

Combined Assurance Status Report 2023/24



**East Lindsey District Council
March 2024**

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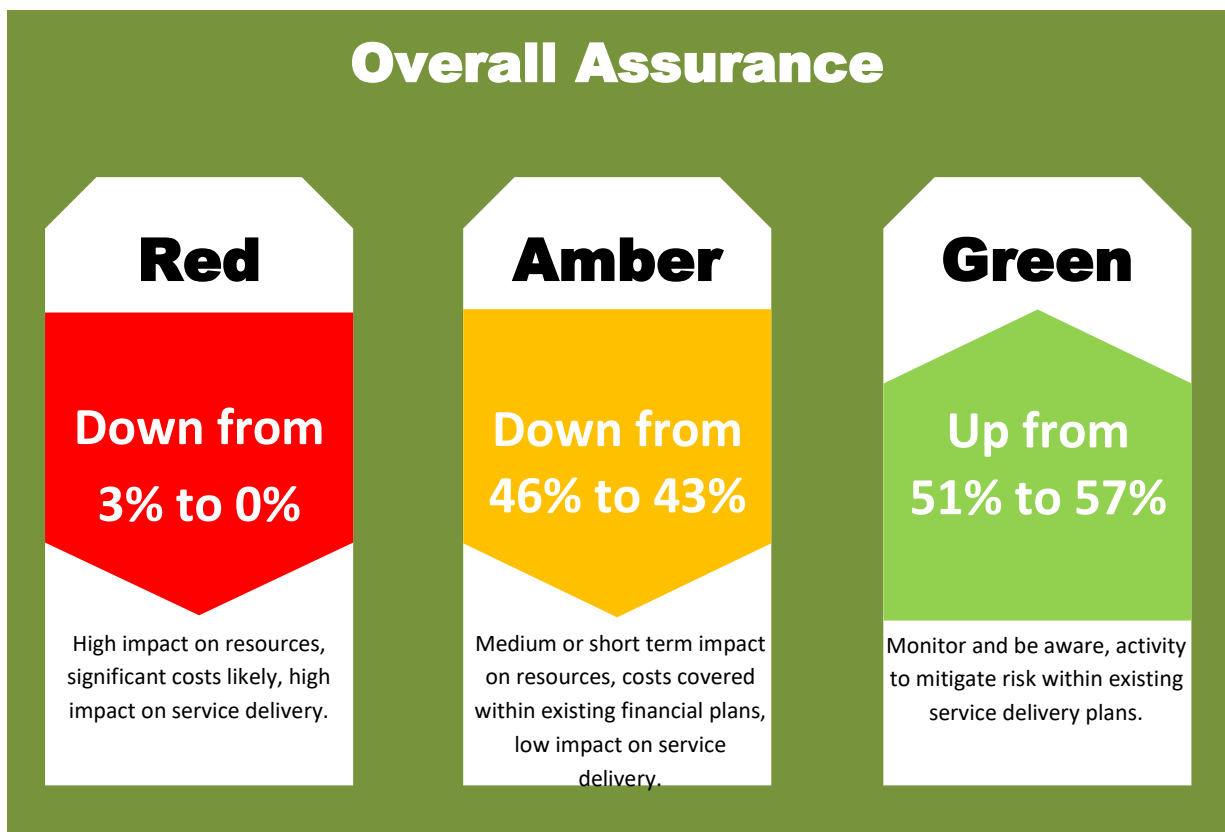
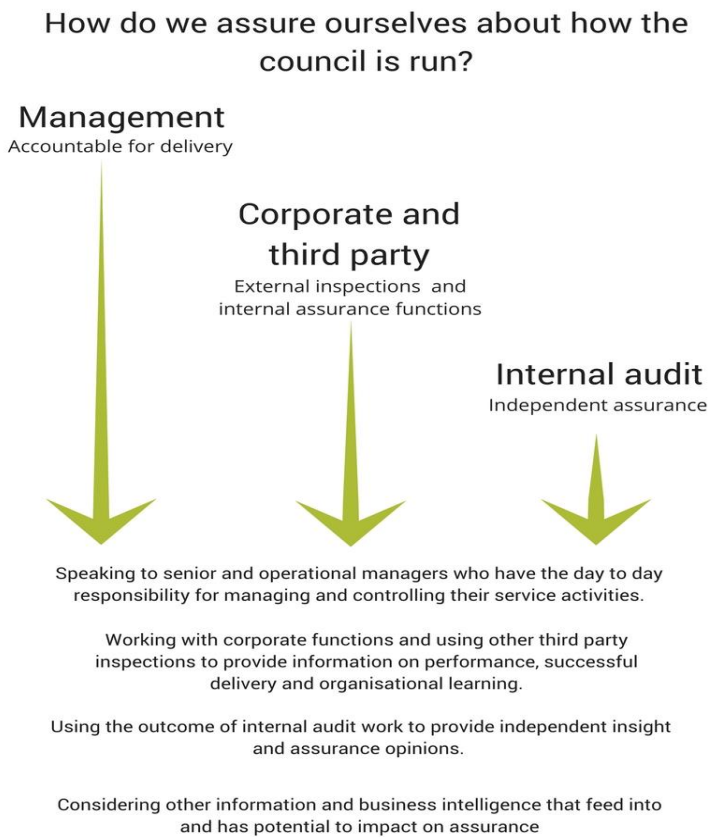
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Overview of Assurance

Combined assurance is a structured means of identifying and mapping the main sources and types of assurance in the council and coordinating them to best effect.

