



Fenland District Council - Annual Equality Report 2023

Are we accessible to you?

We would like everyone to understand the work that we are undertaking on equality and diversity issues, and therefore to achieve this we would like to provide you with this information in an accessible format.

On request we will provide this report in alternative formats and languages.

To make a request please telephone 01354- 654321 or e-mail diversity@fenland.gov.uk or info@fenland.gov.uk

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Introduction

Fenland District Council (the Council) recognises the role it must play in advancing equality of opportunity locally, regionally, and nationally as a statutory organisation. As a large local employer and provider of a wide range of community facing services, the Council is at the centre of improving life opportunities for people who experience disadvantage and discrimination in Fenland.

This report gives a summary of some of the actions we have taken and the progress we have made on improving equality of opportunity; in the way we serve the people of Fenland, promote the diversity of the area and how we act as an employer. It also demonstrates how we undertake, integrate, and mainstream this approach into all our work, both as an employer and service provider.

Producing this information has also helped the Council identify the key issues affecting its service users and staff. This information has helped the Council to better inform the development of its services and to make them as effective and accessible as possible for everyone. This is achieved by carrying out equality analysis for all the Councils policies strategies, procedures, and functions to better understand the impact of the decisions we make on people with different protected characteristics and therefore enable the Council to scope services to make them accessible to all and plan services more effectively.

By gathering equality data and engaging with all our communities, we know that the main issues affecting people locally are community cohesion, housing, transport, inter-generational population, and access to services. This should be viewed in relation to local deprivation and the large inward flux of migrant workers, the rural nature of the area where residents live further away from key services than the regional average leading to cases of rural isolation, and fear of new emerging communities.

The Council acknowledges and recognises that there exist in society individuals and groups who face discrimination (whether intentional or unintentional) based on their background and personal circumstances. Further, that the unintended consequences of a policy or procedure may have an adverse impact on a particular group. This is particularly important at a time of significant reductions in public sector budgets and a cost-of-living crisis in a highly deprived area.

Like all public bodies we have a statutory general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. We also have specific legal duties; these include publishing employment information and reporting on how we are integrating equality into our work practices.

The Council is actively working towards fairness for all; that will enable everyone to maximise their life chances and be free from discrimination in a society that recognises and values the diversity within our district. We seek to create and maintain a District in which each person has an equal entitlement to quality services and employment opportunities irrespective of their race, religion or belief, disability, age, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, family circumstances or marital status. The Council values the strength that comes with difference, and the positive contribution that diversity brings to the district.

This work was first recognised in October 2009, when the Council attained *Excellent* status on the Customer Service Excellence Framework and, following annual inspections, this status has been reaccredited every year since. To maintain this the Council has to demonstrate its understanding of customer expectations and is meeting these by providing excellent customer services to all our community in meeting these.

In the Council's Business Plan which sets out the priorities for the Council and outlines how we will address the challenges ahead. The Business Plan is underpinned by the commitment to develop and support cohesive communities, and equality targets including:

Under the community's priority

- Use our housing powers to improve the condition of private rented homes and ensure they are safe, secure and **accessible**.

Under the environment priority:

- Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and **promoting social cohesion**:
 - **Support the Fenland Diverse Communities Forum to deliver the Fenland-wide Community Cohesion action plan.**

Under the quality organisation priority:

- **Meet our Public Sector Equality duty by delivering the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act and 1998 Human Rights Act through our core service delivery and publication of a statutory Annual Equality Report.**

Who we are?

We can only provide an effective service to our community if we recognise and understand the diversity that exists within our community, which in turn enables us to plan to meet their needs and address any concerns of our residents.

The Council covers a wide geographical area and is committed to delivering excellent services to all the district's community which is made up of a diverse range of individuals, groups, and communities, whilst continuously improving the way we promote equality, celebrate difference and diversity, and promote integration.

As part of our commitment, we seek to collect relevant information about our service users and our communities. This information helps us to understand the makeup of our community, and then we can engage to see if we are meeting service user needs and see if there are any areas where we can improve the services we offer.

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) replaced and simplified previous anti-discriminatory laws with a single piece of legislation. It harmonised the law and removed inconsistencies which made it easier for people and organisations to understand and comply with it. Additionally, it also strengthened the law in important ways, to help tackle discrimination and inequality.

The specific duties of the Act require the Council, as a public Authority, to publish information showing its compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually and to set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years.

This document publishes information which demonstrates that the Council has due regard to the need to: -

- **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Equality, equity of outcomes and fairness underpin our work, and helps to build the culture, and ethos of the Council at all levels. Despite the challenging economy and unique health challenges/ circumstances that we face we have continued to strive to achieve fairness in all our services and in all our activities.

Updating the Annual Equality Report alongside our core Customer Service excellence accreditation work is one of the ways in which the Council highlights the extent to which it is meeting its obligations and responsibilities. It tells a lot about our progress in relation to the key equality objectives that the Council had set for itself, but it is not the whole story. Many achievements have been made via informed decision making, on issues that affect the broader well-being of our community and particularly amongst those who faced disadvantage through the promotion of our equality priorities embedded in the Council's Business Plan.

In this document we outline the issues and activities that have had a greater significance to the Council's progress in promoting greater equality as well as how we met the Council's responsibilities under the public sector duties contained within the Equality Act during the last financial year

This update also provides information on the services we focussed on last year as well as giving examples of key areas of our work via case studies in line with the commitment made under our equality objectives.

Our Demographic data

Fenland has strong community spirit and pride in its heritage. There are 102,500 people living in the Fenland District (ONS: 2021), which covers 211 square miles within North Cambridgeshire. Over 70% of residents live within our four market towns of Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech. Our rural landscape is home to 29 villages and attracts visitors from all parts of the UK. Fenland has the lowest house prices in Cambridgeshire, with the average house priced at £239,184 (UK HPI May 2022); 23% less than the national average. This, along with plentiful commercial land and proximity to large urban centres such as Cambridge and Peterborough, contributes to Fenland's rapid population growth. By 2041, it is expected that our population will have increased by 23% to 126,160 (ONS: 2020). As outlined within this plan, we have plans in place to maximise the positive opportunities that growth could bring.

Our population is getting older. 30,000 residents (29%) are aged over 60; above average compared to Cambridgeshire and the UK (ONS: 2021). Alongside partners, we are working to enable residents to access the support they need to live happily, healthily, and independently. We also face challenges around deprivation, particularly around education and health. Fenland is ranked 80/317 of all the local authorities nationally, where 1 is most deprived (Meaning Fenland is the 237th least deprived district out of the 317 English Local Authorities) Nevertheless, we continue to work closely with other organisations to positively overcome these challenges.

The state of Fenland's health as of 17 November 2022 is identified in the Office for National Statistic's 2021 Census data.

The health of people living in Fenland has improved in the past five years, but it is still below average.

