

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Cabinet 12 January 2022

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Transparency Statement

Report of the Head of Corporate Finance, **FIN/539**

1. Purpose

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

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Cabinet is recommended to:
- a) Approve the publication of the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Transparency Statement as attached at Appendix A.
 - b) Approve that the Leader of the Council be delegated the approval of minor amendments and subsequent annual statements for publication, in consultation with the Head of Legal, Governance and HR, Head of Community Services and Head of Corporate Finance.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The adoption and publication of a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Transparency Statement is considered best practice and is likely to become a statutory requirement within the next 12 months.
- 3.2 The approval of the statement shows the commitment of Crawley Borough Council to tackling modern day slavery in the community and in its supply chains. It also supports the principles set out in the Social Value Charter which is used within our procurement processes.

4. Background

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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.

- 4.3 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 and the beauty industry.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 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 organisation's 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.
- 4.6 Appendix A contains the proposed Statement for the Council. It covers the period from January 2022 until the end of March 2023 when the Statement will need to be reviewed and updated which must include progress on what actions have been taken.
- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 The Statement has been drafted in association with the Community Services team which works with partner organisations to tackle this issue within the community. The process has involved working with colleagues across Horsham District 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.

5. Description of Issue to be resolved

- 5.1 By producing the Statement it is hoped that there is greater transparency and awareness of modern slavery and human trafficking and the actions the Council is taking to eradicate it.
- 5.2 Producing a Statement gives a clear message to our supply chain of the importance of tackling this issue and our expectations of them to do the same.

6. Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation

- 6.1 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 Statement and implementing its actions we can raise awareness of this crime and ensure that mitigating actions are taken to minimise the risks.
- 6.2 The Statement also supports the Council's corporate priority to "create stronger communities", it also supports the Council's Social Value Charter ambitions to work with suppliers who are responsible and ethical employers.

7. Implications

- 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.
- 7.2 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 is 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.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 Procurement Code
- 8.2 Social Value Charter

Report author and contact officer: *Jo Newton-Smith, Procurement Manager, 01293 438363*