

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 11 March 2020  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Gender Pay Gap

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present Scrutiny Committee comments concerning the Gender Pay Gap report
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Customer Focused Services
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	An Efficient and Effective Council
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Corporate Plan 2016 - 20
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

<b>Appendices</b>
None

### **Introduction and overview**

1. At its meeting on 03 March 2020, the Scrutiny Committee considered a report concerning the Gender Pay Gap period to 31 March 2019.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Customer Focused Services, for presenting the report and answering questions. The Committee would also like to thank Helen Bishop,

Head of Business Improvement, for compiling the report and supporting the meeting.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

3. Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services introduced the report which fulfilled a statutory requirement and drew attention to a mean gender pay gap of about 10%. The previous year's report had shown an almost negligible pay gap. The increase was accounted for by the separation of colleagues in Oxford Direct Services for the first time and who were not now included in the Council figures. In very broad terms, higher paid jobs were more likely to be held by men and women were more likely to work part time, both of which contributed to the gap. While the increase was regrettable, it compared favourably with an average pay gap elsewhere of about 18%. While some other authorities had a significantly smaller gap, this was probably attributable to the fact that they had not, like the Council, taken the step of setting up arms' length companies.
4. The pay gap calculation was partly determined with reference the "Partnership Payment" scheme. Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement, explained that this bonus payment was, like basic pay, determined on a pro-rata basis, which further contributed to the gap because of the high proportion of female staff working part time. This scheme had however now come to an end. The current pay deal was based on a percentage increase or fixed sum increase, designed to be of greater benefit to lower paid staff.
5. Members of the Committee noted the purpose of the Gender Pay Gap report to be a factual response to a legal obligation, and that the Council's response to tackling the issues within it had already been presented to the Committee and commented on by it as part of the Equalities Action Plan. Consequently, there was limited discussion relating to it.
6. In response to the report presented the Committee focused its questions primarily on issues around parental leave on future working hours and seniority, with the associated impacts on overall wages.
7. The Committee makes one recommendation.

### **The Impacts of Parental Leave**

8. As referenced above, the key driver of the gender pay gap at the Council was reported to be the number of men working full time versus the number of women, and the higher proportion of men amongst the higher pay grades.
9. One area picked up on by the Committee which directly touches on this issue is childcare. The preponderance of women with childcare roles is not limited to the post-natal period, but tends to continue throughout childhood. It is the view of the

Committee that career breaks, often followed by part-time working, perhaps in roles with less seniority but greater flexibility are exceedingly likely, particularly in combination, to have a negative impact on the earning-capacity of women at the Council.

10. The Committee noted with approval the number of ways in which the Council was already seeking to address this issue, including providing paternity leave beyond the statutory-minimum level, investing in technology to support a culture of working from home (to give working parents greater opportunities to work more, or at a higher level, should they wish), and the promotion of the Council's corporate attitude towards flexible working from the earliest parts of the recruitment process and throughout.
11. Despite the steps taken, the Council mirrors the national picture in having a very low take-up of shared parental leave. It is recognised that unless both parents work for the Council this may not directly impact on gender pay gap figures, although the effects of creating more opportunities for workers at lower grades to act up may do so. Regardless, it is the view of the Committee that the Council should be seeking to set an example in supporting the taking of shared parental leave. The Committee supports the efforts currently being made to ensure men and women have equal earnings potential, particularly in regards to the impact of childcare. However, the Committee would welcome greater communication around this to the workforce to ensure the existing approach taken by the Council is as effective as it can be.

**Recommendation 1: That the Council gives greater prominence to promoting male take-up of shared parental leave within its current and prospective workforce. A particular suggestion is the inclusion of articles within Council Matters by male staff who have taken shared parental leave on their experiences and the benefits they have encountered.**

### Further Consideration

8. The Council is under a legal duty to report on the Gender Pay Gap on an annual basis. Along with the opportunities afforded by scrutiny of the Council's Equalities Action Plan, it is not thought likely that more regular consideration will be necessary.

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**Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 03/03/2020 concerning the Gender Pay Gap report**

**Response provided by Cabinet Member Safer Communities and Customer Focused Services, Councillor Nigel Chapman**

<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Agree?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
<b>1) That the Council gives greater prominence to promoting male take-up of shared parental leave within its current and prospective workforce. A particular suggestion is the inclusion of articles within Council Matters by male staff who have taken shared parental leave on their experiences and the benefits they have encountered.</b>	Yes	The Council is happy to accommodate this recommendation