

Report to Cabinet

27 January 2022

By the Cabinet Member for Community Matters

DECISION REQUIRED



**Horsham
District
Council**

Not Exempt

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet members of our intent to publish a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement detailing our commitment to tackling this issue within our business activity and supply chain.

Recommendations

To recommend to Council:

- a) Approve the publication of the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Transparency Statement as attached at Appendix A.
- b) Delegate authority to the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to approve minor amendments and subsequent annual statements for publication.

Reasons for Recommendations

The adoption and publication of a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking statement is considered best practice and is likely to become a statutory requirement within the next 12 months.

The approval of the statement shows the commitment of Horsham District Council to tackle modern day slavery in the community and its supply chains, it also supports the principles set out in the Sustainable Procurement Charter which is used within our procurement processes.

Background Papers

Procurement Code
Sustainable Procurement Charter

Wards affected:

Contact: Jo Newton-Smith, Procurement Manager 01403 215147.

Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Modern Slavery Act 2015 applies to England and Wales and includes the offences of human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. The Act consolidated and simplified existing offences and establishes a legal duty under Section 52 for public authorities to notify the Home Office where there is reasonable grounds to believe a person may be a victim of modern slavery.
- 1.2 In 2015, the Home Office estimated that 13,000 people were subject to modern slavery in the United Kingdom, although the National Crime Agency estimated that the true figure is likely to be in the 'tens of thousands', with recent research by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) and Justice in Care in 2020, estimating there are at least 100,000 victims. Due to modern slavery being a 'hidden' crime along with barriers for victims to come forward and the systems used to record cases at a local and national level it is difficult to provide exact data and the number of cases is expected to be significantly higher. In the last 12 months Sussex Police have recorded 195 crimes of Modern Slavery, which includes trafficking
- 1.3 Many local cases involving young people occur through criminal exploitation and 'county lines' where local children are made to travel to other boroughs and counties to sell drugs. There are also cases of forced labour where individuals are made to work for little or no pay in various industries including construction sites, hospitality, cleaning services such as car washes and the beauty industry.
- 1.4 Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act states that every commercial organisation in the UK with a total annual turnover of £36m or more must produce a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Transparency Statement annually. Whilst this is not currently a mandatory requirement for local authorities many are doing so on a voluntary basis to demonstrate their commitment to tackling this issue. It is thought this will become a statutory requirement during 2021/22 when the law is amended to include reporting of public sector organisations.
- 1.5 Currently the statement must include "the steps the organisation is taking to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any of its supply chains, and in any part of its own business". The Act states that the Statement should include information about:
 - The organisations structure
 - Its policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking
 - Its due diligence processes in its business and supply chains
 - The training that has taken place and is available to staff
- 1.6 Appendix A contains the proposed Modern Slavery Statement for the Council. It covers the period from January 2022 until end March 2023 when the Statement will need to be reviewed and updated which must include progress on what actions have been taken.
- 1.7 Current guidance advises that the Statement must be approved and signed annually by executive leaders prior to publishing. This Statement will therefore be

updated annually for approval as per Recommendation 2.1 (b) before being signed by the Leader and Chief Executive and published.

- 1.8 The Statement has been drafted in association with the Community Services who work with partner organisations to tackle this issue within the community. The process has involved working with colleagues across Crawley Borough Council, Mid Sussex District Council and Mole Valley District Council who form part of the Shared Procurement Service. Best practice guidance was also used to inform the development of the Statement.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 The proposed model supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan priority - A strong, safe and healthy community.

3 Details

- 3.1 Modern Slavery is happening within the UK and within West Sussex. The Council has a duty to ensure that we safeguard our communities. By producing a Modern Slavery Statement and implementing its actions we can raise awareness of this crime and ensure that mitigating actions are taken to minimise the risks.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 If approved, the Statement will be published on the Councils website covering the period January 2022 until April 2023.

5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 To date consultation has taken place with Senior Leadership Team, Head of HR & OD, Head of Housing & Community Services.
- 5.2 Community & Wellbeing Policy Development Advisory Group will be consulted on this matter on 25th January 2022.
- 5.2 The Monitoring Officer and the Director of Corporate Resources have been consulted on the proposals and have had input into the report and proposals.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 Do nothing. It was felt that this was not an option, the Council will soon likely be required to publish a Statement by law. This is a model of best practice and supports the Councils Sustainable Procurement Charter commitments.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 There are no financial implications. There will be some resource implications on the delivery of the action plan, including providing appropriate training to staff and ensuring through contract management that we are monitoring the actions our suppliers are taking. The responsibility for taking forward the actions will sit with the Procurement team who will work closely with Community Services

8 Legal Consequences

- 8.1 Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act requires 'commercial organisations' to prepare a Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for each financial year. It is not, as yet, a statutory requirement for the Council because we are not a commercial organisation, however it is regarded as industry good practice. Parliament are currently considering a change to legislation and it is thought this will become a statutory requirement for local authorities during 2021/22 when the law is passed

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 There are no medium or high risks associated with the proposed approach.

10 Other Considerations

- 10.1 There is no significant impact caused by these proposals.