
WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Don Bristow, Resource Management Portfolio

Responsible Director – Paul Wildsmith, Director of Corporate Services

Purpose of Report

1. This report proposes that Cabinet agree to the Council commemorating “Workers’ Memorial Day”, which takes place annually on 28th April.

Information and Analysis

2. “Workers’ Memorial Day” is a day of commemoration to remember those who have died or been injured at work and to campaign for better health and safety.
3. It was founded in Canada in 1984 by the Canadian Public Service Union (CUPE) and subsequently became a National Day of Mourning in Canada in 1991.
4. The day is now sponsored by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and locally by the Trades Union Congress (TUC).
5. Many Councils and other employers in the North East commemorate the day. However, Darlington Borough Council has not previously done so.
6. The Council is committed to health and safety in the workplace and has a good record of reducing accidents reportable to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and lost time as a result of workplace accidents year on year. However, two Darlington employees have died as a result of tragic accidents whilst at work, most recently a member of the Council’s Street Scene Team in a road traffic accident.
7. Commemorating the day would highlight the Council’s commitment to health and safety and show our respect for those who have died in the course of their work.
8. This year, 28th April falls on a non-working day (Saturday). UNISON would like to mark the day appropriately and has suggested that the Council could raise awareness by displaying posters and having articles in the Flyer and weekly communications bulletin beforehand (an article will appear in April’s edition of the Flyer). The Council could also fly the flag at half-mast over the Town Hall on the day.

9. UNISON is prepared to purchase 500 purple lapel ribbons for distribution in Council reception areas during week commencing 23rd April. This would work in a similar way to the 'Poppy Appeal', whereby people may make a donation and receive a purple lapel ribbon. Funds raised from this activity could then be donated to an appropriate health and safety charity, such as Great North Air Ambulance.
10. The Council could build on these foundations to develop a more comprehensive campaign in future years. For example, the Council may wish to hold a minute's silence when 28th April actually falls on a working day and consider some of the additional measures shown in paragraph 13 below that require more forward planning.

Outcome of Consultation

11. The request to commemorate Workers' Memorial Day was initially raised by UNISON at the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meeting on 17th October 2006.
12. Members of the JCC welcomed this as an opportunity to support and endorse health and safety awareness. As such, they agreed that the Council should start to do so from April 2007 and proposed that this be fully endorsed by Cabinet, following further consultation with Trades Unions, highlighted the following as options to commemorate the date :-
 - (a) raising awareness by displaying posters around council buildings and articles in 'The Flyer' and weekly Communications bulletin;
 - (b) flying the Union Jack at half-mast at the Town Hall;
 - (c) encouraging staff to wear purple 'forget-me-knot' lapel ribbons as a symbol of remembrance;
 - (d) having a formal one-minute silence;
 - (e) having a Book of Remembrance;
 - (f) planting a tree, displaying a plaque, or dedicating a piece of art or bench (any wording to be general as opposed to displaying actual names). This could also provide a focal point for future commemoration i.e. placing a wreath or flowers;
 - (g) having a non religious/humanist service for Darlington residents, employers, employees and trade unionists (similar to the Holocaust Day remembrance service);
 - (h) encouraging managers to undertake health and safety inspections of their work premises during the week incorporating 28th April;
 - (i) having stalls at Council premises to promote health and safety at work.

Legal Implications

13. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

14. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

15. The issues contained within this report represent a minor change to Council policy in that the report recommends that the Council start to commemorate Workers' Memorial Day and the Council has not done so previously.

Decision Deadline

16. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Recommendation

17. It is recommended that Cabinet:-
- (a) agree that the Council commemorate Workers' Memorial Day from 28th April 2007 onwards;
 - (b) raise awareness of the day this year by:-
 - (i) displaying posters and having articles in the Flyer and weekly communications bulletin beforehand;
 - (ii) flying the Union Jack at half-mast over the Town Hall on Saturday 28 April;
 - (iii) agreeing that UNISON make purple lapel ribbons available in Council reception areas during week commencing 23 April and that funds raised from this activity be donated to the Great North Air Ambulance;
 - (c) agree to the Council building on these foundations to develop a more comprehensive campaign in future years by considering some of the additional measures shown in paragraph 13 that require more forward planning.

Reasons

18. The recommendations are supported by the following reason:-

commemorating the day will highlight the Council's commitment to health and safety and show our respect for those who have died in the course of their work.

Paul Wildsmith
Director of Corporate Services

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Maggie Swinden : Extension 2218