Visit to the Wood Group

24 April 2017

Background

Wood Group is a multinational energy services company, headquartered in Aberdeen and listed on the London Stock Exchange.

Attendants

Karen Birss, Reward Manager, Wood Group
Lesley DeJager, Vice-President People and Organisation, Wood Group
Gillian Martin MSP
Bill Bowman MSP
Rodger Evans, Senior Assistant Clerk

Discussion

The meeting covered—

- The company was looking at the numbers for the purposes of the new gender pay gap reporting requirements, but with the aim of expanding to its operations outside of the UK;

- A robust approach was taken with equal pay in the Wood Group but gender pay applied a “different lens” to the issue;

- Anecdotal evidence in the sector suggested substantial gaps in other organisations;

- It was seen as a matter for the industry and the company, but not forgetting the societal dimension;

- The company saw the matter as the right thing to do ethically but good business sense, when it came to drawing on 50% of the talent pool;

- The feeling, ahead of the numbers being ascertained, was there was likely to be a big gap on the onshore white collar technical side, more of a balance in the support sections, and a considerable gap for offshore work;

- In terms of actions or solutions to gender pay, the company has been carrying out engagement work with schools over the last decade to encourage girls to take an interest in STEM subjects, both going into the classroom and with visits to the workplace by schools;

- In recent years they could discern a bit of change, for example in take up of chemical engineering posts, but nothing more radical;
• Three out of eight members of the Wood Group’s senior management team were women, sending out a strong signal about the role of women in the organisation;

• There was discussion of the pressure points or drop off rates, for example among female employees in their 30s, for women in the company (similar to a pattern seen more widely in the economy);

• The challenges of being part time (for family/carer reasons) and being client-facing were discussed;

• The company was keen to look at the data analysis when it was ready (at the end of the month) and to consider its policies for returning to work from maternity leave and part-time working;

• Asked about support for developing their gender pay relevant policies, the company said there were other organisations with expertise in the field, such as Deloitte, who they could bounce ideas off;

• The company saw gender pay as an opportunity and were keen to embrace the possibilities addressing the issue brought rather than merely to report on what the gap was;

• The take up for shared parental leave had been disappointingly low and it was suggested there was a need for more male role models;

• On the recruitment side, the company are reviewing its approach and ensure gender neutrality, an approach it was looking at for its global business, not just the UK arm;

• It was keen to look at ways to boost diversity in its apprenticeship schemes, discussing the work with RGU, the milk-round and school leavers;

• More targeted and sustained engagement was being undertaken, a good example being currently setting up a flagship relationship with an Aberdeen secondary school through DYW;

• Asked about the business case for addressing the gender pay gap, moving beyond the anecdotal into the analytical, a Deloitte report on work in Australia was mentioned;

• The company reiterated its belief in the benefits to the business of addressing the issue, stressing the importance of reflecting the make-up and beliefs of their clients and the communities in which the Wood Group operates;

• They were starting to see this in their tender work, for example, with people beginning to ask about the split;
• There was discussion of other companies, with Shell said to perform well in attracting women into technical roles, companies based in Norway likewise;

• The complexity of gender pay reporting was discussed, the legislation looking deceptively straightforward it was suggested, the actual work within the Wood Group having been ongoing for some months;

• In international terms, the company was looking at its practice in Australia for example (with a different regulatory regime) and would be comparing notes on what it was doing in UK and its approach elsewhere;

• The company would be reflecting its findings in its next annual report but would be happy to engage with the committee again.