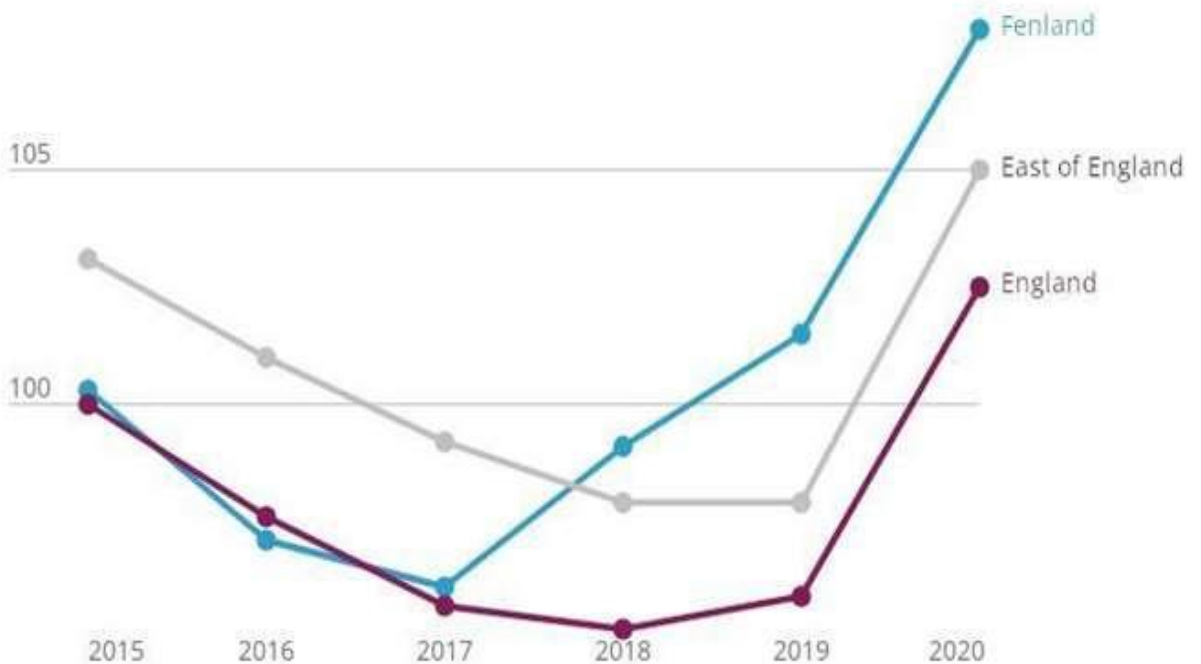
This overall score is made up of measures in different categories, called domains and subdomains. These measures include physical and mental health conditions like diabetes or anxiety, local unemployment, road safety, and behaviours like healthy eating.

This score can show whether health in a local area is improving. The Health Index score has a baseline of 100, which represents England's health in 2015. A score higher than 100 means that an area has better health for that measure than was average in 2015, lower than 100 means worse health than the 2015 average.

Fenland's overall score was 95.1 up 3.4 points on the previous year.

Fenland's Health Index value for "crime" improved by 7.7 points in the five years between 2015 and 2020

Health Index values for the "crime" subdomain, Fenland, the East of England and England, 2015 to 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Health Index for England

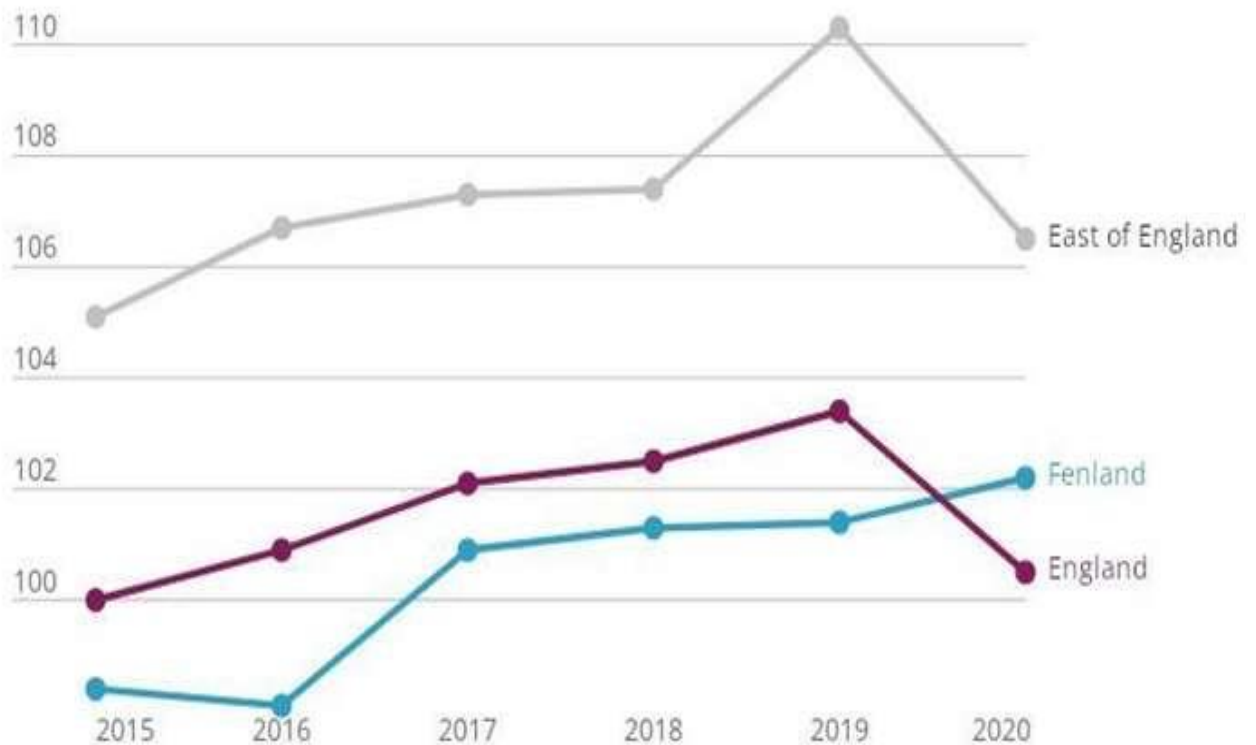
The top measure for health in Fenland was 'living conditions' with a score of 109.6. This area looks at air pollution, household overcrowding, noise complaints, road safety and rough sleeping.

The second highest score was 'access to green space' while the worst score was for 'physiological risk factors'.

Fenland's lowest indicator score was for overweight and obesity in adults which was 76.6 that is down 5.6 points.

Fenland's Health Index value for "economic and working conditions" improved by 0.7 points between 2019 and 2020

Health Index values for the "economic and working conditions" subdomain, Fenland, the East of England and England, 2015 to 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Health Index for England

People are also less happy than they were with the score dropping 12.4 points from 94.1 in 2019 to 82.2 in 2020.

The index for smoking, pupil absences, distances to sports and leisure facilities and sedentary behaviour barely changed between 2019 and 2020.

But there were worsening scores for cancer, life satisfaction, happiness, suicides and young people in education, employment or apprenticeships.

Scores for diabetes and GP appointments improved, as did job related training, air pollution and feelings of anxiety.

Fenland's score for health relating to 'access to green space' is better than the score for England as a whole. The score is 108.2 in our area, for the East of England it is 101.1 while England has a score of 99.9.

Fenland's score puts it in the top 25% of local authority areas across England for this subdomain. Cambridgeshire Insight provides updated information [Economy – Interactive Reports](#)

Equality Data – Hate Crime Reports

Hate crimes and incidents are reported either via Cambridgeshire Police, local reporting centres or the True Vision online reporting system. Most of the reports come via our community/ community reporting centres. Data is crossed checked by the Police to ensure that all reports are just counted once.

During April 2021- December 2022 there were 114 reported hate related crimes. There were more reports of incidents, but once initial investigations were undertaken these figures were filtered to actual crimes that needed investigation. Reports vary from verbal abuse to actual bodily harm.

