, currently helping to inform the University's response to the USS consultation with Employers.

4. Guest Speaker – Nita Sanghera, UCU Vice President

Sam Marsh introduced Nita who spoke about union democracy. She spoke about the changes brought about by the USS dispute and the work of the new UCU Democracy Commission. Nita encouraged individual members to put themselves forward to the national executive committees.

Questions and comments included:

- Our Branch is one of the strongest in the country and is healthier by the month. Management know that when we call on our members they will respond. For example, we stopped the national drive to get rid of automatic increments. We also have excellent support from our Regional Office.

5. Equality and Pay Dispute

Sam Marsh explained to members that a re-run of the Pay and Equality ballot that initially took place in Autumn 2018 is now taking place again, and ends on 22nd Feb. The ballot will be aggregated rather than disaggregated. This Branch called for an aggregated re-ballot in a motion which was passed at the Sector Conference. UCU are recommending a vote in favour of industrial action, and action short of a strike (ie Yes, Yes), and it is most important that members vote so we exceed the national threshold of a 50% turn out. It is particularly important that we get a high turnout locally so we can assist the aggregated national ballot. Locally we have formed a dispute committee which is leading on plans to get the vote out which includes phone banking, a survey, local materials, and workplace meetings. We are also organising meetings for specific groups of staff such as Professional Services and post graduate students. A “Ballot Day” event is organised for the 5th February in the Interval, 12.00 to 14.00. Members are encouraged to bring their completed paper ballot papers which will be posted in the Student Union post box. Other activities include zine making and pizza will be provided. There will also be after work drinks in the Interval on the same day.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Why does UCU advocate a vote in favour of Action Short of a Strike when members should work to contract anyway?

Ans. The law requires that ASOS is on the ballot paper and we need a live vote for both options. Members cannot be disciplined for taking legally mandated action. The push back on not rescheduling lost work during the USS strike was successful, and we will continue to ensure that the end to any industrial action does not lead to increased workload due to backlogs.

- The ballot paper includes advice that should action be called it would be “non-continuous”. Why is this?

Ans. This is also a legal requirement. USS was non-continuous even though it was intensified over a period of 4 weeks. This was a successful strategy.

6. Branch rules proposed amendments

On behalf of Branch Committee Jon Benson proposed four amendments to the Branch Rules. An explanatory note was given to each member in the room. The amendments were: a clarification of the Committee quorum rule, the creation of a new role of Branch Policy and Governance Officer, the nominations process for election of Branch Officers and Committee members at the AGM, and an increase in the Committee mandate to agree donations.

Discussion included:

- An amendment was proposed from the floor to rule 6.3.4; to change “Donations to charities or other external bodies” to “Donations to charities or other external bodies to UCU”. This amendment was accepted by the proposer and therefore did not need a vote.

The proposal as amended was put to the vote and was passed nem con. The agreed amendments to Branch Rules will now be sent to UCU NEC for ratification.

7. General Election motion

Both UCU Vice President candidates took motions to NEC last year for UCU to call for a General Election. The motions were passed and put to the TUC, who have been pushing for a General Election.

Proposed motion:

General Election

This branch notes the current political crisis and the Tories' appalling record on Further and Higher education and demands that Theresa May resigns and calls a General Election.

Proposed by Sam Morecroft on behalf of SUCU Committee.

Seconded from the floor.

Discussion included:

- One member spoke against the motion stating a General Election would be a waste time and could result in a hung Parliament. The member advocated a government of national unity.
- The proposer replied that the current Government should not be part of the solution.

A vote was taken and the motion was passed by a majority of hands. Six voted against and there were 5 abstentions.

8. AOB

None.