

Council: Tuesday 19th January 2021

Opposition Motion in the name of Cllr Arjun Mittra

Commonwealth and veterans' support

Council notes:

1. Commonwealth veterans have a long and proud history of service in the British military. From World War II to recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, Commonwealth veterans have served with distinction alongside British born veterans.
2. However, when their service is complete many are left with extortionate charges to remain in the UK. Commonwealth veterans are supposed to receive indefinite leave to remain in the UK however many veterans state they were not informed that they needed to make an immediate application to the Home Office for leave to remain in the UK when their service was complete. Many thought the process was automatic, but this is not the case.
3. Fees for indefinite leave to remain have also dramatically increased. Since 2015, fees have increased by nearly 127% from £1051 - £2381 with a family of four having to pay nearly £10000 to remain in the UK. This doesn't include associated legal fees that some who have struggled with immigration applications may need to pay. This has led to many facing spiralling debt and uncertain immigration status with the very real prospect of deportation. Whilst their applications are ongoing commonwealth veterans are also unable to seek employment or claim benefits.

Council believes:

1. This is poor reward for people persuaded to leave their countries in order to serve in the British armed forces and put their lives on the line in the service of this country.

Council resolves to:

1. Make Barnet's armed forces champions and lead officers aware of the difficulties experienced by commonwealth veterans and ensure that those who are currently experiencing problems, whether financial or immigration difficulties, are not disadvantaged whilst their applications are ongoing.
2. Council also asks the Leaders of all three political Groups to write to the Prime Minister, the minister of state for immigration, and the minister of state for veterans' affairs outlining Council's support for all commonwealth veterans who have served a minimum of 4 years to be granted automatic and free of charge right to remain in the UK and that any veteran who completes 12 years of service to be automatically given British Citizenship.
3. Council also asks the Leaders of all three political Groups to write to all three Barnet MPs to ask them to press the Government for a change in the legislation as set out above.

Under Full Council Procedure Rule 17.17: if my item is not dealt with by the end of the meeting, I ask that it be voted upon at the Council meeting.