It enhances risk management by providing an effective and efficient framework of sufficient, regular and reliable evidence of assurance on organisational stewardship and management of major risks to the Council's success.

We do this using the 3 lines of defence model.



Chief Executive's Summary

The annual assurance process is of great value to me as Chief Executive.

The ability to triangulate the views of management with external peer accreditation provides both confidence in the way our services are managed, along with the clear visibility of areas where we believe there is room for improvement. The latter helping us with resource and transformation planning.

The level of recorded assurance is a strength for the Council.

Key Messages

Strategic Risks

Good risk management is part of the way we work. It is about taking the right risks when making decisions or where we need to encourage innovation in times of major change – balancing risk, quality, cost and affordability.

This put us in a stronger position to deliver our goals and provide excellent services.

Our Strategic Risk Register is regularly reviewed, and our risks are being effectively managed.

Risk	Mitigating actions	Risk rating
Budget	Medium Term Financial Strategy; Budgetary process; Sound level of reserves; Continued close monitoring; Where there is likely to be a high degree of variability, sensitivity analysis will be used in Committee and Cabinet reports, and also as part of our financial analysis process.	High
Local Economy	Town Deal and Levelling Up projects; Emergency Planning Team represented on County Wide LRF Group looking at issues of winter pressures / cost of living and industrial action.	Medium
Lincshire flood defence	The Council is undertaking a number of activities including its Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to support and inform the Local Plan moving forward. Equally, the Council is part of a number of groups, including a collaborative approach with the Environment Agency, to seek to identify the challenges and opportunities for the coast in the future.	High
Business continuity	Work is underway in 2023 to update and align all BC plans across the Partnership. It is anticipated that this work should be completed by the end of Quarter 4 2023/24.	Medium
Health and Safety	The partner Councils receive specialist Health and Safety advice from Public Sector Partnership Services who support the Partnership Health and Safety Governance Group (chaired by the Assistant Director – Regulatory) and the Staff Health and Safety Forum. Health and Safety is included within Internal Audit’s annual audit plan. The audit undertaken in 2021 demonstrated a substantial level of assurance.	Medium
Local Plan	The Local Plan is monitored regularly with an Annual Report produced, in addition, measures such as the 5-Year Housing Land Supply and Housing Delivery Test are good indicators as to the delivery of the Local Plan. There is a statutory requirement for a 5-year review of the Local Plan (after 2024).	Medium
Safeguarding	The Safeguarding Policy and Procedures have been reviewed. Wellbeing Lincs Service has provided a countywide response and support service for vulnerable and clinically vulnerable residents. Safeguarding was a key focus of a report to LCC during the Covid response. The District Councils and County Council continue to meet to collaborate and discuss matters around safeguarding policy and procedures.	Medium
Information	All employees receive annual online training in data protection. An experienced Data Protection Officer is in place who monitors training,	Medium

Key Messages

Risk	Mitigating actions	Risk rating
	compliance and development of policy; also, full assessment of any breaches, providing recommendations for continual improvement.	
Treasury and Capital	A long term strategy is in place, supported by strong internal awareness and governance and external professional advice. Members are encouraged to be fully appreciative of changes and risks through training and seminars.	Medium
Third Party Service Delivery	Assessment of business plans for key partnerships. Regular performance reports and monitoring meetings with third parties. Some key partnerships based on open book approach to financial monitoring. Regular contract meetings in place to manage risk.	Medium
Technology Infrastructure failure	The Council has a series of resilience arrangements in place through its service provider, PSPS. Work is continuous to ensure these are fit for purpose across a range of areas.	High
Cyber Incident	Defence in depth in the form of firewalls, Mimecast and antivirus is deployed both at the perimeter and the internal Local Area Network. The ICT team play an active part in the East Midlands WARP (Warning, Advice and Reporting Point) which allow us to have early sight of issues being experienced across neighbouring Authorities and Agencies.	High
Capital Programme	Robust programme and project management Regular and structured reporting mechanisms Robust and effective governance (financial and project) Effective working with partners and 3rd Party delivery Risk transference and mitigation	Medium
General Fund Assets	The restructure has taken place, so we now have the SOPM (Strategic & Operational Property Manager) for budget management, meetings job criteria and Strategic Property acquisitions and sales.	Low
Economic Hardship	Taking action to improve housing standards, Working with local landlords; Support to local people on budgeting, training, and jobs; Political pressure on the government to address fuel bills nationally. Homes for Ukraine Host Property Inspections to ensure decent standard and properties not overcrowded.	High
Implementation of the Environment Act 2021	The Lincolnshire authorities comprising the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership are working together to identify the impact of the Environment Act across the county.	High
Introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility	Officers closely follows all policy and practice changes being implemented by the Government and has responded to relevant consultations.	Medium
Identification and Suitability of future Depot Accommodation	Report in development for mitigating options	High
Capacity	Annual Delivery Plan in place to help manage the work programme. Services when bringing forward new initiatives to consider the capacity required and the need to bid for capacity if it can't be accommodated within existing resources.	High
External Communication	External communications are quality checked by the Communications Team to ensure that the messaging is effective and relevant to its audience.	Medium

