

SUCU General Meeting Thurs 10th April 2018, 1pm

Council Room, Firth Court

Chair: Jon Benson, SUCU Vice President

Minutes: Jane Rodger, Branch Administrator

1. Welcome and introductions

Jon Benson welcomed all members to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the General Meeting held on 1st March 2018 were accepted as a true record.

3. Brief round-up of news

3.1. Anticasualisation campaign: we are waiting for the Employer to respond formally to the motion passed at the last General Meeting. We will keep members informed.

3.2. The University has published their gender pay gap data. Sheffield UCU still has an outstanding gender pay claim with management. Members are encouraged to get in touch with SUCU if they have concerns or questions about this or related issues.

3.3. Sheffield UCU has been shortlisted for two University Academic awards.

3.4. University reviews and restructures are ongoing - in particular central professional services. Many colleagues are going through difficult times as a result.

4. Industrial Action and motion

4.1. Sam Morecroft spoke to this motion. Whichever way members decide to vote in the USS ballot many will have concerns about the way the dispute has been handled. This motion is necessary as there will only be limited time at the national Congress (scheduled for the end of May) to discuss the USS dispute. One third of branches involved in the USS dispute need to support a call for a Higher Education Sector Conference (HESC).

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- How many delegates will this Branch be permitted to send to the HESC?
Ans. 4 or possibly more.
- It's important that we call for an HESC now as we will need this forum whether the outcome of the ballot is to reject or accept. There is a lot to discuss.
- Everything about the Employers' offer is vague.
- We previously passed a motion for a national strike committee to be set up. This idea can be developed. We want more membership control of disputes.

Sam Morecroft proposed the motion which was seconded by Jess Meacham.

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

Leadership and governance motion

Branch notes:

- Widespread concern among members about the timing of the ballot on the UUK 'offer' of 23rd March.
- Widespread concern among members about the process that led to the decision to ballot all members - that is, the branch delegate meeting in London and the vote taken by the Higher Education Committee immediately afterwards on 28th March.

Branch resolves:

- To join other branches across the country in calling for a Special Higher Education Sector Conference (HESC) to discuss the USS dispute under Rule 16.11. If possible this meeting should be held immediately prior to or following UCU Congress at the end of May .

4.2. Further questions and comments from the floor included:

- Some Universities will be taking strike action next week if the outcome of the ballot is to reject.
- There are concerns that strike deductions for part time staff may have been calculated incorrectly.

Ans. Our advice in the first instance is to contact HR (and copy ucu@sheffield.ac.uk) to ask for a clear explanation of how the deductions have been calculated. We can raise concerns with the Employer if necessary.

- Why are we scheduled to take action during a stand-alone week?

Ans. Branches have a choice of which strike dates would have the greatest impact, as some institutions have different assessment and teaching patterns. Our choice of dates can be looked at again if necessary.

5. Unis resist border controls motion

5.1. Sheffield UCU has worked for the last year to improve the conditions for our international colleagues. Committee have redrafted a motion from an organisation called "Unis resist border controls" which concerns the impact on staff and students of the current hostile environment, and the pressures placed on Tier 2, 4 and 5 holders by the USS dispute. Jess Meacham spoke to the motion.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- An amendment to specifically include the Prevent Agenda was suggested. A vote was taken to include the amendment which was agreed nem con.
- Should we release a statement specifically to colleagues on tier 2 visas?
Ans. Yes we will. We hope to discuss the matter with HR before Friday.
- Can we circulate the original motion from Unis resist border controls?
Ans. Yes we will.

Jess Meacham proposed the motion which was seconded by Sam Morecroft.

A vote was taken on the following amended motion which was passed nem con.

Migrant rights and antiracism motion

Branch notes:

- That the 'hostile environment' created by current government policy for migrants continues to have a deleterious effect on both staff and students across the HE sector
- That Sheffield has been a sector leader on the importance of internationalism via the #weareinternational campaign
- That the current USS dispute has placed particular pressures on staff and students who are currently Tier 2, 4 or 5 visa holders
- That SUCU is affiliated to a number of anti-racist movements and campaigns, including Palestine, Tamil and Cuba Solidarity, Stand up to Racism and Love Music Hate Racism
- That EU law grants all workers the right to undertake industrial action, a right that is threatened by current UK immigration legislation for workers on Tier 2 and 5 visas

Branch resolves:

- To continue to call on senior management of the University of Sheffield to do more to protect its migrant staff and students
- To continue to resist and to actively campaign against the legislative constraints placed on universities in the service of hostile environment policies, including the Prevent duty
- To continue to call on UCU nationally to lobby the Home Office for assurances that staff on Tier 2 or 5 visas who are engaged in prolonged industrial action will not be disproportionately affected or have their visa status threatened by their action
- To continue our work with all affiliated anti-racism organisations, and to work with Unis Resist Border Controls in the future, to continue to campaign for the rights of migrant workers and students across the sector

6. Sheffield Save Our NHS motion

6.1. Sam Morecroft spoke to the following motion explaining that there is a chance that the NHS Minor Injuries Unit and Walk in Centre could be saved.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Has the University made its position clear with regard this matter?
Ans. There has been no public statement, although there was a consultation event for staff. UCU were not invited and it seems only two attendees as the General Meeting received invitations. Many students have been active in the campaign.
- Point of information. The workers at the Walk in Centre are not NHS employees. This is an example of creeping privatisation of the NHS.
- Departmental risk assessments will be affected by these potential closures.
Ans. We will raise health and safety concerns with University management.

Sam Morecroft proposed the motion which was seconded by Emma Nagouse.

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

Save Sheffield Minor Injuries Unit and Walk In Centre motion

Branch notes:

- that both the Minor Injuries Unit and the NHS Walk In Centre are threatened with closure
- that these services are right on our doorstep and provide vital care to all of us in the University community as well as the wider community around the University
- that the A+E unit at Northern General is already seriously under-resourced and will not be able to deal safely with an increase in patient numbers
- that campaigning by Sheffield Save Our NHS and others has already delayed a decision on closing these services and can keep them open

Branch resolves:

- to donate £150 to Sheffield Save Our NHS to help cover the costs of organising and promoting a demonstration on Saturday 28th April against the planned closure of the Minor Injuries Unit and Walk In Centre
- to promote the demonstration and encourage all of our members to attend and promote where possible

6.2. Deborah Cobbett from the Sheffield Save our NHS Campaign expressed thanks and provided flyers for other campaign events. She asked for members in particular from the Faculty of Medicine Dentistry and Health to have input to the campaign.

7. AOB

7.1. The teach-outs from the strike period continue starting tomorrow in the Reindeer Pub at 16.15. Details of further teach-outs will follow.

7.2. An Extraordinary General Meeting is called for next Monday 15th April 13.00-14.00 for members to discuss the outcome of the consultative ballot and next steps.

7.3. Advance notice of the Annual General Meeting on 7th June 13.00-14.00 was given. All Committee membership and Branch Officer positions are open to election. Members were encouraged to get involved.

7.4. Members are asked to promote the Student Union boycott of the National Student Survey. Materials are available from the Student Union.