

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Employment Committee
Date:	16 April 2024
Subject:	2023 Gender Pay Gap Report
Chief Officer:	Stephen Brown
Contact Officer:	Christine Ford Diversity & Inclusion Lead
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	A- 2023 Gender Pay Gap Report

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report presents Committee Members with the 2023 Gender Pay Gap figures:

- There has been a change to both the mean and median pay gap from the previous year and women's average hourly earnings are more than men, (represented by a negative figure)
- In 2023 the mean gender pay gap was -7.8% (compared to 0.7% in 2022)
- In 2023 the median gender pay gap was -3% (compared to 0% in 2022)
- The council employs more women than men overall and in all pay quartiles apart from the Upper Middle quartile.
- The mean and median bonus pay gaps are 10% and 0%
- Full details are included in Appendix A

Recommendations:

1.2 The Committee is recommended to review and note the 2023 Gender Pay Gap Report.

1.3 Reason:

The council is committed to being an inclusive employer and to promoting equality within the workplace, as part of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Since 2017, there has been a statutory duty for the council to calculate and publish its gender pay gap annually.

2. Commissioner Review

The commissioners note the content of this report.

3. Report

Introductory paragraph

- 3.1 Regulations made under the Equality Act 2010 require specified bodies to publish gender pay gap information. The 2023 Gender Pay Gap Report reflects the council's gender pay gap using payroll data from the required snapshot date of 31 March 2023. It must be reported by 30 March 2024, both on the council's website and on the governments national [Gender Pay Gap Service](#). The gender pay gap is the difference in average hourly pay between all men and women in a workforce. It is different to *equal pay* – that is men and women being paid the same amount for the same or comparable work. It is unlawful to pay people differently for work of equal value because of their gender. The legislation requires us to look specifically at the mean and median average **hourly** pay rates, based on full-time equivalent salaries. The gap reported is the percentage difference between men and women – the gender pay gap. The mean and median gender bonus gap, the proportion of men and women receiving a bonus and the proportion of men and women in each pay quartile are also reported as part of the requirements. The figures only relate to directly employed staff (as per the reporting regulations) and do not include any interim or temporary staff.

Background

- 3.2 Nationally, the gender pay gap has been slowly declining over time. However, according to analysis conducted by the BBC, 79% of eligible employers who submitted their pay gaps on the reporting service in 2022, paid men more than women on average. From the reporting service submissions, the overall average median pay gap for all sectors in 2022 was 9.4%. It was slightly less for public sector institutions, at 8.9%. Only 13% of eligible employers who reported in 2022 had a negative gender pay gap. Analysis of the reported 2023 gender pay gap will be available later in the year.

In addition (and separate) to the government reporting service, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes research into the national gender pay gap, via an employer survey. In April 2023, the *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings* (ONS), calculated the gender pay gap for all employees (both full and part time) to be 14.3%. The ONS survey found the gap halved to 7.7% when looking at just those employees working full time only. It also found that age was a critical factor in the gender pay gap, with the gap increasing with age: for those full-time employees under 40 years of age it was 4.7%, for those aged 40-49 years it was 10.3%.

- 3.3 The council has consistently reported gender pay gap figures lower than the national average since reporting began in 2017. The council employs more female staff than male staff (approx 60:40) and there are more women than men in 3 of the 4 pay quartiles, including the top pay quartile. This is consistent with national employment trends in local government and is reflective of the wide range of job roles and services provided by a unitary authority. The council has also reported a negative median pay gap several times, although this is the first year the mean gender pay gap has been a negative figure. The mean average is much more influenced by outliers in the high or low end of the salary distribution. Whilst the whole workforce had been impacted by organisational change in 2020/2021 via the Transformation Programme, it has been senior leadership that has been the focus of reorganisation over the past 12-18 months. In 2023, the council still had the flat (and small) senior leadership model of the 2020 Transformation model, although this was starting to change. The appointment of

women to several senior executive posts would have impacted the mean average. .As the council continues its recovery journey, organisational change is likely to continue in the short to medium term and this is likely to cause our pay gap figures to fluctuate from year to year, until the workforce stabilises.

It is also important to acknowledge that the high level of temporary/interim workforce (currently c.25%), means that a significant number of posts are being covered by staff who are not included in the GPG calculations. As we recruit to more permanent positions, depending on the gender of those appointed we are again likely to see our GPG fluctuate in the short-term. The mean pay gap will also be affected by the expansion of more highly paid, senior management jobs than have been in previous structures. This is to accelerate and support the on-going recovery of the organisation.

