



# **Combined Assurance Status Report 2023/24**



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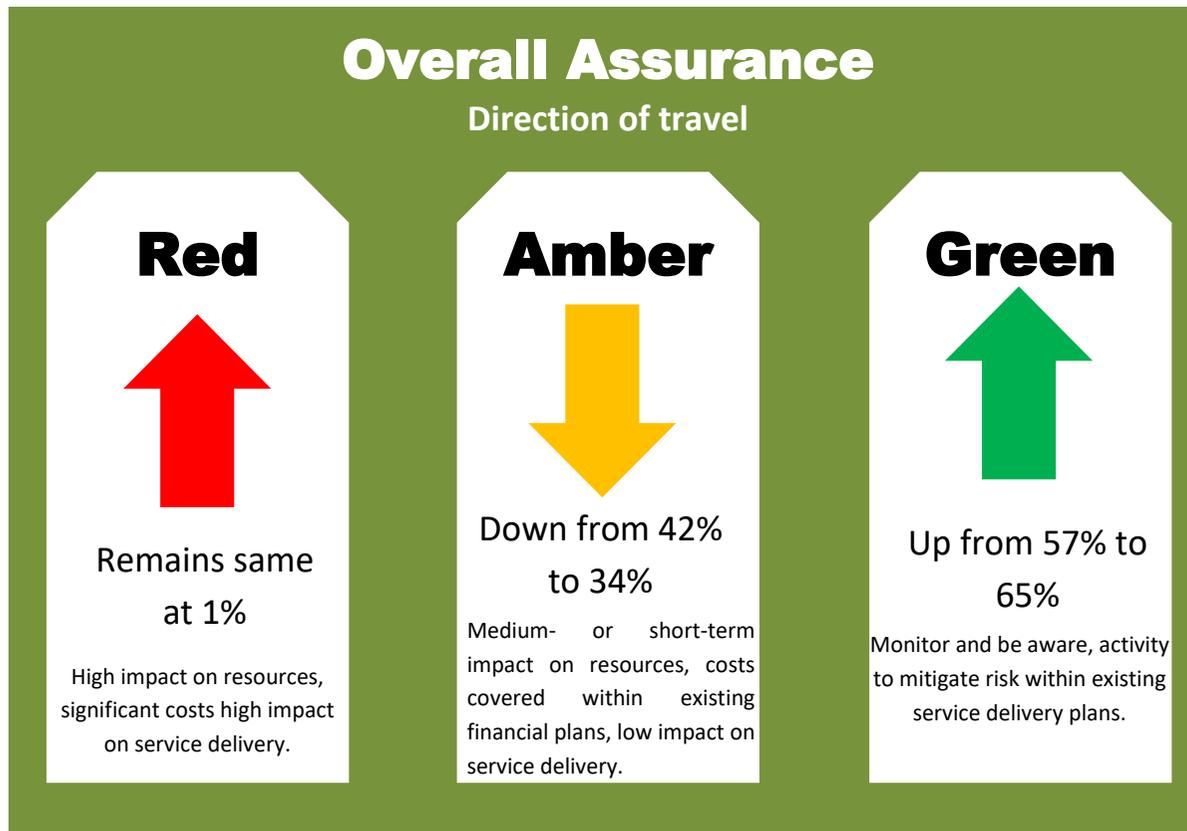
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# Overview of Assurance

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. We do this using the 3 lines model.

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.

The overall assurance of activities has been compiled and the direction of travel from 2022/23 is shown in the graphic. The following sections detail those which are amber or red and provide a narrative on the reasons and action being taken.