Key Messages

Risk	Mitigating actions	Risk rating
Retention of staff	The workforce strategy is aligned across the 3 Councils. A development programme is in place to assist with both personal and professional development and to further develop the talents of individual employees.	Medium
Service Delivery	Staff resources maximised under the Partnership. Working with external partners to deliver shared priorities. HR support on recruitment and retention.	Medium
Internal Communications	Internal communications approach has been reviewed. There isn't a one size fits all approach for the Council/Partnership given the breadth of services provided and this is reflected in the internal communications model.	High

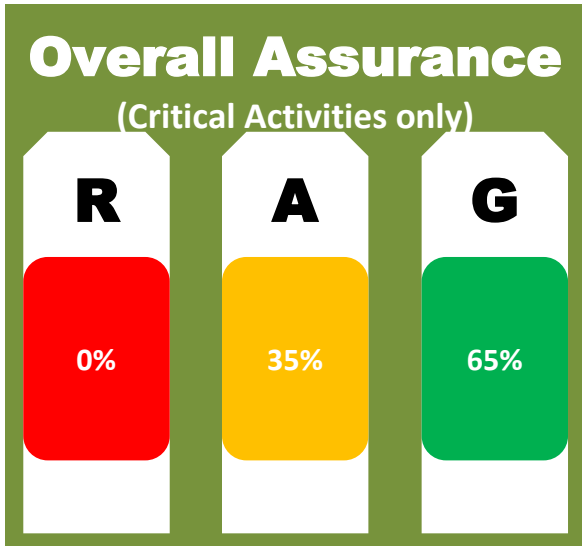
Key	Risk
Very High /High	High impact on resources, significant costs likely, high impact on service delivery
High/Medium	Medium or short-term impact on resources, cost covered within existing financial plans, low impact on service delivery
Medium/Low	Monitor and be aware, activity to mitigate the risk within existing service delivery plans / management arrangements

Key Messages

Deputy Chief Executive - Communities

Health & Safety, Ground Maintenance, Greens Management, Play areas, Street Cleansing, Street Scene, Tree Risk Assessment, Public Conveniences, Green Waste, Depot, Recycling, Fleet Management, Safeguarding, PSPS, Wellbeing, Affordable Homes & Supported Housing Growth, Homelessness, Housing Standards, Rough Sleeping, Housing Advice Triage, Housing Register, Temporary Accommodation, Housing Strategy, Housing Assistance, Community Safety, CCTV, ASB, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, ELDC Age Friendly Work, Community and Voluntary sector, NHS Engagement, Licensing, Emergency Planning, Business Continuity, Land Charges, Environmental Health – Food Safety, Building Control, Home Energy Advice and Retrofit Team, Carbon Reduction, Climate Change, Cost of Living Crisis, MV, Culture, London Road, Recruitment and Retention.

Critical Activities
Public Conveniences External
Depot
Homelessness
Housing Advice Triage
Housing Strategy
Building Control
Home Energy Advice and Retrofit Team
Carbon Reduction
Climate Change and Environment
MV
Recruitment and Retention
London Road



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
	Ground maintenance including Street Cleansing
	Greens Management
	Play areas

During 2023/24 the Communities Directorate has been able to mobilise its resources effectively to meet the aims and objectives of East Lindsey District Council to achieve better outcomes for local people.

As part of the infrastructure associated with the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership the Directorate has been able to deliver with greater resilience initiatives such as the Government’s Household Support Fund and work to make the District a cleaner greener place such as delivery against the Partnership wide enviro-crime contract, whilst embedding District specific new ways of working such as the East Lindsey twin bin scheme and a new vehicle testing centre at the East Lindsey District Council depot.

