**JNC(UCU)/17/1/M**

**UCU Joint Negotiating Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting held at 2.00pm on 11 October 2017**

**in the Sussex House Committee room**

**Present:**

**University Management:** Stephen Shute (SS), Pro-Vice-Chancellor - Chair; Philip Harris (PH), Head of School; Sheila Gupta (SG), Director of HR.

**UCU representatives:** Chris Chatwin (CC), President; Roger Philips (RP), Rumy Hassan (RH); Charlotte Skeet (CS).

**In attendance:** Sarah Cox (SC) - Management Joint Secretary; Allan Spencer (RAS), Director of Finance (agenda item 4 only). Ade Philips (AP) UCU National Officer.

**1. Welcome, introductions & apologies for absence**

All present introduced themselves. Ade Philips was attending the JNC on behalf of Mike Moran. SS noted that the University currently had a vacancy for a Professional Services Director on the JNC committee following the departure of Sharon Jones.

**2. Minutes of the meetings held on 31 May 2017 (JNC(UCU)16/3/M)**

The draft minutes were approved.

**3. Matters arising**

**3.1 Workload Allocation Model (para 3.4)**

The action was to provide an update at the current JNC, and would be discussed at item 6 on the agenda.

**3.2 Reasonable adjustments panel and legal liability (para 3.5)**

This action had been completed: SC had provided UCU with a copy of the legal advice and UCU did not have any further queries on this issue.

**3.3 Independent exit interviews (para 3.6)**

It was agreed that this matter would be included in the planning meeting that would be discussed further at item 5 on the agenda.

**3.4 Request for increase in UCU remission time (para 3.7)**

The action was on UCU to provide further information supporting their request for increased facility time.

**ACTION – UCU to send the case/supporting information requested by the University for their request to increase facility time**

**3.5 Staff disciplinary procedure (para 6)**

This action had been completed: SC had sent UCU the University’s definition of violence.

1. **USS pension**

RAS said that USS had published their draft assumptions that would be used to calculate the USS Scheme deficit. The assumptions paper was in the public domain. The assumption set was slightly less prudent than the previous one from 2014. Using the draft assumptions, the Scheme deficit was calculated to be around £5 billion (this was less than it would have been if the previous assumption set had been used). Investment rates were likely to be depressed for the considerable future. If the scheme were not changed, future service contribution rates would have to go up by 6% and this would have to be split between employee and employer contributions. USS had now written to UUK and asked employers for their responses to the valuations. UUK were analysing the responses they had received from individual employers before preparing their overall response, which would be finalised this week.

RAS said that for this University, a 6% increase in contributions would mean an extra £6 million per year. It was important that employees and members understood the significance of the valuation for the future and what they had earned in their pension to date. Previous pensions savings would be protected from any changes made to the scheme for future contributions.

RAS said that the University had just engaged Mercers to deliver pension education training sessions to staff who were USS members and to explain what the changes meant for them. They would be putting forward neutral information, not a ‘management view’.

RAS said the USS pensions valuation would be with the pension regulator for agreement in June 2018. If a consultation were to take place, this would be likely to happen in the first quarter of 2018.

SG said it would be the University’s responsibility to consult with USS members at the University. SG noted that in terms of the University’s influence, Sussex staff made up less than 1% of costs going into USS. Other institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge made up a much larger proportion.

CC said that nationally UCU had taken a ballot on strike action. CC had heard that Southampton were pulling out of USS and starting their own scheme.

AP said UCU had heard that UUK employers were saying they would not consider paying more than 1% extra in contributions and that was what the UCU ballot was based on. Pension provision was an issue that was likely to make a high proportion of people take action.

CC said there had been a news item saying that the USS trustees had made irresponsible and risky investments and had lost money.

RAS said that USS investments were showing a pretty good return for the current environment. The factor that had a much larger effect on the scheme was that year on year, people were living significantly longer and therefore pensions were paid out for longer. Also, investment rates had been depressed for a number of years and were providing much lower returns since the financial crisis of 2008 . Large investments which were set up in the 1970s and 1980s with the expectation of a yearly return of 7-8%, and currently the return was far below that. This was one of the reasons why USS had had to look wider for more diverse investments. There was no concern amongst employers that USS had invested recklessly or that the returns on asset classes invested in were out of line with expectations. When investment rules were changed in the 1980s and 1990s some pension schemes made the costly decision to transfer to gilts and USS did not do so. This meant that USS was more exposed to the markets but did mean that some investments actually got some returns. Switching to low risk asset classes at this stage (‘de-risking’) would be expensive and unaffordable at present . The issues USS were dealing with were not unique to USS, they were being experienced by all defined benefit schemes.

1. **Joint JNC planning meeting**

SG said that the University were proposing to set up a separate forum outside of the individual JNCs for representatives of the three trade unions to come together to make a plan of work for the coming year. Both the Unions and the University had capacity issues and a number of projects/initiatives they would like to take forward. The purpose of the meeting would be to work in partnership to jointly agree priorities and identify what would be taken forward in the coming year, creating working groups to undertake the work and report progress back to the JNC as necessary. This would also help to make better use of time during the termly JNC meetings.

