

Dear [colleague]

I have had lots of messages from members about the USS ballot - some supportive of my position, others disagreeing and many wanting to discuss particular points before they make their mind up.

In particular I have been asked to say why I believe we should settle now rather than take further action. There are three main reasons:

First, on the basis of my direct discussions with UUK I believe that further concessions or clarifications are unlikely without a substantial increase in industrial action - above and beyond the fourteen days already taken and the nineteen further days of strikes that many members are due to take between now and the end of June.

Second, I believe that the union should bank the employers' new found commitment to a defined, guaranteed pension benefit of comparable quality to what we have now - it is a massive step forward from their previous position which was to end the guaranteed pension entirely.

Third, I believe that if we want to use the joint expert panel (JEP) conceded by the employers to influence the valuation we should move quickly while the regulatory space exists to do this.

All unions across the UK are fighting hard to defend pensions. However I am struggling to think of any other group of workers who have been able to achieve the transformed position that we have.

Three months ago we faced imposition of a proposal which would have ended the guaranteed pension for ever and we were a lone voice in the sector in opposition to the 'reckless prudence' pursued by USS at UUK's behest.

Now we have won a commitment to the guaranteed pension and an equal voice with the employers in a reopened discussion of the valuation of the fund. In my view that represents a significant opportunity.

This does not mean the future is risk free if members vote to accept. No agreement - however worded could achieve that. Strike action may be required again to hold the employers to their commitments and just as in January I will be the first to call for it if it is needed. The employers know that.

I have the greatest respect for all those members who have contacted me to discuss these issues including those with whom I have debated but who disagree with my views.

That debate - conducted in the right spirit - between people committed to the same ends is what makes UCU a great union to be part of.

The decision is yours.

Whatever your views thank you for taking part.

Sally Hunt
UCU general secretary