

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE USS – NATIONAL DISPUTES COMMITTEE

Held at the Space Centre Greys Inn Road London

Friday 8 February 2019

### **ATTENDEES**

#### **Elected Members:**

Bruce Baker (Northern)

Andrew Chitty (South East)

Deepa Govindarajan Driver (South) Chair

Jo Grady (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Gholam Khiabany (London)

Linda Moore (NI)

Karen Evans (North West)

Susanne Hakenbeck (Eastern and Home Counties)

#### **Standing Committees**

Ryan Prout (LGBT+)

Themesa Neckles (Disabled Members)

Megan Povey (Women Members)

#### **NDC participating by Skype**

Shalini Sharma (Black Members)

#### **Officials**

Paul Bridge (Head of HE)

#### **Present from the SWG**

Dennis Leech

Carlo Morelli (by Skype)

#### **Apologies**

Sam Morecroft (Anti-casualisation), Tim Wilson (Scotland), Rebecca Richards (NW), Douglas Chalmers (President-Elect, Observer)

### **PROCEEDINGS**

#### **Minutes**

A draft copy with amendments had been circulated via email to NDC members. Following a discussion, the minutes were AGREED with minor amendments.

#### **Matters arising**

Sue, Blaise, and Joao who have stood down were thanked for their work on the NDC.

Shalini, Megan and Ryan (as now elected) were formally welcomed.

Andrew Chitty (AC) updated the committee on various USS related documents which he had organised and that were in the public domain. AC was thanked for his work and it was AGREED that the link to the documents would appear on the NDC web page.

AC updated the NDC motion for branches and the feedback he had received to date. 5 branches had passed the motion: Keele, Sussex, Oxford, Warwick and Newcastle; however not all meetings were quorate. It was reported that the motion will be considered at GMs in Sheffield, Cardiff, Ulster and Cambridge. It was AGREED to send the motion to chairs and secretaries of regional and standing committees. It was AGREED that we would offer that NDC members could Skype into GMs to inform discussion (BB, DD, JG, AC). PB will communicate that to regional officials. NDC will send a text to go in a Friday email.

AC further commented that the web page was now in need of a review and reordering to deal with the volume of NDC documents. Following a discussion AC will write to Paul Bridge (PB) with suggested changes.

Some issues with the NDC email list were discussed. It was AGREED to request a spreadsheet with who is on the NDC email list and what they're representing. Addition of observers to the list should come through Deepa to confirm and be aware of who is on the list. It was AGREED that national negotiators should be on the list. Any other SWG members who wanted to be added would be welcome as observers – they are requested to please contact Deepa in the first instance.

Bruce Baker (BB) raised an issue with the formatting and positioning of the NDC motion as it appears on the web page. Following a discussion BB will write to PB with suggested changes.

The proposed NDC member survey was discussed. It was AGREED to park it at this time so as not to interfere with pay ballot and also as to get educational material out. It will be considered at a future meeting.

NDC discussed a multi stranded communication to branches and members covering the anniversary of the USS strikes, the recent USS briefs 11 key questions to ask document by Nick Hardy, the advertising of NDC members to speak or skype at branch meetings and other matters.

Christine Haswell (CH) had invited UCU-nominated USS trustees to attend. They could not make this date but could come to future ones. It was AGREED to extend the invitation to the independent trustees, and that we could eventually invite UUK-nominated trustees.

### **Update on negotiations**

Carlo Morelli (CM) updated on the latest developments covering at the JNC and a wide-ranging discussion followed.

CM commented on the USS's demand for contingency 'trigger contributions' that had been discussed at the recent JNC. CM also highlighted that this demand is also part of the 2018 TP consultation document. However, at both the JNC and in the consultation document no details are provided. CM further commented that no agreement had been reached between USS and UUK on the mechanism. USS had asked UUK to make proposals. The expectation is that UUK will need to consult on a proposal but none is agreed at this time.

CM referred to a proposed and un-agreed timeline that appeared in the last set of JNC papers which implied a modelling of benefit reductions as part of the negotiations. However, no details were suggested or illustrated. CM stated that only major benefit reductions, tantamount to the abolition of DB, could make a significant difference to contribution levels. CM confirmed the SWG had pushed back hard against both UUK and USS and restated our position of No Detriment and that any attempt to factor in benefit reductions would lead UCU to move to ballot members. CM advised that the proposed timeline did allow for the October contribution increases to be avoided if an agreement could be reached sometime between March and end of May, or even later. Concerns were expressed that if things came to a head in the summer UCU would be unable to take effective industrial action. SWG continued to push the JEP report as the basis for negotiation.

CM also reported on a sense that USS had initially suggested they could implement JEP in full in order to get UUK and UCU to accept the 2017 valuation based cost sharing arrangements but had then reneged on this when these had been confirmed.

He also mentioned that UUK had recently appointed reps from Liverpool and Cambridge to JNC, signifying a desire to represent bigger employers.

The issue of 'negative pledges' was also discussed.

### **NDC expansion**

The issue was raised of elections of post-92 reps to NDC so as to expand it to cover the pay equalities and casualisation dispute, as per recall Congress motion. PB reported that HEC is the appropriate body to implement this, but had not met since October as full committee. His recommendation was to have an election for the expansion positions. DD suggested that in an expanded committee USS could be discussed in the morning and then pay in the afternoon.

It was AGREED to request an update from HEC on this.

### **Critical accounting**

There was a discussion of the value of UCU, at branch or national level, conducting 'critical accounting' of universities' finances. AC also suggested that UCU should commission First Actuarial to investigate the issue of 'reliance risk' which figured largely in the 2018 TP consultation document. PB suggested that this had already been done.

### **Artistic production**

The recently circulated animations by BB depicting the strike were positively commented on by NDC and the artist, Lydia Wysocki, was thanked. We needed to set up conversations where experts on NDC could explain an issue to the artist who could then depict it. Other NDC members suggested similar initiatives were being offered by members in their patch. It was AGREED to commission an artist or artists and that BB would coordinate this.

### **Anniversary letter**

It was AGREED to draft a letter to all members marking the anniversary of the USS strikes, pointing out that the dispute is not over, urging members to vote in the pay dispute without confusing the two, inviting members to contact NDC with comments and questions, and including a template letter to send to employers on the present consultation, with 10 key proposals. Jo Grady (JG) will pull this together and send to PB for onward communication.

### **Annual Congress**

It was AGREED that NDC members should attend UCU Annual Congress as observers.

It was AGREED to submit the motion NDC had suggested to branches to Congress via HEC. Alternatively one of those branches that have passed it could send it to Congress, and other branches can pass related motions to add further elements (to be composited).

### **Next meetings**

It was AGREED that the next meetings will be Friday 8 March and Friday 5 April.

[End]