During the last year, our work with the voluntary sector has also been further enhanced as a consequence of the South and East Lincolnshire Community Lottery and the South and East Lincolnshire Crowd (crowd fund) with considerations well underway to develop a Trusted Volunteer Scheme. The Communities Directorate is also the project sponsor for Town Fund initiatives such as the Station Leisure and Learning Centre which is set to open later in 2024.

Key Messages

Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Development

Transformation including digital, Data Protection & Corporate Compliance, FOI's, Procurement, Finance skills and knowledge, Contract Management, Constitution, Training Plans and Budgets, Workforce Strategy and Culture Media Communications, General Communications, Risk Management – Strategic, operational and Fraud, Consultation, Corporate Plan delivery monitoring, Performance, Legal Services, Information Management, Member Complaints, Complaints, Members Expenses & Community Grants, Police and Crime Panel, Electoral Registration, Elections, Member Training, Committee Services, Scrutiny Function, Transformation and Service Reviews, Financial Resilience, Corporate Governance,

This year has seen a continued programme of activity embedding governance arrangements across the three organisations supporting the partnership way of working that is now becoming more established. The Partnership Peer Review action plan is being regularly reviewed and reported upon.

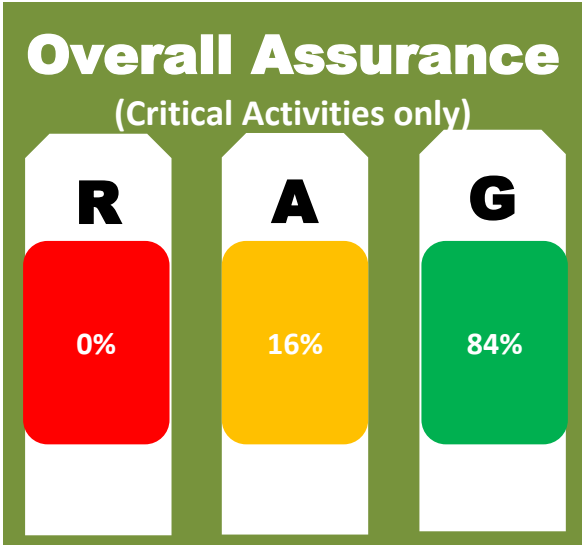
The Transformation agenda has also seen significant activity with the establishment of an Innovations, Transformation and Efficiency board to support services in implementing service changes through the Workforce Development Strategy and service review proforma. An efficiency plan has also been developed to support the savings requirement in the 2024/25 budget alongside the continued efforts and lobbying around the challenges of IDB funding.

The redemption of debt in 2023/24 mitigated a significant risk in terms of the proposed changes to MRP impacting on the Councils historic debt.

The key areas of Risk Management and Procurement have seen renewed focus and enhanced resources with a complete review of all Risks and the embedding of the team within PSPS to provide procurement advice a considerable step change from previous resource levels and the benefits of this approach are now being seen. Internal audit progress has improved throughout the year with us in a good position moving into 2024/25.

Finance continues to be an area of substantial focus with three budgets being set in challenging and unprecedented circumstances with impacts from international events and high inflation continuing to impact. In addition, the resourcing in this area continues to be incredibly challenging and we are working with PSPS closely in order to seek to address this and support the development of home-grown talent.

Data protection and cyber security continue to be a significant area of focus for the Council.

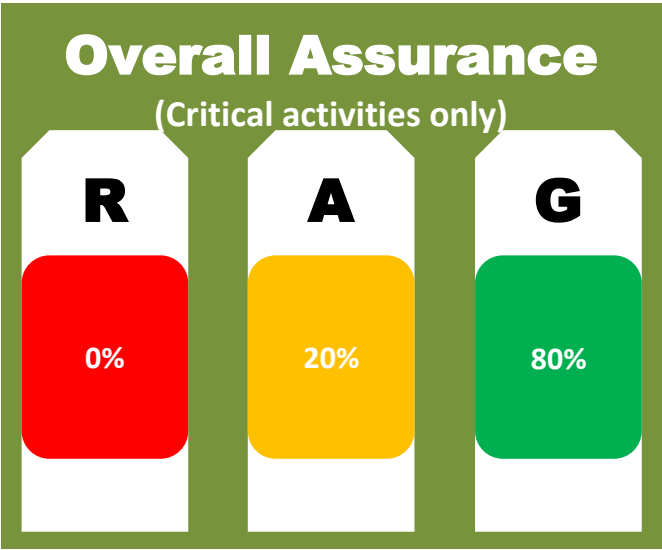


Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
None	Transformation (inc. Digital)
	Media Communications
	Complaints
	Data Protection and Compliance. Finance skills and knowledge
	Transformation, Savings and Service Reviews.