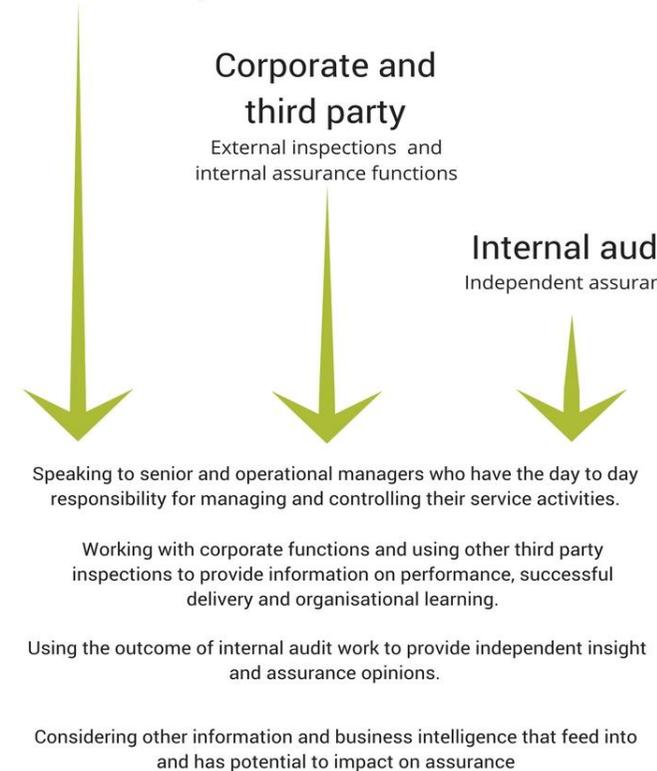


## How do we assure ourselves about how the council is run?

**Management**  
Accountable for delivery

**Corporate and third party**  
External inspections and internal assurance functions

**Internal audit**  
Independent assurance



## Chief Executive's Summary

We thank Assurance Lincolnshire for producing the 2023-24 Combined Assurance and the Council's Management Team and Team Managers for providing their time and input. We very much value this annual exercise and it is highly beneficial in identifying not only areas that are operating well but also identifying aspects that require greater focus. The findings represent a comprehensive and accurate view of assurance position across services, critical systems, governance processes, ICT arrangements, key projects, partnerships and risk analysis.

The three-level assurance model has been used to provide assurance that we are operating as effectively as can be expected and key risks are managed appropriately. Internal Audit have co-ordinated the process and compiled the information and provided constructive challenge over the process.

2023-24 has been a successful year for the Council, despite significant challenges in funding, a change in political administration and the announcement of the pausing of the Scampton project due to a Home Office decision to place a large pathfinder asylum accommodation site in the district the Council has maintained Corporate and Service Performance, delivered services within budget and has continued to deliver key projects and programmes.

## 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	Mitigations	Current risk rating	Target risk rating
Inability to set a sustainable balanced budget for 2024/25	MTFP in place. Identification and use of grant-funding opportunities. Value for Money Strategy adopted and Lobbying strategy. Volatility and risk reserves maintained. Working Balance minimum set at £2.5m and Commercial risk indicators set.	4	4
Cost related to the proposed asylum centre at Scampton has an adverse impact on financial sustainability	Programme of works Partnership Work across all statutory agencies in Lincolnshire. Legal action (Judicial review). Financial negotiations with Home Office and partner organisations.	9	1
The quality of services does not meet customer expectations	Continual development of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technology and Procurement of new contact centre technology. Robust performance management & Quality Management Board in place. Customer Experience Strategy being developed including action plan.	6	4
Inability for the Council's governance to support quality decision making	Member and Staff protocols, training and development programmes in place. Annual review of the Council's Constitution. Robust corporate governance framework. Annual schedule of audits and internal/external audit oversight. Corporate Plan 2023-27 approved. Programme Boards operating to oversee project development	6	3