3.4 It is positive that the gender pay gap has reduced from 2022 and that there is now a negative gender pay gap. The council remains committed to recruiting, retaining and supporting women at all levels in the workforce, and this can contribute to closing pay gaps, through removing hidden barriers and improving the experiences of women employees. Activities to support this throughout 2023 have included:

- Developing a thriving SBC Women's Network, which engages with HR and the senior leadership team to ensure women's voices in the organisation are heard and issues discussed. The network reviews HR policies and procedures, organises events and talks, and provides a safe space for colleagues to come together and discuss issues that affect them in the workplace.
- Launching the Menopause Cafe. Supported by the Women's Network, this informal group meets bi-monthly to raise awareness of the impacts of menopause in the workplace and provides peer-led support.
- Holding an initial Carer's Cafe, to support all colleagues who have caring responsibilities, and hope to develop this further in 2024.
- Continuing to update our HR policies and procedures to ensure they are fully inclusive and support gender equality, including a new Hybrid Working Policy and Flexible Working Policy.
- Reviewing and completely re-designing our recruitment practices to ensure that job descriptions, adverts and recruitment processes support applications from under-represented groups, including women. The implementation of the TALOS applicant tracking system will also support better equality monitoring of job applicants throughout the recruitment cycle.
- The operation of a transparent pay grade system, with all positions being subject to a strict job evaluation process.

3.5 To support gender equality we will:

- Continue to develop HR and recruitment data reporting processes and analytics, which we will use to support evidence-based interventions that promote inclusion in the workforce.
- Expand and improve the level of data we present in the Annual Workforce Equality Data Report, so we are transparent about workforce equality, including gender equality.
- Develop a specific workforce equality objective around building a diverse workforce that is representative of our local communities and improve collection of employee equalities data and use of HR data.

- Support the development of the SBC Women’s Network, Menopause Cafe, Carer’s Cafe and other staff network groups and ensure they are part of the culture-change and recovery process of the council.
- Ensure HR policies are routinely updated, inclusive and monitored effectively to support equality in the workplace.
- Conduct Equality Impact Assessments on all staff restructuring because of organisational change.

4. Implications of the Recommendation

4.1 Financial implications

There are no financial implications of the proposed action in terms of allocated budgets.

4.2 Legal implications

The Equality Act 2010 contains various duties in relation to workforce duties. This includes, but is not limited to, the public sector equality duty, the duty to have up to date equality objectives and to publish equality information. There is a specific duty to publish data on the gender pay gap. The Equality Act consolidated previous discrimination legislation and contains duties and responsibilities in relation to employment and work-related activities. There are specific duties in relation to equal pay between men and women. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate, victimise or harass based on protected characteristic and places positive duties on employers to make reasonable adjustments to employees who have a disability. Some duties apply in the recruitment process, as well as during employment. Whilst it is lawful to have policies to encourage and promote roles to specific protected groups, there are only limited circumstances when it would be appropriate to require a person with a specific protected characteristic, for example a requirement for a female care worker if the role involved intimate care tasks.

When collecting and reporting on workforce data, the Council must comply with its data protection duties. Data about a person’s protected characteristic, such as their ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion is classed as special category data under GDPR. This means that when collecting data, the Council must make sure their employees are aware of how the data will be used and how it will be kept safe and secure.

4.3 Risk management implications

Failure to publish gender pay gap information by the required deadline, risks legal challenge relating to non-compliance and potential investigation and intervention by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Failure to address the long-term causes of gender inequality in the workplace can reduce staff morale and engagement, and ultimately impact recruitment and retention. Longer term it may also increase the risk of indirect and direct discrimination claims.

4.4 Environmental implications

There are no anticipated environmental implications

4.5 *Equality implications*

The obligation for organisations to calculate and publish the differences between what women and men earn, on average, in their workplaces provides transparency and the council seeks to reduce the gaps where possible. It aims to promote inclusion and gender equality in terms of pay. No negative equality impacts are identified: recommendations to promote gender equality are likely to improve inclusion generally for all groups and will not disadvantage other protected characteristics. The council is not proposing any positive action strategies.

4.6 *Workforce implications*

The council is committed to being an inclusive and representative employer, promoting equality of opportunity for women and reducing the gender pay gap where possible. Closing the gender pay gap and taking actions to promote gender equality in the workplace is known to positively impact on recruitment and retention.

5. Background Papers

A - 2023 Gender Pay Gap Report