Equality Data – Domestic Abuse

Police incidents of domestic abuse show

- The number of incidents in the last 12 months was **1399**
- The % of these incidents that related to females? **67.4%**
- Are these an increase or decrease over the previous 12 months? Decrease of **1.8%**
- The % of these incidents that relate to BAME victims? **2.4%**
- Are these figures an increase or decrease over the previous 12 months? Increase of **1.8%**
- % of domestic abuse victim aged between 16-18? **5.6%**
- % of people aged over 55? **12.4%**

To address these issues:

The Community Safety Partnership are engaging in the delivery of Work Force Development sessions linked to Domestic Abuse for frontline professionals and volunteers who work across Fenland. Improved awareness of domestic abuse relating to signs of abuse, signposting and referral routes

Work alongside the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership to improve the community's awareness of Domestic Abuse and to better understand the signs, support, reporting and referral options.

In doing this they hope to improve the community understanding of Domestic Abuse and increase the confidence in people to report and/or seek support.

The council's Housing Options Team is undertaking an accreditation in Domestic Abuse known as Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA).

The accreditation is independently assessed and covers the following areas:

- Policies and procedures
- Staff development and support
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Safety-led case management
- Survivor lead support
- Intersectional and anti-racist practice
- Perpetrator accountability
- Publicity and awareness raising

The focus of the accreditation is around the housing service and linking in with broader teams, including Community Safety, Human Resources, and our outward facing services.

The accreditation requires us to evidence against all the criteria within the broad headings above.

Context

Every year we set out our ambitions and priorities for the coming year. We outline what we want to achieve and how we intend to do it – with people always at the forefront of our minds.

Residents, visitors, employees, employers, our workforce – people - are at the heart of everything we do, no matter how we plan for the years ahead. The outcomes we focus on, the actions we will deliver through working collaboratively with our partners and communities are what change peoples' lives for the better and for the long-term.

Working with partners we help to improve opportunities for everyone and make Fenland an even better place to live, work and raise a family. During the past few years, we have made significant progress towards unlocking Fenland's potential, raising aspirations, improving public services, and securing inward investment to help our communities grow and strengthen.

Fenland continues to experience deprivation that affects peoples' quality of life, their health and even their life expectancy. But if getting through the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we work better when we are standing together. The pandemic has shown us what is possible when public bodies, businesses and communities work together with a common aim.

In this report you will see a series of actions that have started and will support this work, through continued collaboration with our partners. We are also progressing key town centre regeneration projects, delivering major transport and connectivity schemes, transforming our council services, protecting our environment, and identifying further investment opportunities. Alongside the ambitions and priorities which will underpin all the work of our members and senior leadership team, there's lots of opportunities to look forward to. Challenges lie ahead, no doubt about it, but there is much locally to be proud of and we're confident we can deliver for the people of Fenland.

Despite the highly challenging issues caused by the pandemic and financial circumstances that the public sector is operating within, the Council has still been able to make tangible progress in many areas of its the Equality Objectives, often through partnership working, harnessing local adaptability, and integrating its work to develop a coherent approach in delivering its priorities to the community. The equality priorities that the Council have set, in recognising that there would be future broader impacts upon services and communities because of the current austerity measures have gone some way through the budget development process to limit these impacts although of course it cannot fully eliminate them.

The Council is also working with Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) and disadvantaged people via the wider 'Diverse Communities Forum' a local partnership involving statutory, third sector and faith groups to successfully tackle, amongst other things, migration issues affecting local people including homelessness, overcrowding, poor housing conditions, modern day slavery, discrimination, and street drinking. This has a close interface with the statutory work of Fenland Community Safety Partnership.

The Equality Duty -The Equality Act 2010 – (the Act)

The Act places a statutory duty upon Local Authorities to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work in developing policy, in delivering services and in relation to their employees. The Act requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

The Act also makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a 'protected characteristic'. The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

To summarise the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council as a local authority to

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Consider the diverse needs of the individuals they serve, minimising disadvantage and ensuring the inclusion of under-represented groups.
- Ensure that those organisations carrying out duties on its behalf also comply with this duty.
- Base their policies, procedures and other actions on sound evidence and research around the needs of their communities³.

Our Approach to Equality

Our corporate approach is to ensure equality considerations are mainstreamed into key business drivers, such as the budget setting process, procurement, and our approach to delivering customer services. We do this by developing related actions that are mainstreamed into the relevant strategies and plans, which shape our organisational approach in each of these areas, thus ensuring equality is integral to our approach and is owned across the Council.

We are committed to providing high quality services that are customer focused. These services will be accessible, sensitive, and responsive to the diverse needs of all individuals, families, and communities. To this end we are continuing to collect equality related data for the services we deliver. Over time, we intend to collect even more information and to strengthen the collection of equality related data across the council. We will use this data to inform service planning and development, seeking to continually improve our performance over time.

The Council as an Employer

Equality monitoring information is collected by the Human Resources (HR) team and stored on the Council's payroll and HR information system. The information is requested at the recruitment stage and regularly updated.

The Council encourages all employees to provide this information and a reminder to update this information is sent out to all employees at regular stages to update the information held.

As at January 2023 the Council employed 363 people.

The monitoring of cases for grievances, disciplinary and dignity at work show no indication of discrimination involving any equality strand. Our relatively low level of grievances reflects the Council's approach in resolving issues wherever possible, informally at local level before they escalate.

Figures have been collected for all the equality strands and analysed. Those for sexual orientation and gender reassignment have not been published because of the low number of people this relates to.

There are effective communication and consultation mechanisms in place at all levels and services within the Council to ensure that the workforce is fully consulted on and informed about any issues that could concern or affect them. The processes employed within the Council to ensure the effective and ongoing communication between Corporate Management Team, managers, supervisors, employees, and trade union representatives are detailed within this document. Any issues regarding restructures, substantial changes to roles, as well as any new initiatives/legislation affecting the function of a service are clearly communicated and consulted upon from inception with all appropriate groups. A report is then made to the Council's Audit and Risk Management sub-committee (formerly known as Staff (Committee) to consider and agreed recommendations are then implemented.

Consultation is characterised by joint discussions with all staff on any/ all service level operational issues, which are conducted on an informal and regular basis; often taking place as part of regular individual, team and/or service meetings along with service plan development workshops.

Consultation at an organisational level occurs at regular scheduled Management, Trade Union, and Staff Partnership (MTSP) meetings. This group is comprised of management, trade union and staff elected representatives. These meetings cover corporate and strategic issues, as well as any staff and/ or service level issues that may need to be discussed. They are held generally monthly (or more frequently if specific meetings are needed), including meetings between trade union officials, the Council's Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development, and the Traveller & Diversity Manager.

This framework facilitates the information and consultation process at all levels with the workforce and trade unions and is so structured and designed to provide an inclusive and consistent approach throughout the Council. Whilst structure is important, it is recognised that there will, at times, be a need for flexibility in approach, and this should be discussed and jointly agreed in each case.

The Council also works to Core Competencies which cover:

- Customer Focus
- Effective Communications
- Teamwork and Co-operation

- Respect & Dignity for all
- Leading, Managing and Responding to Change and Management competencies:
- Coaching and Developing People.
- Effective Leadership.
- Managing People.
- Managing Performance.
- Strategic Awareness.

