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2 September 2008

Chief Executive
West Dunbartonshire Council
Council Offices
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Your contact is: David Moore Chief Committee Administrator

Dear Chief Executive

Gurkha Rights

I am writing to draw your attention to a resolution on this matter passed at the last full Council meeting, the text of which I set out below. You will note that point (3) of the resolution involved writing to all other Councils in the United Kingdom to ask you to support the Campaign for Gurkha Rights.

Resolved:

"This Council notes and welcomes the opening in Reading of the first UK office of the United British-Gurkha Ex-Servicemen's Association.

This Council thanks the former Mayor of Reading, Cllr Chris Maskell, for hosting a reception during which representatives of the Gurkhas explained the background to the Campaign for Gurkha Rights to members of the Reading community.

This Council notes that Gurkhas have played an active front line part in the British Army's activities in times of war and peace for nearly 200 years. In this period approximately 300,000 have fought alongside United Kingdom soldiers, with 45,000 of them being either killed or wounded.

This Council notes that the Government announced in September 2004 a change in immigration rules that allowed Gurkhas who had served in the British Army to settle in the United Kingdom with their families.

This Council notes with concern however that this offer has only been extended to cover those Gurkhas who had served at least four years and been discharged after 1st July 1997.



This Council believes that, given the exceptional service they have given to the United Kingdom, Gurkhas and their families should be given fast track eligibility for either the right to remain or citizenship.

This Council:

- 1) Urges Reading M.P's to support Early Day Motions that seek to extend Gurkha rights.
- 2) Instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Local Government Association asking them to lobby the Government on this matter.
- 3) Instructs the Chief Executive to write to all other Councils in the United Kingdom asking them to support the Campaign for Gurkha Rights.
- 4) Instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister demanding that all retired Gurkhas who fought in the British Army, get the right to citizenship, as well as a fair deal on pensions.
- 5) Asks the Chief Executive to view sympathetically any request from Reading Gurkhas for a street collection in aid of Gurkhas living in Reading who are suffering financial hardship."

The resolution was passed unanimously, following a petition and presentation to full Council by members of the United British-Gurkha Ex-Servicemen's Association. This drew the Council's attention to examples of the difficulties faced by Gurkha ex-servicemen who, having served the Crown, have chosen to continue to live in the United Kingdom with their families. The main Gurkha barracks in the country is in north Hampshire, less than 20 miles from Reading.

One example of the difficulties faced is that, as Nepalese citizens, Gurkhas living in this country are not entitled to register to vote, as Nepal is not a Commonwealth country.

I should be grateful if you could consider taking action, as appropriate, to put the Campaign for Gurkha Rights before your Council. The following hyperlink to an article in The Times of 20 March 2008 will give you more information on the Campaign: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article3586931.ece>

I know that a number of authorities, like Reading, have already given active consideration to the Campaign. The Mayor of Reading, Councillor Peter Beard, has associated himself with the Campaign locally, and is particularly interested to know of other authorities who have taken action to support the Campaign, and if so, how. I should therefore be grateful if you could let me know of any action that you have already taken, or propose to take, about Gurkha Rights.

Yours sincerely



Head of Central Administration