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University and College Union

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Professor Koen Lamberts
Chair, Employers Pension Forum USS Group
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Sally Hunt
UCU General Secretary
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Carlow Street
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Dear Koen and Sally

We are writing jointly on behalf of the University of Aberdeen and the Aberdeen branch of the University and College Union (Aberdeen UCU) to request Universities UK (UUK) and UCU to engage, as a matter of urgency, in meaningful negotiations regarding the future benefits structure of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and that, if it is felt helpful, to do so with the help of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas).

The University of Aberdeen remains committed to providing strong and sustainable pensions for its staff. Aberdeen UCU remains committed to protecting its members' pensions. Both parties recognise the challenges facing USS and believe that meaningful negotiations ought to be able to develop a solution that is mutually acceptable in terms of the three challenges of benefits, affordability and risk. As risk is likely to be a key part of any solution we suggest that it might be helpful to include the Pensions Regulator in the discussions.

We remain convinced that there is no need for USS to move away from having a significant defined benefit element. However, we recognise that there are challenges related to affordability and risk, and that all parties to the negotiations need to engage constructively in order to meet them.

The University of Aberdeen and Aberdeen UCU therefore urge that any solution needs to be marked by a commitment to maintain USS as a defined benefit pension scheme. So, we recommend strongly that any solution that involves changes to the current benefit structure should be accompanied by absolute clarity about the rules and circumstances under which there would be a return to the current benefit structure.

The University of Aberdeen and Aberdeen UCU further recognise that meaningful negotiations need to be conducted by two sides fully committed to the process and clear about the three challenges and the commitment mentioned above. That is why this joint open letter is being sent contemporaneously to UUK and to UCU.

Yours sincerely

Professor Sir Ian Diamond FBA FRSE FAcSS

Derek Dawson

cc Alistair Jarvis, Chief Executive, UUK