## Strategic Risks

Risk	Mitigations	Current risk rating	Target risk rating
Inability to raise local educational attainment and skills levels	West Lindsey Employment & Skills Partnership operating in line with approved strategy and delivery plan. WLDC establish and lead Further Education Taskforce. UKSPF investment plan and Multiply delivery.	9	9
Inadequate support is provided for vulnerable groups and communities	Targeted enforcement project in private rented sector being developed. Focused support for residents of Hemswell Cliff. Development of normalisation strategy for Scampton. Effective multi-agency partnership working. Communities at Risk Strategy. Housing and Wellbeing Board have oversight.	9	6
Health and wellbeing of the district's residents does not improve	Leisure Contract monitoring. Everyone Active Community Wellbeing Plan developed. Wellbeing service in place and promoted with clear objectives. Representation on Wellbeing Lincs Management Board	9	6
The local housing market and the Council's housing related services do not meet demand	Ongoing monitoring of Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. Housing Strategy adopted & Delivery of homelessness strategy. Targeted enforcement project is being delivered and will be reviewed. Viable housing solution, RSAP and NSAP properties acquired. Temporary accommodation review undertaken.	9	6
The local economy does not grow sufficiently	Maintain sustainable Local Plan for Central Lincolnshire. Maintain effective working relationships with key funders to keep cost increases under review. Implement Levelling Up programme. Development and delivery of Economic Recovery Strategy leading to new Economic Development Strategy Implementation of UKSPF Investment Plan.	9	6

## Strategic Risks

Risk	Mitigations	Current risk rating	Target risk rating
Insufficient action taken to create a cleaner and safer district	Award winning Waste Collection and Street Cleaning Service. Refreshed (Mar 2023) Enforcement policies operating to oversee all relevant areas. CCTV operations in place 24/7. Educating school children in recycling and sustainability. Monthly tactical meetings with the Police and Environment Agency	8	4
Inability to deliver our Climate Change ambitions and not deliver net zero carbon emissions by 2050	Climate Strategy and Action Plan Earmarked reserves Climate initiatives Member and Officer working groups. County wide Partnership working Central Lincolnshire Local Plan	4	4
Inability to maintain critical services and deal with emergency events	Robust infrastructure and back-up arrangements. IT Disaster Recovery Plan & robust emergency planning in place. Membership of LRF Partnership. Regular training for Strategic and Tactical Commanders + Members. Continued work with partners on Humber 2100 Strategy. Approval of new, countrywide low-level emergency response procedure.	6	6
ICT Security and Information Governance arrangements are ineffective – Part A: Data Extortion Attack, State-aligned actors	Robust ICT security systems in place & PCIDSS compliance. Cyber Assessment Framework assurance. Up to date infrastructure and back-up arrangements Business continuity arrangements established and updated. On-going training and awareness for staff.	4	4
ICT Security and Information Governance arrangements are ineffective – Part B: Significant data breach or cyber loss of data	Robust ICT security systems in place & PCIDSS compliance. Cyber Assessment Framework assurance. Up to date infrastructure and back-up arrangements Business continuity arrangements established and updated. On-going training and awareness for staff.	8	8

## Strategic Risks

Risk	Mitigations	Current risk rating	Target risk rating
ICT Security and Information Governance arrangements are ineffective – Part C: Targeted malicious attack to gain access to devices and data	Robust ICT security systems in place & PCIDSS compliance. Cyber Assessment Framework assurance. Up to date infrastructure and back-up arrangements Business continuity arrangements established and updated. On-going training and awareness for staff.	8	8
ICT Security and Information Governance arrangements are ineffective – Part D: Cyber enabled fraud	Robust ICT security systems in place & PCIDSS compliance. Cyber Assessment Framework assurance. Up to date infrastructure and back-up arrangements Business continuity arrangements established and updated. On-going training and awareness for staff.	8	8
Inability to maintain service delivery with the amount of change initiatives	Robust governance through Programme board and Portfolio Board. P3M3 Maturity Model annual review Performance and Delivery quarterly reports and performance improvement plans in place with full measure set review in Autumn 23/24.	8	6
Failure to comply with legislation including Health and Safety matters	General and service specific H&S training provided. Service level H&S risk assessments. Reporting to Mgt Team/JSCC on H&S incidents. Pro-active maintenance programme.	8	8
Central Lincolnshire Local Plan does not deliver land required for sustainable development to meet the needs of residents, businesses and communities	Joint CLLP Team Good Governance & positive partnership working (CLSG/HoPs) CLLP vision and objectives reflect the Corporate Plan, Objectives and Vision. Corporate Policy & Strategy Team ensure corporate priorities are reflected in service policy & strategy	6	6

