

## **CHAIRMAN'S DIARY**

### **8 November 2011**

The Chair, Gen Sec, PR, Ramdhan Rai, Padam Rai and Meg Gurung attended the Council Meeting on Nepali Integration and a motion for equal pensions placed by the Lib Dem Councillors. The Tory Councillors did not support the motion while the Lab Councillors abstained from voting. The Chair will be writing to all the councillors expressing our views of the meeting.

### **10 November 2011**

The Chair, Kishor Shrestha and Chij Gurung visited the Gurkha Resources Restaurant project, which is positively taking shape.

### **23 November 2011 AM**

#### **British Gurkha Welfare Society meeting with Robert Buckland MP**

##### **Present**

Robert Buckland MP  
Chris Van Roon (Office of Robert Buckland MP)  
Tikendra Dewan (British Gurkha Welfare Society)  
Frances Powrie (The Whitehouse Consultancy)

##### **Overview of key issues discussed**

The issue of pensions was discussed, including the recent meeting with Andrew Robathan MP. Both CVR and RB emphasised that Gurkha pensions are not seen as a priority for the current Government, particularly given the other pressures on the MOD budget. Therefore, movement on this issue is unlikely during the current Parliament.

TD made the point that leaving the issue unresolved will have greater costs, including to other departments such the Department for Work and Pensions.



TD pointed out that making the Gurkha Welfare Trust office more mobile, rather than basing it in one place, could be beneficial, as it would lessen the extent to which recently arrived Gurkhas are compelled to concentrate in certain communities such as Rushmoor. RB was in agreement with this.

CVR pointed out that asking for extra outreach and support for Nepali families was likely to be more successful than asking for extra money for pensions. However, TD suggested that spending money now will not deal with the problem in the long term, and many veterans will become more expensive to care for as they get older. TD said that there would probably be a need for specific Gurkha care homes. The veterans are compelled to remain in the UK due to financial desperation and equal pension remains the ultimate answer.

There was some discussion of the need for statistics on how much Nepali migration has risen/fallen in recent years.

TD to survey choice of settlement if equal pensions were granted

**23 NOV 2011 PM**

### **Chair BGWS was invited to the launch of the Hindu Christian Forum**

The Archbishop of Canterbury and Sri Shruti Dharma Das Ji launched the Hindu Christian Forum at Lambeth Palace, at an event which featured addresses from Andrew Stunell MP, Baroness Richardson and Lord Popat.

In his address, the Archbishop said "The conversation of interfaith dialogue is always one where we look eagerly and expectantly for enrichment. We're not playing for victory, we're seeking understanding from one another... by learning the depth of one another's commitment and vision - dialogue and depth is what we all hope for."



He praised the launch of the Hindu Christian Forum and the role it will play in facilitating dialogue: "I believe that a dialogue is about work, real labour, but also about surprise and excitement, and it is with that vision in mind that I commend this forum to you, thank you for your support of it, and ask for your continuing prayers and solidarity with the work it will do in the future."

The Hindu Christian Forum has been formed by a group of Hindus and Christians who have been meeting together since 2001. It has become a national forum partly in response to the findings of the 'Bridges and Barriers to Hindu Christian Relations' Report which was carried

out by Dr Jessica Frazier of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies and funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government. In his address, the Archbishop described the report as a "very creative and stimulating piece of work, which provides an enormous resource for reflecting on how dialogue can be pursued, and how at the grassroots level it is to be understood and worked with."



**29 NOVEMBER 2011**

Meeting with the Aldershot Town Football Club Community Trust

The Chair had a meeting with the Aldershot Town Football Community Trust Chair General (retd) Malcolm Wood CBE, the Community Trust Manager Kirk Wheeler and his assistant Gavin. The Trust run programmes on behalf of the Football League Trust under the headings of sports participation, social integration, health, education and the environment in the Aldershot area. They have been doing some work amongst the Nepali community already, notably with Talevera and Connaught schools and in the Manor Park, Herons Wood, North Town locations. It also organised, along with Rushmoor Council, the football competition held at Manor Park in the summer which The Mayor attended and in which Nepali teams as well as Army teams participated. The Community Trust Manager, Kirk Wheeler, and fellow Trustees, would like to expand their work to help with social integration in Aldershot. Additionally the General also discussed a pure Gurkha Cadetship programme.



The Chair brought up the issue of supporting United Rushmoor initiative and an unofficial meeting for the future has been planned. The Chairman thanks Major Rudra Shahi for his initiative for the initial introduction between the two parties.

#### Grange Community Primary School



The Chair attended the Governors Meeting. (After note: The Chair is trawling for parents whose children go to this school to join the Governors Body)

#### Chair met the Mayor Aldershot with Sam Phillip



The meeting was to get a better understanding of the United Rushmoor and discuss future joint programmes.

**1 DEC 2011**

### Shadow Defence Minister and local Labour party delegation visit Gurkha Bhawan

The Shadow Defence Minister Kevan Jones MP, Mayor Keith Crawford, Cllr Keith Dibble, Leader Rushmoor Borough Council Labour Group, North Town ward Cllr Frank Rust, North town ward, Barry Jones - Labour Candidate Cherrywood ward 2012 elections, Les Taylor - Labour Candidate Cherrywood ward 2012 elections and Phil Collins - Labour Candidate - West Heath ward visited Gurkha Bhawan on 1 Dec 2011 at 1130 to discuss the current Gurkha issues.



The team were met by the Chair and BGWS members. The Chair stressed the fact that the Government is only concerned with a quick fix solution to the Gurkha migration problems disregarding equal pension which remains the ultimate answer. Kevin Jones highlighted the fact that this was a very difficult issue as there were thousands of British pensioners who left prior to Apr 75 with no pensions. The Chairman reiterated that BGWS was aware of this, however considering the Gurkha pensions there were other issues related to it which must be taken into consideration, a fact he felt justifies the demand.



He also highlighted the problems of the 1993 intake who were now made redundant. The discussion then moved to the migration problems. It can be summarised the meeting was short but very constructive. The Leader of the local Labour Group stated that he would be inviting the Chair to a local Labour Party meeting.