UCU agreed that this would be a good idea.

SG said that the suggestion would be put to Unite and Unison at their next CJNC and if they agreed, a meeting would be arranged.

**ACTION – HR to arrange a joint JNC planning meeting.**

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1. **Workload model**

SS gave a background to the work that had been undertaken on the Workload Allocation Model (WAM) prior to the last UCU JNC.

More recently, a contact had been signed with Simitive in June 2017 to provide the WAM software. Pilots were currently being undertaken in Psychology, HAHP, Global, LPS and BMEc. The new model and software would be used alongside the current School allocation mechanisms. A Project Manager and Project Board had been appointed, who would work closely with Simitive to configure their software. When complete the pilot would be reviewed and recommendations on next steps would be put forward to UEG and the wider University. It may be that the system was fully implemented in the pilot schools and piloted for the other Schools rather than being fully implemented across the University at the same time.

SS said that he would continue to talk to UCU about the outcomes of the pilot and recommendations for next steps. The process was slow, but there had been sensitivities to work through. Universities that had rushed this process had experienced difficulties. The principles of the new WAM were fairness and transparency. It was to be hoped that the adoption of the WAM would address some issues that UCU had had with academic workload in the past.

UCU raised the following points:

* The WAM should be piloted in the schools not involved to date, especially those with lab-based teaching.
* PhD students activity was very different in different schools
* Facility managers should be taken account of.

PH asked about timescales. SS said that the data entry and analysis of the pilot would take place by the end of December and the report would be produced by the end of January.

1. **Email and data protection (JNC(UCU)/17/1/1)**

CS said that the University’s policies on email and data protection were not easy to find and suggested that there was a need for a clear briefing to managers about on what basis and in what circumstances managers could access the emails of their staff. There should be safeguards, for example two people should be present when the email account was accessed.

SG said that managers were not able to access the emails of a member of their staff, it would be impossible to do so without that person’s username and password. It may be that ITS accessed email accounts in specific circumstances and with appropriate authorisation. The Director of ITS could provide more information about this and about the University policies that governed it.

**ACTION – SC to obtain information from ITS about policies/practices for accessing staff email accounts.**

1. **Proposed update to absence reporting policies (JNC(UCU)17/1/2)**

SG said that the University were proposing changes to the wording of absence reporting policies and guidance to better reflect UKVI statutory requirements. The proposed changes were set out in the accompanying papers.

UCU agreed the changes.

1. **Student Support Unit (SSU)**

Following discussion at the last JNC, UCU requested an update on the issues in the Student Support Unit.

SG said that Debra Green had now taken over management of this area and it appeared that the immediate staffing issues had been addressed. In the longer term, consideration was being given to the best way that students at the University could be supported.

1. **Tutors agreement**

UCU requested an update on progress with the Associate Tutors Working Group. SG said that currently the group was looking at improvements in the process in light of LEAN processes, from initiating a Tutor contract to processing their payment. Once the process had been addressed, the group would look at the wider issues that were causing concern. UCU would be updated on progress. The interim arrangements would continue for the coming academic year.

1. **Discretionary pay review**

SG said that the Discretionary Pay Review for grades 1-9 had been launched. The process had been slightly revised for the current year and copies of the procedure had been already sent to the unions. The guidance stated that managers should consider all directly reporting staff in their areas, regardless of their equality group and whether the members of staff had themselves requested that they were considered or submitted a case.

SG asked UCU to let her know if they had any queries on the process.

1. **Equal Pay**

UCU requested an update following the meeting with UCU in July on gender pay and the workshop with Ann Cummins in September on the Equal Pay Review.

SG said that some good ideas had been produced in the workshop and some areas for follow up had been identified. SG said that follow up meetings would be arranged late this term or early next term to discuss an action plan.

**ACTION – arrange joint union follow-up meeting to discuss equal pay issues and action plan.**

1. **Equality & Diversity Unit**

SG said that an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion unit was being set up in HR. Jackie Rymell would head up that unit and be supported by two roles. These roles were initially being advertised internally as a development opportunity, and staff could apply for the roles on a permanent basis or as a secondment.

CC asked if this unit would report to the two PVCs for equalities.

SG said not as a direct line management relationship but the PVCs would be involved in the appointment process for the new roles and for setting the agenda for the work of the unit and helping to move it forward.

1. **Probationary Procedure**

CC asked if there was an update on the revisions to the Probationary Procedure.

SG said that in her view rather than change the existing procedures that were currently used, the process as a whole needed significant review.

CC said that the procedure was inconsistent because one document said there was a final review 6 months before the end of the process whereas another document said something different.

SG suggested that this was an item which was considered at the planning discussion.

CC said he thought it should be looked at as a matter of urgency.

1. **Any other business**

None

1. **Date of next meeting**

21 February 2018, 2pm – 3.30pm

Sarah Cox

31 January 2018