

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET – 6 FEBRUARY 2024  
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR (RESIDENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD)

MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking is a growing problem globally. It can take many forms including coercion, exploitation, deception and/or the trafficking of people for labour, sex, criminality, organ removal, marriage and servitude.
- 1.2 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is fully dedicated to tackling modern slavery and ensuring transparency in our procurement. We are committed to reporting on our business practices and supply chain as well as acting as a first responder and raising awareness of the issue in line with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- 1.3 In 2015, the Modern Slavery Act (s.54) introduced the obligation on certain businesses to publish an annual modern slavery statement and local councils are also being encouraged to publish one.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That Cabinet note, consider and approve the Council's Modern Slavery Statement in Appendix A.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking is a global problem and something that we, as a council are committed to tackling. Modern Slavery is when an individual is exploited by others, for personal or commercial gain. Whether tricked, coerced, or forced, they lose their freedom. This includes but is not limited to human trafficking.
- 3.2 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is fully dedicated to tackling modern slavery and ensuring transparency in procurement. We are committed to reporting on our business practices and supply chain as well as acting as a first responder and raising awareness of the issue in line with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- 3.3 The most common forms of modern slavery are:
  - **Human trafficking** – The use of violence, threats or coercion to transport, recruit or harbour people in order to exploit them for purposes such as forced prostitution, labour, criminality, marriage or organ removal
  - **Forced labour** - Any work or services people are forced to do against their will, usually under threat of punishment.

- **Debt bondage/bonded labour** - The world's most widespread form of slavery. People trapped in poverty borrow money and are forced to work to pay off the debt, losing control over both their employment conditions and the debt
- **Descent-based slavery** - (where people are born into slavery) A very old form of slavery, where people are treated as property, and their "slave" status has been passed down the maternal line
- **Child slavery** - When a child is exploited for someone else's gain. This can include child trafficking, child soldiers, child marriage and child domestic slavery.
- **Forced and early marriage** - When someone is married against their will and cannot leave. Most child marriages can be considered slavery.
- **Domestic servitude** - Domestic work and domestic servitude are not always slavery, and when properly regulated can be an important source of income for many people. However, when someone is working in another person's home, they may be particularly vulnerable to abuses, exploitation, and slavery, as they might be hidden from sight and lack legal protection.

3.4 In 2015, the Modern Slavery Act (s.54) introduced the obligation on certain businesses to publish an annual modern slavery statement. The aim of the statement is to encourage businesses to tackle issues of forced labour and human trafficking within their business and supply chains. Whilst local councils are currently under no obligation to publish statements in compliance with the Section 54 provision, councils are being encouraged to provide one by the Local Government Association. Councils are uniquely placed with the wide range of goods and services that we procure placing us at the forefront of the fight against modern slavery.

3.5 The Modern Slavery Statement will be published on our website and will be updated annually.

### **Implications**

#### **4 Legal Implication(s)**

4.1 Thought it is not a legal requirement for local authorities to prepare and published a modern slavery statement, it is consider good practice to do so and is encouraged by the Local Government Association.

#### **5 Financial Implication(s)**

5.1 There are no financial implications. The statement and the actions within it will be undertaken within existing budgets and resources.

#### **6 Risk Management Implications**

6.1 There are no known risks linked to the statement.

#### **7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)**

7.1 There are no known security and terrorism implications in relation to the statement.

#### **8 Procurement Implication(s)**

8.1 Our procurement processes are key to identifying and acting on any modern slavery issues.

**9 Climate Change Implication(s)**

9.1 There are no known climate change implications in relation to the statement.

**10 Human Resources Implication(s)**

10.1 Our recruitment processes are key to identifying and acting on any modern slavery issues.

**11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)**

11.1 Identifying, referring cases and tackling suspected cases of modern slavery is positive and seeking assistance for those that have been trafficked or exploited is critical and will positively impact on their health and wellbeing.

**12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

12.1 The statement will be published on the Council’s website and will emphasise our commitment to tackling this issue as a leading body in the community.

**13 Link to Corporate Priorities**

13.1 This project links directly to the corporate priority ‘A sense of community where people feel safe’ as the project aims to improve the safety and wellbeing of residents and their families.

**14 Equality and Diversity**

14.1 An EqIA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

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Appendix A – Welwyn Hatfield Modern Slavery Statement