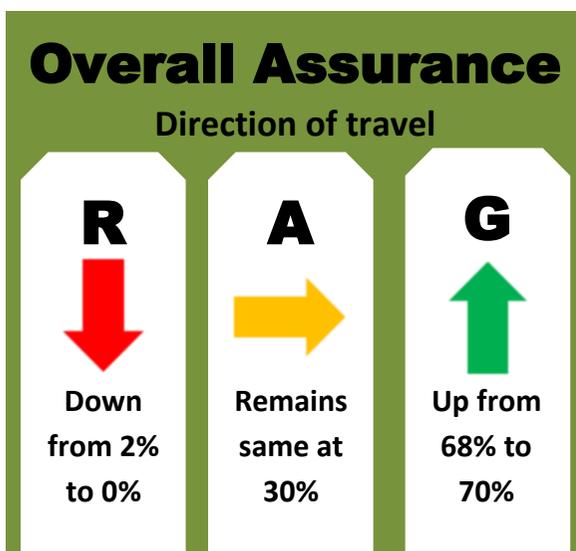
Key		
<b>Red</b> High impact on resources, significant costs likely, high impact on service delivery	<b>Amber</b> Medium or short term impact on resources, cost covered within existing financial plans, low impact on service delivery	<b>Green</b> Monitor and be aware, activity to mitigate the risk within existing service delivery plans / management arrangements

## Management Team's Key Messages

# Operational and Transactional Services

**Objectives** – Operational and Transactional services refer to the agreed set of services and functions run by the Council. Each service area should have clarity of its purpose, an understanding of their stakeholders and clear processes for delivery and managing performance.

Critical Activities
Amber
Street Lighting
Homeless Prevention
Communities at Risk
Disabled Facilities Grants
Community Services
Green Space Management
Food Safety
Commercial Waste
Gainsborough Markets
Trinity Arts
Customer Services
Income Management System
Complaints
Lea Fields Crematorium



## Overall Comments

In 2023-24 we are pleased to report that our red risks have reduced, and our level of green assurance has increased.

Upgrades of **Street Lighting** remains amber due to challenges with suppliers interested in carrying out the work. Where bulbs require replacing, they are replaced with LED bulbs.

**Homeless Prevention** ensures the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act are met and homelessness is rare brief and non-recurring. Homelessness cases could rise due to cost-of-living challenges, the team could cope with slight increase in cases, but a huge spike would test resources.

The Temporary accommodation procurement process is underway to secure additional TA which will also improve service and potentially increase capacity within the team.

The additional Community at Risk of Scampton has been added to the **Communities at Risk** listing and the strategy will be reviewed in 2024-

## Management Team's Key Messages

25. In year funding from the Communities at Risk reserve has been approved to support enforcement in our Communities at Risk.

The **Disabled Facilities Grants** Service is being delivered efficiently and at the highest level it can be under the funding constraints. The Council continues as a non-stock holding authority to lobby for fair funding in this area for our District.

**Community Services** cover a range of community-based business as usual activity including support to communities, parish/town council liaison, engagement and voluntary sector work. Community action work aligns to Corporate Plan priorities and the UKSPF programme. Staff resilience in this area is a challenge and in the next 12 months a new Community Strategy will be delivered.

**Green Space Management.** The Council has the responsibility to manage woodlands and parks, maintaining the public access. There are service level contracts and grant funding available to do this. A new green space Officer is to be appointed and they will coordinate this work.

**Food Safety** Service performance this year is expected to meet the required level, but this may be a challenge in 2024/25 in terms of the number of food safety inspections to complete, given existing resources and fluctuations in the number of required inspections. The Food, Health and Safety Work Plan was approved by the Regulatory Committee in June 23. Progress updates are provided to the Management Team and Regulatory Committee.

The **Commercial Waste** service continues to deliver a contribution to the Council's budget. Income has not risen as quickly as anticipated but the service continues to perform well and has recently adopted a new business plan.

**Gainsborough Market** has unfortunately not delivered the level of income predicted in the business plan; a new working group has been set up and the organisation is year two of delivering its action plan to improve the market offering across the district.

**Trinity Arts Centre** ticket sales have improved and the venue hosted a successful pantomime season. Performance is reported effectively with monthly updates through Commercial Board. The Cultural Strategy will be approved in Quarter One of 2024-25 which will assist in unlocking external funding for the venue.

