

Council 22 July 2021

Commonwealth Veterans

Labour Group to move:

Council notes that:

- 1 Commonwealth veterans have a long and proud history of service in the British military. From older conflicts such as World War II to more recent service such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, Commonwealth veterans have served with distinction alongside British-born veterans.
- 2 While serving across the Armed Forces, Commonwealth citizens are exempt from UK immigration controls. However, this exemption is removed as soon as they leave the military.
- 3 Personnel who have served for four years are eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain in the UK but must pay visa application fees that have risen from £155 to £2,389 since 2003. This figure does not include associated legal fees. Many Commonwealth veterans face spiralling debt and uncertain immigration status.
- 4 Whilst their applications are ongoing, Commonwealth veterans are unable to seek employment or claim benefits.
- 5 The Government has undertaken a consultation on proposals to waive fees for non-UK military personnel applying for indefinite leave to remain. The consultation ran for six weeks and closed on 7 July 2021.

Council believes that:

- 6 It is wrong that, unlike, their UK national colleagues, Commonwealth personnel and their families can only continue to live in the country they've served at significant financial cost. This is unfair and should end.

Council agrees therefore:

- 7 To make our lead officers aware of the difficulties experienced by Commonwealth veterans and to ensure that those who are currently experiencing financial or immigration problems, are not disadvantaged whilst their applications are ongoing.
- 8 To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Defence Secretary and the Home Secretary outlining this Council's support for all Commonwealth veterans who have served a minimum of 4 years being granted automatic and free of charge leave to remain in the UK and that any veteran who completes 12 years of service be automatically given British Citizenship.
- 9 To ask the Leader of the Council to write to our local MPs asking them to press the Government for a change in the legislation affecting those that have served diligently and honourably for this country.