Key Messages

Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery & SIRO

New Homes, Capital Programme ELDC, Invest EL, King Fisher Caravan Park, Towns Fund Delivery, SIRO, Asset Management, Commercial Rents, Repairs and Maintenance, Car Parking and Enforcement, Councils Business Centres



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
	King Fisher Caravan Park
	Invest EL Housing

It is pleasing to note that there are no red rated activities.

Kingfisher Caravan Park and Invest East Lindsey continue to represent the biggest risks within the directorate as they have significant levels complexities and financial implications associated with them. However, there are numerous tiers of governance within these schemes, including Board and Oversight meetings, and regular presentations to members.

The delivery of Towns Funds projects represents a significant risk within the directorate as they are part of a £180m SELCP partnership wide delivery programme. However, there numerous tiers of governance within these schemes, including sponsorship meetings, monthly Major Projects Board oversight and regular presentations to members.

Other risks are part of normal day to day activities and are managed through our risk management processes.

From a SIRO perspective, no major issues have arisen during the year.

Key Messages

Deputy Chief Executive – Growth (Vacant)

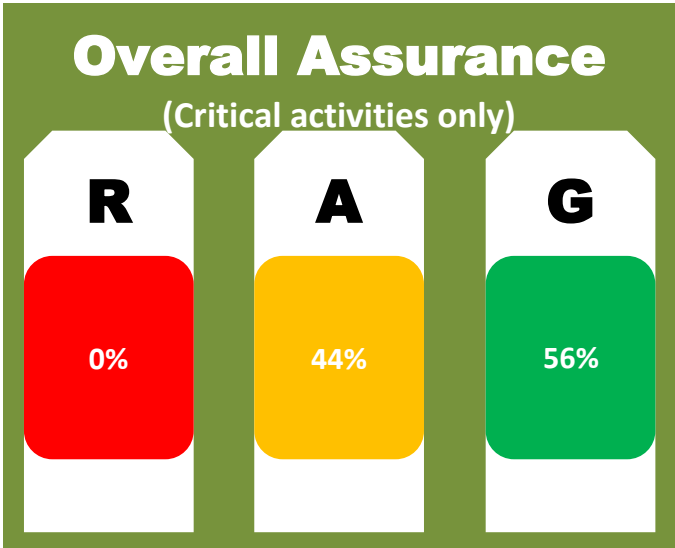
Towns Fund #2 Internal Governance, Towns Fund #3 LA as Accountable Body, Towns Fund Inception to stage 4 delivery, Levelling Up, Towns Fund #1 External Governance with Central Government Strategic contracts, Investment & Growth, NPO Funding, Vital and Viable, S106, Planning Policy (Local Plan), Heritage, Planning Enforcement, Planning Enforcement Caravans, Development Management Control, South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee Cultural Development Fund.

The annual assurance maps for the Growth Directorate remains positive.

During the year, our reputation with Government, Partners and Local Businesses has been seen as exemplary.

We carry many challenges within the work programme due to the ambitious nature of activity.

Our performance in attracting investment, adhering to conditions of funding and delivery has been to a high standard.



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
None	Towns Fund#2 – Internal Governance
	Towns Fund#3 – LA as Accountable Body
	Investment and Growth.
	NPO Funding
	Vitale and Viable
	Cultural Development Fund

Key Messages

Strategic Partnership Working

Procurement, Spend Analysis, Procurement Strategy, Contracts Register, Contracts Management, Recruitment, Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, General Ledger, Budget Management, Budget Preparation, Control Account Reconciliations, Financial Staff Resilience, Close down of accounts, Recovery, Housing Benefits, Council Tax Support, Governance, Organisational, Physical, ICT Projects, People ICT, Technological, Applications, Compliance, Health and Safety, HR Strategy, Officers and Members Expenses, Payroll, Equality and Diversity, Employee Relations, Systems and Reporting, Pension Scheme, Customer Services, Telephony Enhancement Project, Complaints Legislation, Digital Transformation Projects, Income, CRM, VAT, Procurement Cards, Treasury Management, Insurance, Working with External Audit, Grant Management, Council Tax, CTS Fraud, Business Rates, ICT Digital Services.

Critical Activities
Complaints Legislation
Digital Transformation Projects
General Ledger
Accounts Payable
Procurement Cards
Budget Management
Budget Preparation
Control Account Reconciliations
Financial Staff Resilience
Close Down of Accounts
Working with External Audit
Grant Management
Recovery
Housing Benefits

A significant amount of effort has been put into the Partnership working with PSPS to address some key areas of focus around recruitment, retention and support for growing local talent in this area.

The new finance systems and processes still need further organisational embedding, and this work is underway and continues into 2023/24.

Significant focus has been needed to ensure the attainment of key deadlines for budgeting/year end and this work continues.

