

Notice of:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
Decision Number:	PH62/2022
Relevant Officer:	Antony Lockley, Director of Strategy and Assistant Chief Executive
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of The Council
Date of Decision:	6 October 2022

MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING STATEMENT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider Blackpool Council’s draft Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for 2021/22.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To adopt the 2021/22 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement attached at Appendix A on behalf of the Council.
- 2.2 To request the Group Company Secretary to raise the statement with all the Council’s wholly owned companies.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To ensure that the council is in a strong position to comply with the extension of Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to public bodies in England. The Modern Slavery and Human Tracking Statement outlines the council’s policies and procedures that have been put in place to raise awareness, mitigate against supporting those who may be involved in perpetrating slavery and identifying and helping those who may be victims of slavery and trafficking.
- 3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No
- 3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council’s approved budget? No

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 Not to adopt the statement. With the move to make production of the statement a legal requirement, this would leave the Council exposed to potential criticism on this sensitive topic.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: "Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience".

6.0 Background information

6.1 Modern slavery is an umbrella term, encompassing human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced labour.

- **Slavery:** Someone is in slavery if they are forced to work through mental or physical threat, owned or controlled by an 'employer', treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property' or are physically constrained or have restrictions placed on their freedom.
- **Servitude:** Servitude is similar to slavery, in that a person is under an obligation to provide a service which is imposed on them, but there is no element of ownership.
- **Forced Labour:** Forced work is defined as 'work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the person has not offered them voluntarily'.
- **Human trafficking:** This is when men, women and children are moved and forced into exploitation. The movement could be international but also within the country, from one city to another or even just a few streets.

There are a number of different types of exploitation that victims of modern slavery may be subjected to, and victims may experience more than one type of exploitation at the same time. The most common forms of exploitation are sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced criminality, organ harvesting, domestic servitude, debt bondage, forced marriage and financial exploitation. Anyone can become a victim of modern slavery, victims can be women, men, or children.

6.2 The Government's approach to tackling modern slavery has been shaped by a number of international laws, conventions and protocols which the UK has opted in to, ratified or is already bound by. In March 2015 the Coalition Government enacted the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which introduced a requirement for certain businesses to produce and publish a modern slavery statement on what they are doing to tackle modern slavery and trafficking in their supply chains.

6.3 The 2015 Act sets out a number of legal obligations that must be adhered to by local authorities. As such Blackpool Council has a duty to:

- Identify and refer modern slavery child victims and consenting adult victims through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).
- Notify the Home Secretary of adults who do not consent to enter the National Referral Mechanism. (There are different forms for the NRM for adults and children and another form for adults who do not consent, called the MS1 form.)
- Cooperate with the Commissioner, as stated by section 43 of the Act.

6.4 Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act requires organisations that provide goods and services which have a turnover of £36million or more per annum to publish a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement. This should be reviewed and updated each financial year. Previously, there has been a lack of clarity on whether Local Authorities should publish a statement. This has been clarified in a letter received by the Council on 11th February 2022, notifying us of the intention to extend the existing provisions to public bodies. The letter asks local authorities to consider submitting a backwards-looking statement covering 21/22 by 30th September 2022.

6.5 Blackpool Council owns a number of wholly owned companies which also provide services to a wide range of individuals who live and work in the town. Although these individually and collectively do not meet the turnover threshold, the forthcoming legislation suggests that these companies should also be included in any published statement issued by the local authority. The companies, with the exception of Enveco which did not exist at the time, have previously been notified of the Council's intent to produce a statement and have reported on their activity on the issue to the former Shareholder Advisory Board. Whilst none of the companies have raised issues with the statement, and many are reporting positive practice, the extent to which companies are reporting on this proposed activity is variable. Following approval, the Corporate Strategy and Delivery Team will work with companies to advise on the implications for their business and discuss activity.

6.6 Blackpool Council's duty to identify and protect those that may be subject to slavery and human trafficking applies to all aspects of the council's policies and working practices. As such the Commissioning and Procurement Strategy sets out how the authority will mitigate against obtaining services and goods from any provider who does not meet specified legal and moral criteria in relation to the treatment of their employees. This is also the case with previous decisions emphasising the council's commitment to paying a living wage to all employees, including those that work within our wholly owned companies, as well as our duty of care towards all residents of Blackpool.

6.7 The Council's Human Resources team has created a 'Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking' e-learning module on iPool. This 75 minute e-learning module has been developed to raise awareness of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, and to help staff recognize their role in identifying and reporting concerns. The module will be accessible to all relevant employees and the % of staff completing the 'Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking' module will be reported as a Key Performance Indicator to measure how effective Blackpool Council Staff are in identifying the signs of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

6.8 Due to the imminent deadline for voluntarily producing the 2021/22 statement, mechanisms will be put in place to engage relevant parties in the process of developing the statement for 2022/23.

Work will commence on the statement for 2022/23 in October 2022, with a view to publishing this early in the 2022/23 financial year in time for the expected deadline of September 2023.

6.9 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 Appendix A – Draft Blackpool Council's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2021/22

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 None.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 As outlined above.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 Not applicable.

15.0 Key decision information:

15.1 Is this a key decision? No

15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: not applicable.

15.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

15.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

16.0 Call-in information:

16.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

16.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed:

Date approved:

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1 None.

19.0 Executive decision:

19.1 The Leader of the Council agreed the recommendation as outlined above namely:

1. To adopt the 2021/22 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement attached at Appendix A on behalf of the Council.
2. To request the Group Company Secretary to raise the statement with all the Council's wholly owned companies.

20.0 Date of Decision:

20.1 6 October 2022

21.0 Reason(s) for decision:

21.1 To ensure that the council is in a strong position to comply with the extension of Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to public bodies in England. The Modern Slavery and Human Tracking Statement outlines the council's policies and procedures that have been put in place to raise awareness, mitigate against supporting those who may be involved in perpetrating slavery and identifying and helping those who may be victims of slavery and trafficking.

22.0 Date Decision published:

22.1 6 October 2022

23.0 Executive Members in attendance:

23.1

24.0 Call-in:

24.1

25.0 **Notes:**

25.1