**Customer Services** A new staff structure has been rolled out and is working effectively. The dynamic of customers has changed, queries still remain complex and difficult, and these are more frequent. A Together 24 review has been undertaken. The new contact centre will help with efficiencies and help to manage complex customers.

**Income Management System** the Council has experienced some supplier quality issues during 2023-24 with outages over weekends and untested patches being supplied. A business case will be brought to Commercial Board to explore alternative options in Quarter One 2024-25.

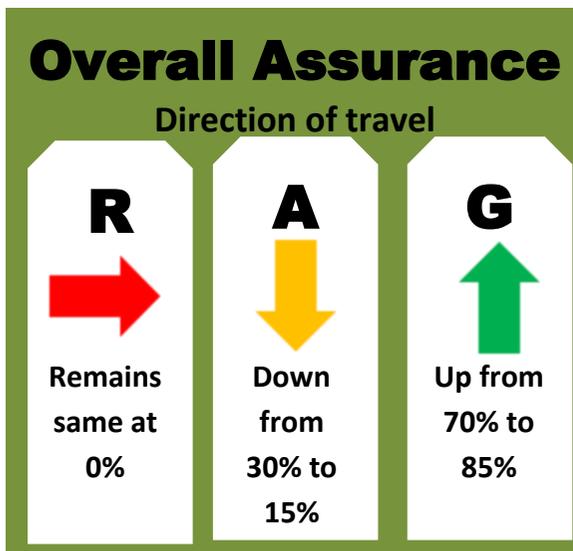
**Complaints** Whilst complaints performance is generally robust and ombudsman referrals low, the Ombudsman have been out to consultation with a new two stage complaints process to follow and be implemented during 2024-25. There is some uncertainty currently of what this will involve and what change will be required.

**Lea Fields Crematorium.** The service continues to operate with the main risk being generating income levels originally forecast. The key driver for this is more customers opting for direct cremation. Numbers of cremations continue to increase but the move to direct cremations impacts income levels/  
There will be a new Business Plan which is scheduled to go to committee in March 2024

# Management Team's Key Messages

## Governance

**Objectives** – This section includes areas such as corporate governance, risk management, partnerships, information governance, procurement and contract management, Human Resources, project management and Member and Democratic Services.



Governance	
Amber	
Democratic Services	
HR Policy & Procedures	
Procurement	

## Overall Comments

### Democratic Services

The service continues to meet legislative requirements and service the committees despite have staff vacancies in year. Recruitment for replacement staff has now been completed.

### HR Policy & Procedures

HR have recognised that policies need reviewing and updating. They have made good progress with 4 policies updated and signed off within the last 6 months. There is also a plan to undertake remaining reviews and renewals with a new manager started in January 2024.

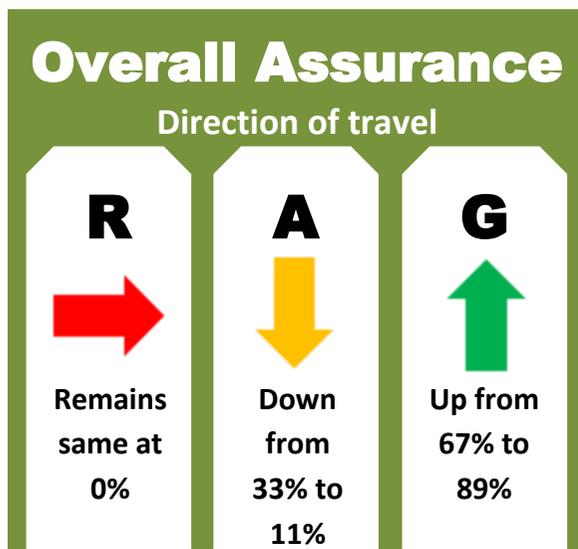
### Procurement

The Director of Operational and Commercial at WLDC also meets with Procurement Lincs every 6 weeks to monitor progress. The service lacks resilience as there is only one procurement officer, however support from PL is being written into the refreshed agreement.

