

Wednesday, 25 September 2024

Report of the Assistant Director - Partnerships

Modern Slavery Statement 2023/24

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

To endorse the Council's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2023/24

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Endorse the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2023/24 signed by the Chief Executive
2. Approve the publication of statement in accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015

Executive Summary

Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 imposes a legal duty on commercial organisations, which supply goods and/or services from or to the UK and have a global turnover above £36 million, to publish a slavery and human trafficking statement covering each financial year.

The legal duty does not specifically cover corporate bodies such as local authorities, however it is considered that publication is a matter of best practice.

The statement is due for publication by 30 September each year immediately following the end of the preceding financial year.

There are no financial or criminal penalties for failing to produce a slavery and human trafficking statement, although the Secretary of State can apply to the Court for an injunction to force an organisation to produce a statement.

Tamworth Borough Council adopts a zero-tolerance position on known violations of anti-human trafficking and anti-modern slavery laws and is included in Safeguarding policies and duties. We are committed to improving our practices and ensuring there is no modern slavery or human trafficking in any part of our business and in so far as is possible requiring our suppliers to hold similar ethos.

The council has a key role to play in tackling modern slavery, including in identifying and supporting victims and working in partnership locally and can be separated into four distinct areas:

- identification and referral of victims
- supporting victims – this can be through safeguarding children and adults with care and support needs and through housing/homelessness services
- community safety services and disruption activities
- ensuring that the supply chains councils procure from are free from modern slavery

The Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement (attached as Appendix 1) sets out the continuing council's actions to understand potential modern slavery risks related to its business and ongoing actions to ensure that there is no slavery or human tracking in its own business, and its supply chains and relates to actions and activities during the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and ongoing activities. Once endorsed it will be published on the Tamworth Borough Council website [Tamworth Borough Council Safeguarding](#).

Looking forward for 2024/25, the Council are committed to:

- Continuing commitment to attend the Staffordshire Modern Slavery Human Trafficking Tactical meeting to ensure crime trends are recognised, proactively organise action with multi-agency partners to tackle possible problems in the Tamworth area and respond to suspicions of Modern Slavery Human Trafficking.
- Identifying further training needs through the Salvation Army, Voice of Hope and Catch 22 for identified front line staff as appropriate.
- Raising awareness through the Tamworth Community Safety Partnership about County Lines (exploitation of vulnerable people) which is now recognised as a modern slavery human trafficking issue)
- Joint working with agencies of the Responsible Bodies Group (RBG) to identify and report modern slavery concerns which may be identified through ongoing programmed inspections of licenced or other premises.
- Continuing to seek reassurance via current training packages that staff remain up to date and have undergone relevant training
- Working with identified safeguarding champions in each Council service to ensure ongoing awareness
- Continuing to work with Service Managers to undertake relevant risk assessments as necessary with suppliers to ensure their understanding and compliance with the Modern Slavery Act
- Ensuring that Anti Slavery Week is promoted via relevant social media channels
- Monitor low level contract spends to identify contractors who are subject to Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Ensure that suppliers through framework agreements can produce their Modern Slavery Statements
- Ensure that the new Debarment List for suppliers who conduct offences under the Modern Slavery Act is checked following introduction of new Procurement Regulations in October 2024.
- Working with community, faith and business groups through community cohesion project to ensure understanding of modern slavery risks and where to report
- Reviewing the Council's Equality and Diversity policy

Options Considered

None

Resource Implications

Support of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 obligations is met from existing budget and staff resources through the Partnerships team.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

The publication of an annual Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement is a requirement of the Modern Slavery Act 2015

Equalities Implications

The statement seeks to ensure that persons at risk of, or subject to modern slavery are protected.

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

None

Background Information

Modern slavery is an international crime, affecting an estimated 49.6 million people around the world. It is a growing global issue that transcends age, gender and ethnicities. It includes victims who have been brought from overseas and vulnerable people in the UK, who are forced to illegally work against their will across many different sectors such as agriculture, hospitality, construction, retail and manufacturing.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 consolidates various offences relating to human trafficking and slavery. In broad terms:

- 'slavery' is where ownership is exercised over a person.
- 'servitude' involves coercion to oblige a person to provide services.
- 'Forced and compulsory labour' is where a person works or provides services on a non-voluntary basis under the threat of a penalty.
- 'Human trafficking' involves arranging or facilitating the travel of a person with a view to exploiting them.

Section 52 of the Act imposes a duty on public authorities, including district councils, to notify the Secretary of State of suspected victims of slavery or human trafficking.

Section 54 of the Act imposes a legal duty on organisations, which supply goods and/or services from or to the UK and have a global turnover above £36 million, to publish a slavery and human trafficking statement each financial year.

The Council engages in commercial activity (statutory and discretionary) and provides a range of services to residents, businesses and visitors. This includes waste collection and recycling, collection of council tax and business rates, housing, homeless support, parks and open spaces, planning and building control, street cleaning, promoting economic growth and regeneration, environmental health, leisure services, community safety and election administration. Services are delivered through a mixture of direct provision, commissioned services, contracted services, joint/shared services, and partnerships. Its annual turnover is greater than £36 million.

Report Author

Joanne Sands – Assistant Director Partnerships

List of Background Papers

Modern Slavery Act 2015

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Modern Slavery Statement 2023/24

This page is intentionally left blank