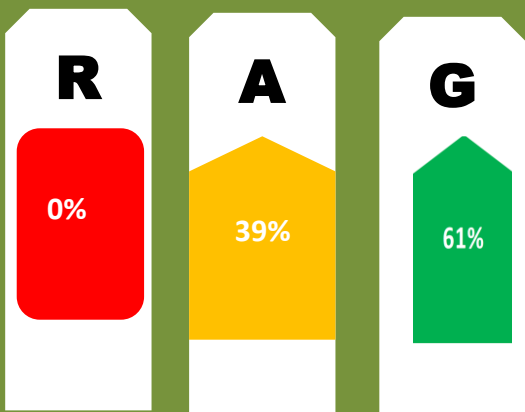
The specialist areas of the service continue to be under high demand particularly in respect of Capital, Treasury and VAT due to the complex nature of the Towns Fund/LUF projects and changes to the prudential and treasury framework.

Revenues, Business Rates and Benefits have supported further distributions of reliefs and resources following the award of financial support although the service is now moving toward a more pre-covid level is it still very challenging due to the economic circumstances currently being experienced.

ICT continues to be critical to our new way of working and further investments continue to be planned particularly to ensure that our data stays secure and within a modern and robust operating framework.

From a HR perspective the service continues to see high levels of activity across all services.

Overall Assurance (Critical activities only)



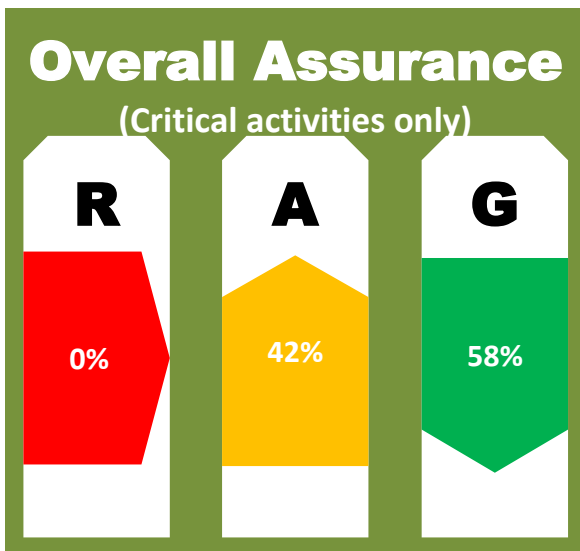
Critical Activities

Red	Amber
None	Payroll

Key Messages

Key Projects

Commissioning of Volunteers Local Plan Review, Number of specific applications/development projects – e.g. Towns Fund projects, Skegness Gateway – private proposition for a Local Development Order, Implementation of Uniform 2023, Theddlethorpe GDF Proposal, Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects, Revs and Bens System Alignment, Revs and Bens Automation, Sheltered Housing, Transformation Team Social Housing Regulations.



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
None	Commissioning of Volunteers
	Implementation of Uniform 2023
	Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects
	Revs and Bens System Alignment

During 2023/24 the Communities Directorate delivered and supported number of key projects within the District of East Lindsey. These include:-

- Implementation of the IDOX upgrade to UNIFORM at ELDC.
- Delivering Household Support Funding
- Embedding the East Lindsey twin bin scheme.
- Creation of a commercial waste service.
- Establishing the Pride in East Lindsey team.
- A successful funding bid to redesign and redevelop the Rockery Gardens in Skegness.
- Delivering the ageing better programme in ELDC.

During this year projects linked to the voluntary and community sector (VCS) have continued to develop such as the South and East Lincolnshire Community Lottery and the South and East Lincolnshire Crowd (crowd fund) and schemes to help our most vulnerable citizens during the “cost of living crisis” such as the Household Support Fund have been delivered. Effective project management arrangements have ensured these schemes have been provided as required.

Work with the VCS is set to continue in 2024/25 with the anticipated development of a Trusted Volunteer Scheme.

We have embedded many positive workforce initiatives (and been shortlisted for LGC Workforce Award for our Future Leaders’ Programme) and we continue to drive delivery of our Digital Strategy that will support the savings agenda and continue to join up ICT.

Key Messages

Key Partnerships

The Council recognises that effective partnership working is key to the achievement of many of its goals and desired outcomes. In that regard it is essential that any partnerships entered into, or are currently in operation, deliver and their on-going relevance and effectiveness are continually evaluated.

Historic England, Arts Council England, Destination Lincs, LCC - South Lincolnshire Food Enterprise Zone, Environmental Agency, Town Boards, Housing Investment, Local Authority Housing Fund, Housing, Health & Care Delivery Group, Resettlement Scheme for Displaced Families, LCC, Housing Association Board.