These competencies link to the Council's Core Values which are:

- Value, Respect and Dignity for all.
- Adopt a positive ONE TEAM approach.
- Listen, talk, and act.
- Understand, learn, and improve.
- Encourage and Support.
- Service Excellence.

All staff and members of the Council are aware of what is expected from them as either Council employees or those representing the Council. To enhance and reinforce their understanding of this the Council has developed and updates its Employee Handbook. This is promoted internally and is available on the intranet.

Staff Groups

The Council has an established **Equality Service Champions Group**. This group provides a forum for staff working on equality issues within their own service area to develop their personal knowledge, gain support, share information, and good practice and promote equality and diversity awareness and practices across the Council.

When developing policies and making decisions, the Council will make sure that the decision makers are aware of the findings of the associated equality impact assessment that have been completed and know how any change to an existing/ new policy, procedure or their implementation could affect people with any of the protected characteristics. To do this the Council places a strong emphasis on equality analysis. If the change might cause difficulties for people with a protected characteristic/s, and/or if any issues are identified then we will do our best to find ways to reduce or remove any identified adverse impact. If we can't then we should think carefully about whether we need to make the change to achieve a legitimate aim.

The Group is coordinated by the Council's Traveller & Diversity Manager who coaches and mentors' equality champions to enable them to undertake their roles which then enables them to carry out the analysis of all findings.

This group is long established and meets on a regular basis. It also provides peer support and a pool of expertise and experience to develop good practice to enable all members to review policies and projects with regards to identify any equality analysis/ issues through a Customer (Equality) Impact Assessment.

What is a Customer (Equality) Impact Assessment?

A Customer Impact Assessment (CEIA) is a process that helps us put equality, diversity, and inclusion, which is at the heart of everything we do. It is an established and credible tool for demonstrating compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is a statutory requirement of all public authorities. By completing this it ensures that our policies and procedures, which are at the core of everything we do are compliant with the Equality Act.

By taking this evidence-based approach it is designed to help the Council ensure that its policies, practices, events, and decision-making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation.

A CEIA should be carried out when there are any proposed changes to a policy. Within the CEIA, any reference to 'policy' covers the full range of functions, activities, and decisions for which the Council is responsible – essentially everything we do. It includes both current policies and those under development, as well as organisational change.

If a CEIA is required, all services are required to complete it during the initial stages of policy development, so that they can implement proactive solutions early on. This will allow sufficient time for the policy to be adjusted to mitigate any equality-related impacts.

The CEIA is based on evidence of impact and relevance. This is collected on an evidence matrix which provides the starting point for the consideration of the potential impacts on anybody with protected characteristics, cross referenced with some key areas where impacts might be discernible.

The Champions recognise that the matrix is intended to be a starting point for consideration of any potential impacts defined within the key protected characteristics. Other sources of data should also be considered.

These might include further detail on the following:

- Data on populations in need
- Data on service uptake/ access
- Data on quality/ outcomes
- Research evidence/ literature review
- Findings from stakeholder consultation
- CEIAs on similar policies or findings of Assessments by other authorities

Staff Self – Service

We have encouraged employees to update their personal profiles and update their records via our self-service HR database. We hope this will help us provide more accurate data and analysis on existing staff to inform our workforce analysis. More detailed information is provided in an attached appendix.

Equality & Diversity training

The Council offers all staff and members the opportunity to refresh and update their equalities knowledge and skill set via training courses.

A comprehensive training programme for customer facing staff is run annually and is open to anyone within the Council to attend. More bespoke equality and diversity courses can be run at any time to meet the identified needs of individual teams or services.

This training approach enables staff to understand the general Equality Duty and thus be conscious of their duties and obligations, and this helps them develop a comprehensive approach to meet these duties.

Raising and Maintaining Awareness

It is important that staff and elected members are aware of the general equality duty and know how to comply with this so that this is considered in our work. To enable this, we ensure that we provide appropriate information / training and use a combination of methods to build and maintain awareness including:

- Briefings for elected members.
- Briefings for Corporate Management Team.
- Information to key contacts within the Council.
- Items and updates in our staff briefings
- Inclusion with Overview & Scrutiny reviews.

Equality issues are an item that is regularly discussed at team meetings and service areas within the Council, this ensures that it remains a live issue. This knowledge is also reinforced through the work that is undertaken as part of Customer Service Excellence accreditation.

Flexible Working and Work Life Balance

The Council offers employees flexible working hours, recognises the need for employees to work flexibly and is committed to optimising the opportunities to incorporate family friendly and flexible working practices where possible. The Council is committed to widening access to quality services through providing flexible modes of working and service delivery.

What's Breaking

What's Breaking is the Council's information and alert mechanism for all staff engagement which is one method the Council uses to communicate with our staff.

It is an inclusive mechanism to communicate and disseminate information, news, and updates to all areas of the workforce, and compliments other established communication mechanisms, such as staff 1-2-1's and team meetings, staff briefings, notice boards, e-mail, newsletters, policies and procedures, briefing notes, training courses and FAQs, intranet and internet. Staff who do not have access to email and the intranet receive printed versions via their manager.

Staff Sessions (Called Horse's Mouth briefings)

These are information sessions delivered to all staff at each Council office, Leisure, and Business centre at varying times by the Chief Executive on a regular basis. These sessions include a great deal of information, including:

- Council Achievements.
- Council Priorities.
- Forthcoming Challenges.
- Budget Information.
- Workforce updates.
- Open forum and Q & A session.

Summary of the latest Staff Survey 2022

All staff were invited to take part in the 2022 Staff Survey in June 2022 by either completing the survey online or by completing a paper copy if required. The response rate for that year

was a 43%, a decrease of 16% since 2020. (This equates to 152 members of staff completing the survey at that time).

The survey asked questions under the following categories.

- Contribution
- Communication
- Working relationships
- Personal Development
- General and Wellbeing
- Suggestions

We also incorporated some additional questions regarding wellbeing. The survey had several yes/no or multiple-choice questions, and the information below provides a comparison to our previous surveys.

The 2020 survey was undertaken during the early days of the pandemic and lockdown, and the results were overwhelmingly positive, and delivered improvements in all areas. Whilst the latest, shows that whilst the scores/results are still generally still high, in almost all areas we have seen slight decrease; this was expected, and it does mean that we have more areas to focus on and improve.

The survey asked staff to identify three things that they felt would improve the quality of life at Fenland District Council, with a free text format provided staff to respond and to submit any other comments they might wish.

Once again, we received many comments, which is great, with several consistent messages and themes from across the Council, such as:

- Formalising flexible/agile working practices
- Improving management visibility and skills, including delivery of Springboards/121s
- Further improving our ICT offer
- Further improving our training offer
- Better pay and terms and conditions
- Office environment and accommodation
- Clearer communication of future vision

Following the staff survey an action plan has been developed to include focus group work to help respond to feedback from the survey outcomes.

Gender Pay and Occupational Segregation Information

The Gender Pay Gap legislation (developed by the Government Equalities Office) was introduced in April 2017. It requires all employers of 250 or more employees to publish their gender pay gap for workers in post as of 31st March of each year.

The gender pay gap shows the difference between the average earnings of men and women. As a concept it is different from “equal pay” which deals with any pay difference between men and women who carry out the same or similar jobs or jobs of equal value.

