

MOTION ON NOTICE

City Council 16 November 2020



Commonwealth Veterans Support

Commonwealth veterans have a long and proud history of service in the British Armed Forces. From conflicts during the Second World War to recent campaigns in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan, Commonwealth veterans have served with distinction alongside their UK-born compatriots, yet when their service is complete many face worrying uncertainty and extortionate charges to remain in the UK.

Commonwealth veterans are eligible to receive Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK, yet many veterans report that the service authorities failed to inform them that they needed to make an application to the Home Office after their service was complete. Many believed incorrectly that the process was automatic.

Since 2015 the cost for an individual application for ILR has increased by around 127% from £1051 to £2381 with a family of four having to pay close to £10,000 to remain in the UK. Some Commonwealth veterans who have struggled to make retrospective visa applications have also had to pay legal costs which has led to significant debt. While their applications are ongoing these veterans are unable to seek employment, claim benefits and are liable for the cost of NHS treatment. The uncertainty of their immigration status and the real threat of deportation on top of financial worries for these veterans and their families is unacceptable.

In consideration of the above, this Council resolves that;

1. Our Armed Forces Champion and Lead Officers are made aware of the difficulties experienced by Commonwealth Veterans and work to help ensure that any from Plymouth who are currently experiencing difficulties are not disadvantaged whilst their applications are ongoing.
2. The Leader of the Council will write to Kevin Foster (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Borders and Immigration) and Johnny Mercer (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence People and Veterans) outlining this Council's support for all Commonwealth veterans who have served a minimum of 4 years to be granted automatic Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK free of charge, and for any veteran who completes 12 years of service to be automatically offered UK Citizenship.

Proposer: Cllr Gareth Derrick

Signature "By email"

Seconder: Cllr Pauline Murphy

Signature "By email"