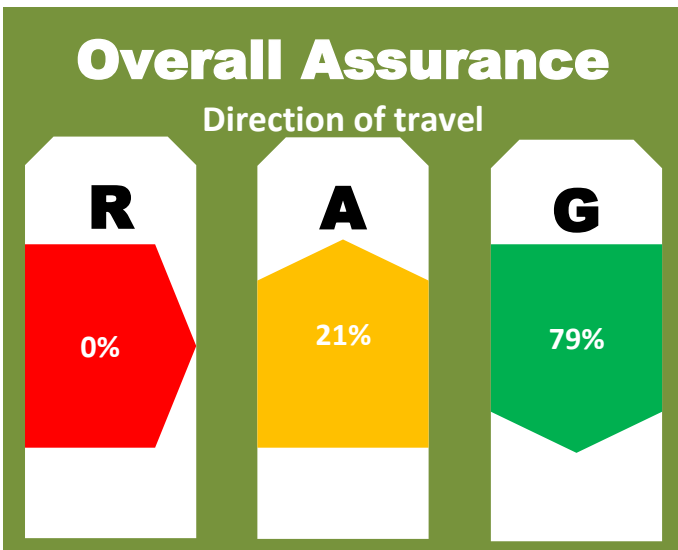
The Communities Directorate supports a number of key partnerships including the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership, the Healthy Living Board and the South and East Lincolnshire Climate Action Network (SELCAN).

The Community Safety Partnership is delivering key actions/initiatives against the following thematic areas of 1) Safer Streets & Night-Time Economy 2) Anti-Social Behaviour 3) Hate Crime 4) The Safety of Women and Girls and 5) Vulnerability and Safeguarding.

The Healthy Living Board meets quarterly and supports work activity 'themed' around 5 'lever' areas: 1) Housing and Homelessness 2) Activity & Wellbeing 3) Environment and climate 4) Economic inclusion and 5) Working with Communities.

The South and East Lincolnshire Climate Action Network (SELCAN) has celebrated its first year of existence and consists of eight sub-groups who meet regularly throughout the year. They have each now agreed priority proposals for the coming twelve months. It has been a busy first year for this Partnership with a number of projects already being worked on, including: -

- A proposal to reduce emissions arising from courier deliveries, by promoting the use of collection points at commonly visited locations.
- Webinars to assist businesses across the sub-region, featuring topics including carbon foot printing advice, promoting the benefits of a circular economy, transitioning to renewable energy, resource auditing and monitoring, and communicating low carbon credentials.
- A proposal to assist agricultural businesses to understand and quantify their carbon footprints and



Partnership Assurance	
Red	Amber
None	Arts Council England
	Environmental Agency
	Town Boards

Key Messages

learn how to undertake energy audits, supported by infographics.

- A project which promotes the concept of 'right tree in the right place' and explores opportunities to protect and enhance our wildlife via more inclusive and interconnected landscape-scale habitat restoration, by utilising tools such as the emerging ELMS, Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
- A proposal which will support residents and businesses to access available funding to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty.
- A proposal to promote technologies and behaviours that reduce water consumption across all domestic and commercial sectors and to support initiatives to improve the management of waterways and coastal areas thereby reducing flood risk and benefitting the natural environment by keeping water higher in the catchment for longer.
- A proposal around mapping of energy flows in and out of the sub-region with a focus on Anaerobic Digestion.
- Developing the first principles for an electric vehicle strategy for the sub-region.
- As well as these projects, SELCAN has developed a logo, website, social media channels and a communications plan.

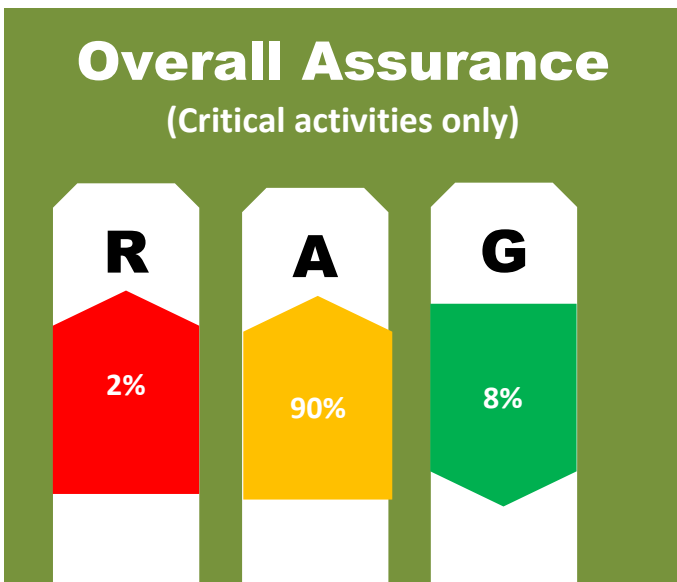
Key Messages

Emerging Risks

It is impingent on all managers to undertake effective risk management and attempt to minimise the impact of any risks should they materialise. Looking ahead and horizon scanning to identify any emerging risks is a pre-requisite and it is encouraging that this activity is being completed.