As a concept it is different from “equal pay” which deals with any pay difference between men and women who carry out the same or similar jobs or jobs of equal value. The gender pay gap is calculated as the difference between average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men and women as a proportion of average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men’s earnings. For example, a 4.0% gender pay gap denotes that women earn

4.0% less per hour, on average, than men. Conversely, a negative 4.0% gender pay gap denotes that women earn 4.0% more, on average, than men.

Fenland District Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment for all employees and has a clear procedure to ensure employees are paid equally for the same or equivalent work, regardless of their sex or any other protected characteristic.

What do we report on?

Mean gender pay gap	The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of male employees and that of female employees
Median gender pay gap	The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of male employees and that of female employees
Mean bonus pay gap	The difference between the mean bonus pay paid to male employees and that paid to female employees
Median bonus pay gap	The difference between the median bonus pay paid to male employees and that paid to female employees
Bonus proportions	The proportions of male and female employees who were paid bonus pay during the relevant period
Quartile pay bands	The proportions of male and female employees in the lower, lower middle, upper middle and upper quartile pay bands

Fenland District Council's annual Gender Pay Gap analysis does not identify any particular areas of concern.

The Council's Human Resources team report on this annually. The report can be accessed at **Appendix 1**

Equality breakdown of workforce – January 2023

The total staff headcount was 363 and the breakdown can be accessed as **Appendix 2**

The Elected Councillors (Members)

Fenland District Council Councillors are elected every four years,

Local Councillors are elected by the community to decide how the council should carry out its various activities. They represent public interest as well as individuals living within the ward in which he or she has been elected to serve a term of office.

They have regular contact with the public through council meetings, telephone calls and/or local community surgeries. Surgeries provide an opportunity for any ward resident to go and talk their councillor face to face and these take place on a regular basis.

Our elected members can be seen on the Council's website or via the following link.

[Your Councillors - Fenland District Council](#)

Services Provided by the Council

The Council seeks to "mainstream" equality into its services and functions.

Mainstreaming is an approach to delivering equality within an organisation. It is primarily a long- term strategy aimed at ensuring that equality principles and practices are integrated into every aspect of an organisation from the outset. The focus should not only be internal (mainstreaming equality principles into procedures and systems) but also external (mainstreaming equality principles into policies and customer service delivery).

Mainstreaming provides a framework that facilitates and compliments, equalities legislation and other equality measures.

In simplistic terms this means integrating equality into our day-to-day work. We take equality and fairness into account in the way we go about our business when acting as an employer, when planning and providing services and when making decisions.

Mainstreaming ensures that equality becomes part of our culture. This benefit both employees and service users who know that they will be treated fairly and contributes to a continuous improvement and better performance.

Reporting on "mainstreaming" helps us to demonstrate the ways we are fulfilling our general equality duty.

Before we design a policy, procedure or function it is important for us to understand the needs of service users, including any needs due to having a protected characteristic. This information can be used to improve service/policy design and implementation.

The Service Planning approach specifically prompts and guides services to have regard to their equality duties; both about implementing the Corporate Plan and the corporate objectives which may, for example, be identified through equalities analysis in Customer (Equality) Impact Assessments.

The Council places a strong emphasis on equality analysis, which is used when developing policies and making decisions. The Council will make sure that those who are making the decisions know how the change could affect people with any of the protected characteristics. If the change might cause difficulties for people with a protected characteristic, we will do our best to find ways to reduce this impact. If we can't then we think carefully about whether we need to make a change to achieve a legitimate aim.

The Council has reviewed its equalities data and impact assessments; these are refreshed annually.

We use the Customer (Equality) Impact Assessment process as a tool for ensuring that equality, social inclusion, and community cohesion issues have been considered when drawing up Council policies or any proposals which affect the delivery of services, the carrying out of the Council's functions and/or employment practices.

The Council has regularly carried out and reviewed these assessments since their introduction in 2002. Assessments are carried out when developing any new policy, plan, or function, or making changes to an existing policy, plan, or function, including the reduction or termination of a service as well as during development of the Council's annual budget proposals.

They identify any impacts on people or groups of people who possess any of the nine protected characteristics, as well as socio economic factors. Existing policies are screened as part of an annual review process.

Impact Assessments help ensure that our service users receive services in a fair and equitable way ensuring that all are focused on outcomes. They provide an opportunity to stop or revise a policy or function which if implemented may potentially be unlawful.

They also contain mitigating actions wherever possible to minimise any adverse impacts, as well as identifying opportunities for positive impacts such as advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good community relations.

We use internal and external data to provide evidence for the assessments and consult directly with service users and equalities groups to proof our findings. Impact assessments are organic documents and are developed and added to as a project progress.

The Council consult with a range of community groups, via forums such as the Fenland Diverse Communities Forum, around specific issues when completing equality analysis. These groups are often consulted when we are developing and refreshing policies, strategies, procedures and functions and they act as the conduit to our vulnerable and minority communities for our annual consultation around the Councils Corporate Business Plan.

Where an impact assessment relating to a new policy has been carried out its findings are fed into any subsequent committee/ cabinet reports. This ensures elected members are fully aware when considering a report on any equality issues and/ or any negative and/ or cumulative effects on any of the protected characteristics to better inform them in their decision-making process.

These assessments are completed by each service's Equality Service Champion and/or Service Manager then agreed/ signed off by the relevant Head of Service. They help drive through the implementation of the Council's equality commitment and monitor service delivery outcomes within their service area. Guidance, support, and advice are offered to those who may need assistance during the process. They are people from within the Council who represent each service team.

As part of the Business Transformation, work has been undertaken to ensure the Council meets the savings targets expected by Central Government. Customer Impact Assessments have been undertaken to consider the impact of the savings projects on the community in relation to the Equality Act taking mitigating action as required.

Procurement

The Council's procurement process of acquiring goods, works, agency workers and services from third parties and in-house providers reflect the Council's commitment to equality and diversity. The Council will seek to ensure that all external contractors that may deliver services on behalf of the Council embrace the principles of equality and diversity and that they can demonstrate this to us.

Delivery of Council Strategies

The Council consults and engages with its residents to collect information and data that can be used to better inform and plan and policies and to prioritise, identify areas for improvement and service change, set and monitor performance standards and measure satisfaction on the quality of the services we provide.

Working with Communities

With many people under increasing financial pressure, local community groups have become a central part of the local response.

The cost-of-living crisis has increased the prices of energy, food and other essential items. People are increasingly struggling to meet everyday expenses, including feeding their families, keeping their homes warm and traveling to work.

Local community groups offer different forms of support to those in need, with the most common being the provision of free or low-cost food. Other support includes children's clothing and equipment, free toiletries, IT support and social activities. In addition to their core focus, each group can refer people on for more specialist help in areas they did not feel qualified to deal with. They also provide important social contact for people struggling with loneliness.

The Council recognises the decisions it makes and the services it delivers will be received/used by different people in different ways. Therefore, the Council aims to involve all communities in the decisions which affect them. All our current consultations are on our website and advertised through all the usual methods of communication including X (formally Twitter), newsletters and direct action to vulnerable and minority groups including hard copies in community languages placed in community hubs and at consultation events.

The Council has many ways of knowing and understanding its communities and collects equality related information from many sources to build a picture of our community. This includes national, regional, and local data down to ward level and helps the Council to know what services our community require.

