

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE USS – NATIONAL DISPUTES COMMITTEE

UCU Head Office, Carlow st., London

December 17th 2018 10.30-2.30

ATTENDEES:

Elected Members:

Bruce Baker (Northern)

Andrew Chitty (South East)

Deepa Govindarajan Driver (South) Chair

Jo Grady (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Gholam Khiabany (London)

Tim Wilson (Scotland)

Sue Abbot (Northern)

Standing Committees

Sam Morecroft (Anti-casualisation) by phone

Themesa Neckles (Disabled Members)

Ryan Prout (LGBT+) on behalf of the Chair

Officials

Matt Waddup (National Head of Policy)

Alan Scobbie (GS Office)

Apologies – Susanne Hakenbeck (Eastern and Home Counties), Rebecca Richards (West Midlands), Karen Evans (North West), Linda Moore (NI), Blaise Nkwenti-Azeh (Black Members), Themesa Neckles (Disabled Members), Douglas Chalmers (President-Elect, Observer)

Proceedings:

1. Following a welcome to all from the Chair, the meeting discussed the minutes from the meeting of 23rd November and agreed to amend them to include a new point 7 ("NDC agreed to request facilities time for Deepa Driver as Chair"), and a new point 8 ("NDC requested that documents possessed by UCU Central Office that are relevant to its deliberations be provided going forward.")

Matters arising:

2. The Chair updated on actions from the previous meetings. The statement agreed by the Committee had been sent to UCU members as requested. The Chair requested that it be sent out again to members. A request was made that in general given the importance of the USS dispute NDC communications should be given greater prominence in the Friday email.

The chair raised the issue of providing documents to the Committee, citing the example of a report produced for the SWG by First Actuarial. MW responded that while improvements can always be made in the flow of communications, the specific report concerned was provided to SWG on a confidential basis to support their negotiations and was for them to agree to share.

A wider discussion ensued about the respective remits of the NDC, SWG and HEC. NDC's role was to steer the dispute in line with the decisions of Conference. SWG's role was to negotiate on the union's behalf. HEC was the democratic body of oversight for USS matters. It was argued that NDC cannot play its role properly if not well informed, but against this MW pointed out that negotiations require confidentiality. DD requested that copies of any formal communications between UCU and UUK / USS should be shared with NDC immediately. MW agreed to try to further improve upward and downward feedback between the various constituent parts.

3. It was **agreed** that NDC would invite members of the SWG (as available) to attend their next meeting either in person or electronically. A request was specifically made to request national negotiators and trustees to attend, if possible.

USS response to member consultation on cost sharing:

4. The chair and others expressed concern about the dismissive response from USS to the consultation, and particularly the belittling approach to the responses from a large number members on the spurious grounds that it was coordinated by the USS Briefs group. Arising from discussion, it was agreed to formulate a condemning USS for its response to the consultation. Text to be agreed by email.

Updates on negotiations and related matters:

5. MW gave a report back on the current position, outlining the positions and interests of TPR, USS, UUK and UCU. There was a general discussion of strategy with reference to the timelines implied by the fresh '31 March 2018' valuation called by USS, the union's policy of no detriment and NDC's policy statement to the effect that members should be balloted on any proposed outcome which involved members paying either more contributions or receiving less benefits.

The Chair raised the issue of the letter from TPR which stated that the covenant was weaker than either USS or UCU and UUK believed. The chair also raised the concern cited in media reports that a constituent college of the University of Cambridge was actively discussing leaving USS. MW responded that the union strongly believed, based

on all the available evidence, that the covenant was strong and that this had been powerfully confirmed by JEP in its first report. Regarding the risk of sectionalisation, it was stated that while attempts to do this would be highly damaging both to the members concerned and to the institution and should be resisted, the impact this would have upon the overall health of the scheme was likely to be limited.

There was a discussion of the merits of possible legal action against USS on its policy of persisting with Test 1 and de-risking.

NDC **agreed** to urge branches to lobby Vice Chancellors and governing bodies to challenge aspects of the forthcoming 2018 valuation technical provisions consultation that do not fully implement the JEP recommendations.

Committee matters:

6. Following discussion, it was **confirmed to NDC** that members of the LGBT+ MSC were about to initiate a process to ensure a nominee to NDC. The Chair made NDC aware of her request to the LGBT+ committee chair that all members (including those formalised after the equalities conference) were aware of the call of the relevant NDC vacancy. Ryan Prout confirmed that he was the ad-hoc representative of the committee in his role as co-chair of the committee. It was agreed that until such time as the LGBT+ formal process for providing a member of the NDC was concluded (ideally 2 meetings), the LGBT+ ad hoc representative should have full voting rights.
7. The Chair requested that various updates be made to the NDC webpage.
8. It was **agreed** that the next meeting date would be Friday, 18 January.

Any other business:

9. There was no other business.