

COUNTY COUNCIL – 20 JULY 2023

NOTICE OF MOTION - AMENDED

Gurkha veterans' pensions and welfare

Proposer: Councillor A Crawford

Seconder: Councillor Andrew Joy

As one of the first County Councils to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and joint first holder of the MoD Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award, re-accredited in 2021, Council acknowledges its role in implementing the Armed Forces Covenant Duty as set out in the Armed Forces Act 2021 and passed into legislation in November 2022.

In doing so, Council is aware that a significant number of Gurkha veterans, who enlisted into the Brigade of Gurkhas between January 1948 and September 1993, have settled in Hampshire but now have deep concerns about their pensions and welfare provision.

As a consequence, in particular of relatively low pensions, many of those Gurkha veterans are living in challenging circumstances and are reliant on Pension Credit. The Covenant Duty encompasses Housing, Education and Healthcare. Council therefore recognises and acknowledges that pensions are out of scope of the Covenant Duty. Nevertheless, the Council, in close working partnership with its District, Borough and City Councils, and especially Rushmoor Borough Council with over 10% of their population identified as Nepali (including Gurkha) in the 2021 Census, has an exceptional record of excellence in addressing their welfare concerns.

Welfare issues, and pensions, have recently been the subjects of inter-governmental negotiations between the British Government and the Government of Nepal, involving representatives of Gurkha veterans.

Whilst the Council itself already fulfils its Armed Forces Covenant Duty to these Gurkha veterans, Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to the Government to urge further exploration of scope to resolve the Gurkha veterans' outstanding concerns with respect to pensions and other welfare issues, as this would be the most equitable way of recognising the unswerving loyalty, courage and sacrifice of these Gurkha veterans in service to the United Kingdom as soldiers in the British Army.

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