Fenland Diverse Communities Forum

The Council, in conjunction with other public, faith, community and voluntary sector partners work together through the Fenland Diverse Communities Forum. This partnership forms part of our consultation process for establishing the equality objectives for the year ahead; it also has a cohesion and integration plan which tracks and updates on all progress against our agreed Fenland-wide cohesion/Integration action plan and discusses the challenges and the benefits of providing public, community and voluntary services in the district.

The partnership action plan is driven, and performance managed through a core partnership group and primarily focuses on positive community outcomes. All proposals are then shared and agreed with our local community.

No one left behind.

Below are some examples of partnership working.

Working with local community groups, the Rosmini Centre and ACCESS support for Eastern European communities through this work we have been able to assist many Europeans to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme who otherwise were unable to apply due to language, literacy or lack of computer skills.

The EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) is a registration process for EU nationals and their family members who wish to stay in the UK after the UK left the EU. All EU nationals who do not have British citizenship will need to apply for settled status.

The EU Settlement Scheme allows people who came here from Europe prior to BREXIT to continue to live, work and study here in the UK. It also means that they continue to be eligible for:

- public services, such as healthcare and schools
- public funds and pensions
- British citizenship if you want to apply and meet the requirements.

The numbers of people who have obtained settled status in Fenland and other local authorities nearby:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| • Cambridge City Council– | 34,160 – high numbers of Italians |
| • East Cambridgeshire District Council – | 8,270 people. |
| • Fenland – | 19,660 people |
| • Huntingdon District Council – | 13,800 people. |
| • West Norfolk Kings Lynn Borough Council | 14,540 people. |
| • Peterborough – | 72,700 people. |
| • South Cambridgeshire District Council | 13,920 people. |
| • South Holland – | 20,820 people. |

Travelling communities

Traveller communities face unique challenges, ranging from inadequate access to education and healthcare to the struggle for respectable living conditions. Local government can make a huge difference in terms of providing culturally appropriate support – including the provision of culturally appropriate accommodation.

It's no secret that poverty, especially in the current cost of living crisis, affects a wide range of communities. The Gypsy and Traveller community is no exception. The Gypsy and Traveller community can be seen in rates of declining health and wellbeing and increasing mortality that are significantly worse than for the general population. Whilst there are a number of ways local authorities can help tackle poverty in the travelling community, which we do, we have also commissioned a new Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment.

Why does accommodation matter so much?

Within the travelling community, several linked factors are at play, such as fuel poverty, access to services, employment, and education, to name a few. However, accommodation is a key area that local authorities could and should intervene in to improve their lives and livelihoods. It is an area that could significantly improve the other factors and consequently improve health, wellbeing, and mortality rates.

New sites and stopping places could and need to be developed to allow access to culturally appropriate accommodation. As well as moorings for Boat Dwellers. We are currently undertaking a Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People Accommodation Assessments to assess the current situation and future planning needs, helping to prepare and implement local plan policies and provisions of new Gypsy and Traveller Pitches and Travelling Show people plots. As well as the need for new moorings and caravan sites for non- Travellers.

Poverty is a widespread and deep-rooted issue in the travelling community and there are many ways that local authorities could help improve the situation. We believe the best place to start is by tackling accommodation.

When a Traveller has accommodation, they can:

- Secure employment.
- Consistent education.
- Improved mental health.
- Access to health and financial services.

Cost of Living Support in the community

The cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on all of us. As food and energy prices soar, families across the UK are feeling the biggest squeeze on their incomes in a generation, and there is no sign of a let up.

In summary, the 'cost of living crisis' is a phrase used to describe a situation when there has been a fall in 'real' incomes - where prices for everyday essential goods and services such as food and energy go up more than household incomes. This difference in costs ultimately can result in households struggling to pay bills due to this increase.

The cost of living is measured using the inflation rate which is calculated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Inflation refers to the price increase of something over time and this figure is updated by ONS monthly.

To help anyone struggling with their financial situation, we've created a guide looking at the cost-of-living support in Fenland and where you can find support. This is available across the district in hardcopy and is also available on the Councils website [Cost of Living Support - Fenland District Council](#) This includes:

- Where to turn to for information, Advice and Guidance.
- Additional Support from the Government.

- Help with travel costs.
- Help with childcare costs.
- Help with health costs.
- Help with energy.
- Help with food costs.
- Help with household bills.

Appendix 1 Gender Pay Gap Narrative

Introduction

Gender Pay Gap legislation (developed by the Government Equalities Office) introduced in April 2017 requires all employers of 250 or more employees to publish their gender pay gap for workers in scope as of 31 March 2022.

The gender pay gap shows the difference between the average earnings of men and women. As a concept it is different from “equal pay” which deals with any pay difference between men and women who carry out the same or similar jobs or jobs of equal value.

The gender pay gap is calculated as the difference between average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men and women as a proportion of average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men’s earnings. For example, a 4.0% gender pay gap denotes that women earn 4.0% less per hour, on average, than men. Conversely, a negative 4.0% gender pay gap denotes that women earn 4.0% more, on average, than men.

The Council uses these results to assess:

- The levels of gender equality in our workplace
- The balance of male and female employees at different levels.

What do we report on?

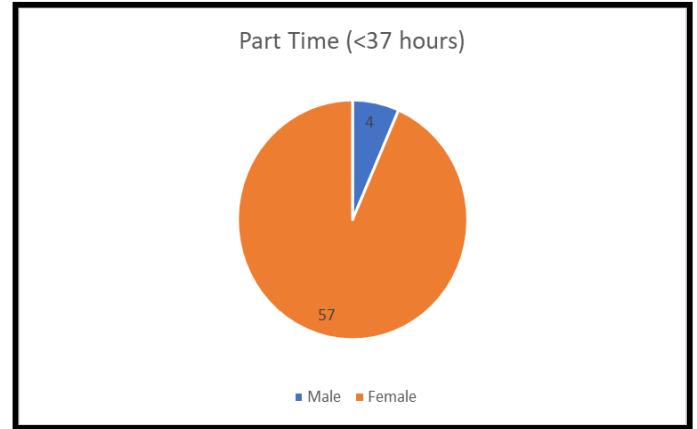
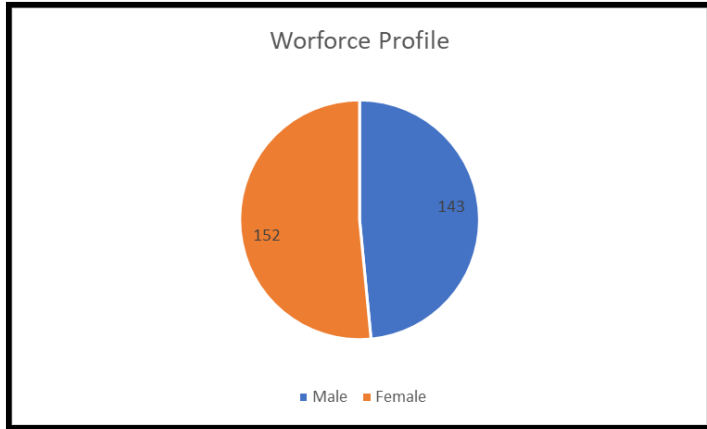
Mean gender pay gap	The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of male employees and that of female employees.
Median gender pay gap	The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of male employees and that of female employees.
Mean bonus pay gap	The difference between the mean bonus pay paid to male employees and that paid to female employees.
Median bonus pay gap	The difference between the median bonus pay paid to male employees and that paid to female employees.
Bonus proportions	The proportions of male and female employees who were paid bonus pay during the relevant period.
Quartile pay bands	The proportions of male and female employees in the lower, lower middle, upper middle and upper quartile pay bands.

