

# NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

### HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES – S.REES

28<sup>th</sup> November 2016

#### Matter for Decision

**Wards Affected:** all wards

#### Dying to Work Voluntary Charter

##### 1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval for the Council to become a signatory to the 'Dying to Work' Charter.

##### 2. Background information

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) are asking organisations to sign up to a voluntary charter that sets out an agreed way in which their employees will be supported, protected and guided throughout their employment, following a terminal diagnosis.

The charter states the following:

- *We recognise that terminal illness requires support and understanding and not additional and avoidable stress and worry.*
- *Terminally ill workers will be secure in the knowledge that we will support them following their diagnosis and we recognise that, safe and reasonable work can help maintain dignity, offer a valuable distraction and can be therapeutic in itself.*
- *We will provide our employees with the security of work, peace of mind and the right to choose the best course of action for*

*themselves and their families which helps them through this challenging period with dignity and without undue financial loss.*

- *We support the TUC's Dying to Work campaign so that all employees battling terminal illness have adequate employment protection and have their death in service benefits protected for the loved ones they leave behind.*

Examples of organisations that have signed the charter to date are:

- Harrow Council
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Legal & General
- E-On
- Carillion

### **3. Implications for the Council**

The Council already strives to adopt a supportive and individual approach towards employees who receive the difficult news that they have a terminal illness and sadly this does affect a small number of employees every year.

The approach taken follows the employee's lead – so for example, some employees will want advice in relation to pension benefits and to be helped to take actions to secure the future position of family and other loved ones. Some employees want to continue to work for as long as possible and maintain a sense of normality, attending work when they feel well enough to do so, and flexibility in working practices helps support this. On the other hand, some employees want to resign from employment.

In 2015 / 2016, 8 employees died in service, although not all of these employees had been ill or in receipt of a terminal diagnosis. It does however give Members an indication that the potential group of employees who could be affected is a small group of employees, and that a commitment to the supportive approach set out in the charter is something that as a large employer we can accommodate.

If Members agree that the Council should become a signatory to the Charter, the TUC will arrange a public signing ceremony with follow up press releases. The logo of the Council will be used on the 'Dying to

Work' website and included in campaigning documents to encourage other signatories.

#### **4. Risk Management**

There is a risk to the Council if the Charter is adopted, but management actions taken with regard to the management of an employee with terminal illness are contrary to the Charter – this could result in bad publicity and / or employment tribunal action. This risk is low however, as the Council already adopts a supporting and bespoke approach. If the Charter is adopted, it will be publicised to employees, and reference to it will be included in the Council's Maximising Attendance at Work procedure, to ensure that it is brought to the attention of managers.

#### **5. Financial Impact**

There are no significant additional financial impacts from this proposal.

#### **6. Consultation**

The Joint Trade Unions placed this item on the agenda of the Council's Staff Council, with the request that Members consider signing up to the voluntary charter.

#### **7. Equality Impact Assessment**

This proposal will have a positive equality impact.

#### **8. Recommendation**

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members AGREE that the Council becomes a signatory to the 'Dying to Work' Voluntary Charter.

#### **FOR DECISION**

#### **9. Officer contact**

Sheenagh Rees, Head of Human Resources, Email: [s.rees5@npt.gov.uk](mailto:s.rees5@npt.gov.uk) or tel. 01639 763315

Diane Hopkins, Principal HR Manager, Email: [d.b.hopkins@npt.gov.uk](mailto:d.b.hopkins@npt.gov.uk)  
or tel: 01639 763012

## 10. **Appendices**

None

## 11. **List of Background Papers**

[www.dyingtowork.co.uk](http://www.dyingtowork.co.uk)