

Response to Sally Hunt's comments on the ballot, 4 April 2018

Sally says: Defined Contribution is off the table

We say: This isn't actually true. As [Sam Marsh points out](#), the DC deal which caused this dispute is still formally speaking the 'default course for the USS trustee to follow'. And if UUK *claim* that DC is off the table, then this is only because of our tremendous strike action. Remember that the employers refused to come to the negotiating table only a matter of weeks ago and that it was as a result of our action that negotiation is back on the cards.

Sally says: A Guaranteed Pension

We say: This does not guarantee a living pension in retirement because it still holds out the possibility of significantly reduced benefits after retirement.

Sally says: A Joint Expert Panel and a Reassessment of the Valuation from last November

We say: this does not offer any guarantees about whether this valuation will be agreed by the trustee nor does it promise any transparency on how the valuation will be arrived at. We need a commitment to full transparency. Once again, to quote [Sam Marsh](#), all we're being presented with is 'a commitment to a *recommendation*, not a commitment to a guaranteed, broadly comparable pension.'

Sally says: comparability with TPS

We say: the term 'comparability' is too vague and does not guarantee a pension that we can live on in retirement. UUK used the term 'broadly comparable' in the original Defined Contribution offer that we wholeheartedly rejected in our successful ballot for strike action, and in the second offer that we rejected in March. The UUK cannot be trusted and unless guarantees are provided, we could end up with something worse than we have already rejected,

Sally says: The Pensions Regulator engagement

We say: that is not a compromise or a concession – that is the job of the regulator,

Sally says: Action won't be suspended until the consultation period is over

We say: UUK didn't even formally demand that we suspend our action although we know that they're desperate for us to do so. We need our action to continue because, in any negotiations with UUK, that is the only real guarantee that we have that a bad deal won't emerge,

Sally asks: Can we get more? The UUK will not accept a 'revise and resubmit' to secure a 'no detriment' clause

We say: First Sally incorrectly labelled it as 'review and resubmit' when it has always been referred to as 'revise and resubmit'. Then she collapsed the call for the offer to be revised by many branches with the call for a 'no detriment' clause from others. This does not represent the membership fairly. Many branches wanted greater guarantees prior to considering a formal offer. By posing the two positions as if they are one, she is forcing an 'either yes or no' situation which is not the position of many branches. We want UUK to revise their offer to take into account the guarantees outlined above. Also, although the wording of this offer is different, the substance of it is too close to the offer we have already rejected. What we are asking for is not that radical: it is simply a call for further guarantees (remembering this is not even a negotiated offer).

Sally says: If the employers misbehave in the negotiations we can challenge them again

We say: The employers have already shown that they are only prepared to 'behave' as a result of our action. The four weeks we have been out on strike is what forced them back to the negotiating table. Do we really want to be balloting for strike action again this time next year, having lost the momentum from our ongoing action? We say let's get the guarantees we need now. Not later.

If you vote YES to accept the proposal

The union will call off the action immediately without any guarantees when we know that it has been the strike action that has got us this far. Can you afford to trust UUK or the USS board to defend our interests?

Sally says: she will 'keep our legal strike mandate live until the proposal is formally noted at the USS board'. What does that mean? It means that if we vote 'yes' the inadequate offer from the employers becomes a formal 'proposal' to the USS. It means that we may well get a deal similar to, or even worse than, the one we have already rejected.

If you vote NO to reject the proposal

Our action continues and, if necessary, we would ballot again to extend our action into the autumn term. This puts further pressure on UUK to make a fair offer and provides the backing for UCU negotiators to get a deal that protects our pension. Voting NO does not necessarily mean that we demand a 'no detriment' clause as Sally Hunt's letter has suggested.

We urge you to VOTE NO as the only way to ensure we get the transparency, the guarantees and the commitment to a decent pension . Otherwise, we may be back in the same situation this time next year with 'comparable' levels of anxiety and not 'comparable' pensions.