

**Full Council – Wednesday 7th July 2021
Labour Group Motion
Commonwealth and Nepalese Veterans support**

Council notes, with pride, the many Merton residents whose families have served in our armed forces, and welcomes the borough's support for them at Armed Forces Day on 26 June 2021; recognises the incredible service of men and women from the Commonwealth and Nepal who have served and do serve in the UK Armed Forces, and also notes the unconscionable way so many of them and their families are being treated.

This council agrees with veterans who believe their right to stay in the UK should be awarded automatically on account of their service and notes that the recent government public consultation was insufficient in scope; with the only proposal being to offer a visa fee waiver after 12 years' service – an unduly high threshold that will alleviate costs for only a fraction of service personnel.

This council believes that only meaningful reform will deliver justice, and that means introducing a free and equitable route to citizenship that incorporates families, and – as we as a nation do not know how many have been affected by this injustice – believe that the government should establish a dedicated unit to assist veterans, similar to the Windrush Taskforce.

Council calls upon the Leader of the council to write to the Prime Minister, The Minister of State for Immigration, The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence People and Veterans, and our two local MPs, outlining this council's support for Commonwealth and Nepalese veterans, and asking them to press for a change in the legislation that affects those that have served our country so honourably.

Cllr Dennis Pearce Cllr Helena Dollimore Cllr Owen Pritchard Cllr Marsie Skeete

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