Overall, the gender pay gap is defined as the difference between the median (actual midpoint) basic pay of men and women expressed as a percentage of the median basic pay of men:

$$\text{Gender pay gap} = \frac{\text{Median pay men} - \text{Median pay women}}{\text{Median pay men}} \times 100$$

Workforce Profile

There were 295 employees (headcount) working on the snapshot date of 31 March 2022.



Average weekly hours worked:



32.79 Hours



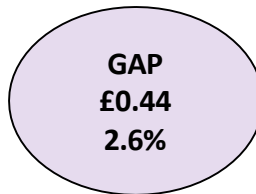
36.53 Hours

Results – 31 March 2022

Mean: Average hourly rate of pay and the percentage difference:



£16.52 per hour



£16.96 per hour

Mean Pay Gap – 2.6% (Previously 5.8%)

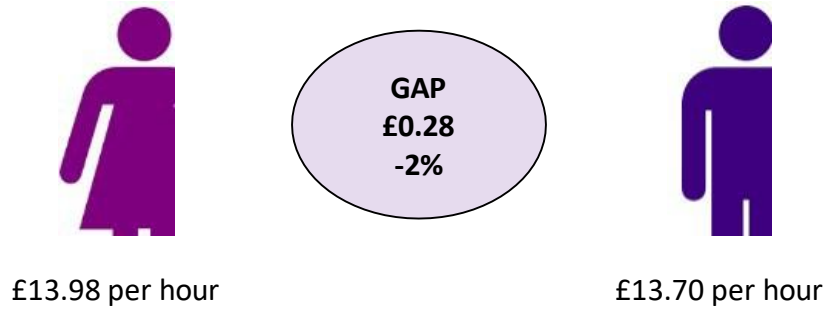
ONS Summary*:

The Council's median gap is significantly different to that of the national average of 14.9% (for all employees, those working over 30 hours per week based on ONS calculations in April 2022)

According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), taken from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2022, the Gender Pay Gap nationally was 14.9%. Specifically, for 'Local Government administrative occupations' there was a 14.8% Gender Pay Gap.

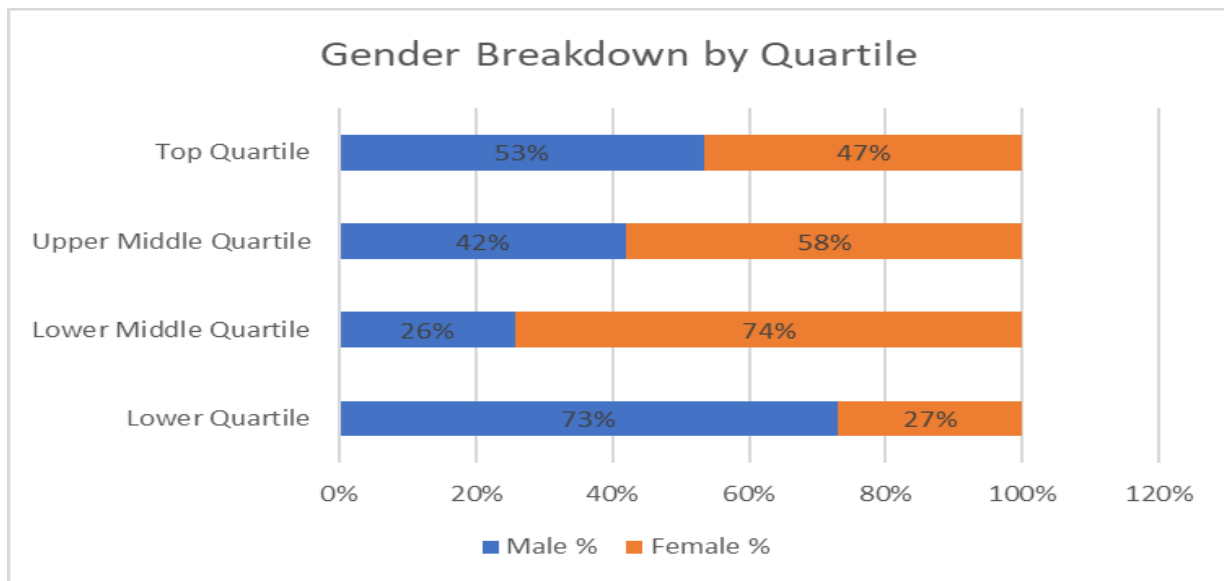
*[Office of National Statistics](#) Annual survey of Hours and Earnings 2022 figures

Median: Middle hourly rate of pay and the percentage difference between:



Median Pay Gap – -2% (previously 12.1%)

Pay Quartiles



Quartiles	Female	Male
Proportion of employees in the lower quartile pay band	27	73
Proportion of employees in the lower middle quartile pay band	74	26
Proportion of employees in the upper middle quartile pay band	58	42
Proportion of employees in the top quartile pay band	47	53

Bonus Pay Gap

Fenland District Council does not operate any performance related pay or bonus scheme and therefore has no bonus gender pay gap.

No Bonus Gap

Analysis of Data

Currently there is no published information to define what level of pay gap is regarded as a cause for concern, the gender pay gaps identified are relatively small, and continue to be less than the statistics reported by the ONS (shown above).

With a mean gender pay gap of 2.59%, this would suggest that ranges of pay are spread fairly equally but the average pay for men remains higher. Similarly, the median hourly pay gap of -2% is well below the average for public and private sector organisations.

The results are also likely to be due to workforce distribution across the pay bands and length of service amongst the male employees. A reason could be that there are a higher proportion of operational staff that are male that are working full time within the organisation.

Fenland District Council has well established Job Evaluation schemes in place and has undertaken a comprehensive review of pay and allowances to ensure there is no disparity. The most recent changes were in April 2019, when we carried out an equal pay audit and as a result, amended our pay band structures accordingly for all NJC salary bands.

Across the UK economy as a whole, men are more likely than women to be in senior roles (especially very senior roles at the top of organisations), while women are more likely than men to be in the front-line roles at the lower end of the organisation. In addition, men are more likely to be in technical and IT-related roles, which attract higher rates of pay than other roles at a similar level.

Women are also more likely than men to have had breaks from work that have affected their career progression, for example to bring up children. They are also more likely to work part time. It remains the case that more women than men work part time because most caring responsibilities within the home are still taken on by women.

This pattern from the UK economy as a whole is reflected in the make-up of Fenland District Council's workforce, where the majority of front-line customer services staff are women, while the majority of operational roles are held by full time men.

We are pleased to be able to say Fenland District Council's gender pay gap compares favourably with that of other organisations, including those within our sector, see below a comparison on other District Councils that at the time of writing had reported their data.