Environment Act, Fleet Management, Bulk Waste, Rising costs of construction works, Decent Homes 2, Damp & Mould Standards, Finance Support, ICT Alignment, Staffing, Invest EL Limited, PSPS, ELDC Towns Funds Assets, Staff capacity, recruitment, and retention, H&S Events, Impact on ICT from SELCP Transformation, Alignment, Payroll, Alignment Constitutions, Pension Scheme, UK Shared Prosperity Funding, Towns Fund Staff Capacity/Resources, Bidding for and Awarding Funds, PSPS Financial Reporting, End user operator for Towns Fund projects, Planning Software Systems alignment, Reduction on planning fees income, Staffing Resources across the whole of Planning, Apprenticeships/Training, National Infrastructure Projects, S106, Procurement, Uniform system, New guidance impact on service delivery and depot provision, Fleet - Environmental Issues, Revs and Bens New Starters, Revs and Bens Alignment, Carbon Reduction, Complaint handling code, Greater strain on Corporate Governance Framework, Leisure and Culture.

Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
Revs and Bens System Alignment.	Environment Act
	Fleet Management
	Rising costs of construction works
	Decent Homes 2
	Damp & Mould Standards
	Finance Support
	ICT Alignment
	Staffing
	Invest EL Limited
	PSPS
	ELDC Towns Funds Assets
	Staff capacity, recruitment, and retention
	H&S Events
	Impact on ICT from SELCP Transformation
	Alignment
	Payroll
	Alignment Constitutions
	Pension Scheme
	Towns Fund Staff Capacity/Resources
	Bidding for and Awarding Funds
	PSPS Financial Reporting
	End user operator for Towns Fund projects
	Planning Software Systems alignment
	Reduction on planning fees income
	Staffing Resources across the whole of Planning
	Apprenticeships/Training
	National Infrastructure Projects
	S106
	Procurement
	Uniform system



Key Messages

Critical Activities	
	New guidance impact on service delivery and depot provision
	Fleet - Environmental Issues
	Revs and Bens New Starters
	Carbon Reduction
	Complaint handling code
	Greater strain on Corporate Governance Framework

Some key pressures and risks continue to require attention to ensure appropriate mitigation such as matters impacting the public directly, for example the cost of living crisis and homelessness. The Well-Being and Community Leadership Division was created to be able to better apply resources against these and other risks and this is supported through key strategic documents such as the Lincolnshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy that the Council has signed up to. The Division through the Accessible Homes, Housing Enabling and Housing Strategy service is looking to commission work that will focus on the condition of the housing stock in the District and across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership area, in order to better target resources as we seek to drive up housing standards, supported by work towards a Private Sector Housing Strategy for the Council/Partnership.

Work towards transforming Neighbourhood Services continues to provide a focus as the team plan for the introduction of food waste collections in 2026 (a requirement of the Environment Act 2021) with the risk to manage here including ensuring sufficient depot space for any additional vehicles and considerations relating to alternative energy supplied vehicles. A project team is being led by the Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services to provide focus on this important work. Neighbourhood Services has also reviewed public conveniences and is seeking further improvements where these might be possible.

The team has also been challenged by recruitment and retention issues in the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing Service which will be carefully managed to ensure continuity of service, whilst inputting to support delivery against an emerging strategy to further support matters such as play provision in the District.

Other transformation work under consideration at this time is the provision of leisure and certain cultural facilities (the Embassy Theatre) in East Lindsey and across South and East Lincolnshire as the Partnership explores any opportunity to improve service delivery with enhanced efficiencies through a single contract for the sub-region. To help mitigate risks within this project a Head of Special Projects (Leisure) has been recruited to in order to provide dedicated support/resources in this regard. This is helping the Leisure and Cultural Services Division focus on managing the important relationship that East Lindsey District Council has with Magna Vitae both from a day to day contract management perspective (recognising the implications that pursuing a sub-regional leisure/cultural facilities offer has for MV at this time) but also when considering matters such as the potential transfer of London Road Sports Pavilion to a new third sector organisation.

Ensuring communities across East Lindsey feel safe as they go about their daily lives remains a priority, and following investment in CCTV infrastructure the service is looking at further ways to support delivery such as the use of volunteers. When considering matters within the Public Protection service it is reassuring to note that from a statutory provision perspective there are currently no key concerns as the service goes into a review in the new financial year.

Success in acquiring grants is evident within the Directorate and an area that continues to develop is the Council's Climate Change and Environment Team as they work hard to deliver green home grants (home energy advice and retrofit service) across the District and South and East Lincolnshire Partnership area whilst also championing work against the agreed Climate

Key Messages

Change Strategy and plans for carbon reduction. In order to help mitigate risks associated with budget spend and demand it is important that where opportunities to support capacity within this service exist, that they are utilised wherever possible.