Comparison

Comparison of other local authority districts that had reported their data at the time of writing this report:

Employer	Employer Size	% Difference in hourly rate (Mean)	% Difference in hourly rate (Median)	% Women in lower pay quartile	% Women in lower middle pay quartile	% Women in upper middle pay quartile	% Women in top pay quartile
Arun District Council	250 to 499	8.7	13.5	51	72	69	72
Basildon District Council	500 to 999	1.9	0	45	55.5	65.5	52.3
Bassetlaw District Council	500 to 999	1.3	-0.2	45.8	48.5	51.9	44.6
Blaby District Council	250 to 499	0.8	1.8	46.5	69.4	55.3	48.2
Bolsover District Council	500 to 999	2	2.9	59.5	45.2	45.2	51.2
Broadland District Council	Less than 250	-4.8	-3.8	75	80	66	43

Bromsgrove District Council	250 to 499	-1.8	-4.4	25.3	36.9	37.9	35.8
Cannock Chase District Council	250 to 499	11.3	24.1	59	71	52	41
Cherwell District Council	500 to 999	-1.6	-2.9	46.8	48	53.2	47.2
East Devon District Council	500 to 999	8.4	0.6	40	64	65	41
East Suffolk Council	500 to 999	11.1	18	54.1	51	54.9	54.5
Epping Forest District Council	500 to 999	9.5	5.7	69.9	64.2	63.5	50.4
Fenland District Council	250 to 499	2.6	-2.0	27	74	58	47
Hambleton District Council	500 to 999	5.2	1.5	44.1	67.9	48.6	57.1
Horsham District Council	250 to 499	-13.6	-16.8	22.6	46	59.6	52.2
Huntingdonshire District Council	1000 to 4999	-1.4	-9.3	48.5	48.9	54.1	55.7
Lichfield District Council	250 to 499	2.4	-8.2	51	29	64	49
Mid Devon District Council	500 to 999	0.1	0	40	64	56	54
Mid Sussex District Council	250 to 499	15	15.7	72.7	72.7	57.1	38.2
New Forest District Council	500 to 999	2.5	3.1	28.7	58.4	51.6	33.7
Sedgemoor District Council	250 to 499	12.7	12.1	62	70	61.5	46
South Cambridgeshire District Council	500 to 999	-10.5	-17.7	27	54	61	57
South Lakeland District Council	250 to 499	-2.3	-10.4	21.5	43.9	56.1	44.9
Stratford-On-Avon District Council	250 to 499	24.3	21.5	74.3	67.1	64.3	39.1
Tandridge District Council	Less than 250	3.2	7.5	52.4	60.7	50	50.9
Teignbridge District Council	250 to 499	-4.9	-1.1	21.8	63.2	34.6	50.8
Tendring District Council	500 to 999	5.8	0	57	60	57	55
Three Rivers District Council	250 to 499	-12.4	-36.9	8.6	54.4	67.5	55.1
Uttlesford District Council	250 to 499	1.4	-2.9	42	62	70	42
Wealden District Council	250 to 499	2.2	15.5	71	67	62	45
Wyre Forest District Council	250 to 499	-6	-6.5	36.1	47.6	66.3	56.6

Action we are taking

The Council is committed to reviewing the results of equal pay audits it carries out to ensure there is no gender bias in respect of pay or in other processes. Although the gender pay gap is not significant and the median shows females are paid more, it is recognised that changes to the workforce will cause fluctuations in the data each year. As such the Council will continue to implement actions to ensure equality, including:

- Where possible the council applies an agile working method, giving staff maximum flexibility providing that the delivery of the service is not compromised.
- The council's use of the National Joint Council Job Evaluation scheme ensure that there is a consistent, thorough evaluation of individual job roles against agreed criteria, which does not allow for gender bias. The Council will ensure that grades continue to be determined through objective analysis and job evaluation to maintain the integrity of the pay and grading system.
- There are no opportunities for managers to pay bonus or any other non-objective payments to any employee.

- Continue to make use of the Apprenticeship Levy by upskilling our existing employees, particularly at the team leader and supervisor levels.
- All staff are provided with at least an annual review which includes consideration of their development.
- A pay and grading review was implemented 2019 and following the review of the pay scales, the change resulted in no grade containing more than six points. This helps staff with shorter service so they can reach the top of their pay scale within five years.
- The Council aims to recruit from the widest possible talent pool for advertising job vacancies widely, ensuring gender-neutral language in adverts, use of competency based selection techniques to guard against unconscious bias in recruitment processes.
- Actively promote the employee benefits we can offer in our recruitment advertising. It is hoped that an understanding of some of the non-cash benefits on offer such as flexi time, generous annual leave entitlements, discounted leisure membership as well as membership of the Local Government Pension scheme may attract a broader spectrum of candidates to roles across all pay structures.
- Continue to monitor shifts in the gender pay gap data each year to identify any trends and analyse underlying causes.

Summary

While women's mean hourly rate is 2.6% lower than men, this is not as a result of paying men more than women for the same or equivalent work. Fenland District Council staff are paid the same for the same job, but the gender pay gap exists due to our workforce profile.

Fenland District Council is therefore confident that its gender pay gap does not stem from paying men and women differently for the same or equivalent work. Rather its gender pay gap is the result of the roles in which men and women work within the organisation and the salaries that these roles attract.

Fenland District Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment for all employees and has a clear procedure to ensure employees are paid equally for the same or equivalent work, regardless of their sex or any other protected characteristic.

To ensure that the jobs employees undertake are of equal value, in setting the pay levels Fenland District Council undertakes job evaluation to determine the size of a job by following the nationally recognised job evaluation scheme for National Joint Council employees. Evaluations are undertaken regularly for new jobs and also as part of restructures where a job significantly changes.

There is additional support offered to women who return to work following maternity/adoption leave in order to enable them to return to work and fit around their work life balance. Additionally, there is shared parental leave that encourages male employees to also consider more time off for work life balance.

Being able to care for others should be a choice open to both men and women, and is a core issue when it comes to gender equality. It was therefore a key consideration when recently reviewing our policies and considering if our workplace culture is such that employees are supported to take on caring roles and responsibilities if they choose to.

The main reason for our organisation's gender pay gap is an imbalance of male and female colleagues across the organisation. The mean pay gap figure shows that overall male employees have higher pay than female. When the gender distribution is looked at by pay quartiles a more detailed picture is revealed which shows that, at the moment, there are fewer women in senior roles than men, and a higher proportion of men relative to women in the lower quartile.

Recommendations

Fenland District Council remains committed to ensuring ongoing robust delivery of all people policies and practices to ensure no gender bias is in place when recruiting and appointing to new roles. The Council will continue to ensure that our pay and reward systems are fair and transparent.

The Council will continue to monitor our performance, along with initiatives that we have in place which have already contributed to these results such as:

- Family friendly policies and procedures
- Actively supporting parents returning to work from maternity leave, shared parental leave or adoption leave by offering job share, career breaks/sabbaticals or part time opportunities
- Career development opportunities
- Flexible working options in most services and many locations
- Agile working
- Compassionate and special leave arrangements
- Learning and development
- Apprenticeships
- Appraisals for all staff to allow for focussed discussions around learning and development
- Coaching programme
- Employee recognition scheme
- Salary bands that clearly show incremental progression and where appropriate related criteria.

The Council should continue to ensure that part time employees are well supported and are given opportunities to progress, which means that well-qualified, experienced women (and men who also take on caring responsibilities) are better able to keep participating in the workforce.

Any future action plan will need to focus on attaining even greater diversity in the workplace and we will continue to encourage and support all our employees to fulfil their full potential.

It is recommended that a further review is undertaken and monitored of these processes on a regular basis to ensure the ongoing delivery of best practice.

Few employers in Fenland can boast the breadth and variety of roles we enjoy at Fenland District Council, and we remain committed to promoting Fenland District Council as a fair and inclusive employer. Our flexible working practices and wide range of roles ensure that we encourage and support employees to come to work for us and to develop their long-term career to stay with us. We have a workforce to be proud of!