# Management Team's Key Messages

## Resources

**Objectives** – This aspect relates to the functions that support the running of the Council and ensure compliance with policies and set procedures.



Resources
Amber
Financial Resilience
Accounts Receivable

## Overall Comments

### Financial Resilience

As for all Local Authorities future resilience remains a challenge. The Council still reports as strong on the CIPFA Financial resilience index but there remains a future budget gap. The T24 programme is in place to deliver cost savings in future.

The General Fund reserves provide 2 years of further funding until the budget gap becomes a real issue.

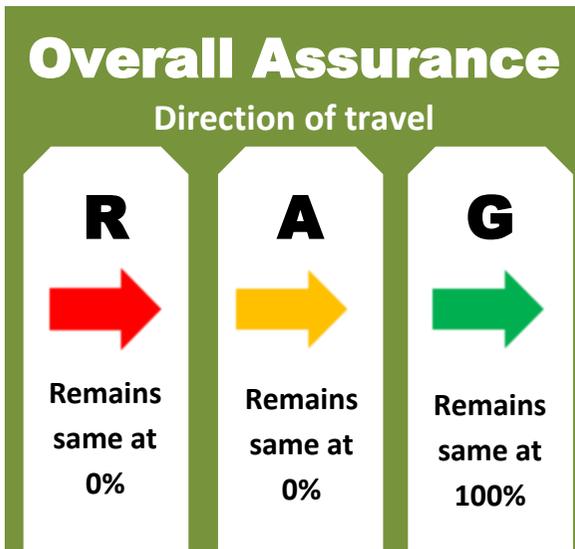
### Accounts Receivable

The One Council system continues to be embedded. The majority of system issues have now been resolved and the team continues to focus on the clearance of historic system debts before the 31 March 2024.

# Management Team's Key Messages

## ICT

**Objectives:** - The ICT aspect of the report focuses on governance arrangements within the service, the infrastructure, day to day operations, projects, compliance and applications and systems.



### Overall Comments

A full review of the ICT Assurance Map 2023 has been completed. The ICT team have maintained full accreditation to undertake organisational cyber assessments as part of Cyber Essentials +.

Robust ICT security systems and processes are in place with up-to-date infrastructure and back-up arrangements.

All aspects of the service have operated effectively over the past 12 months and the shared ICT partnership with North Kesteven District Council continues to work well. A revised Digital Strategy was approved during the year.

External assurance is provided through a support contract which provides expertise for active monitoring and support of any high impact issues.

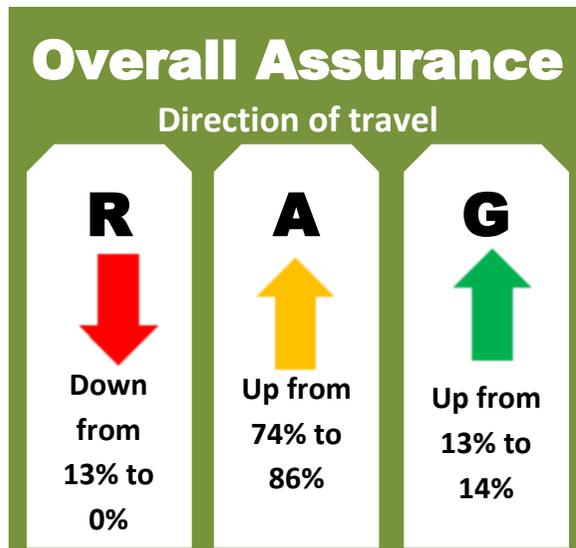
Training and staff awareness are re-enforced for all ICT policies, hybrid working and Cyber Security risks.

# Management Team's Key Messages

## Emerging risks

**Objectives:** - It is important all managers 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 undertaken across the Council.

Emerging Risks
<b>Amber</b>
Elections Act
General Election
Recruitment
Operational Resilience
Sustainability, Climate and Environment Strategy project risk
Devolution
Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
Sport and physical activity
Non adoption of cultural strategy
Building Control change in Regulations
Income from leisure contract
Failure to deliver food waste on time
Failure to achieve environmental targets
Budget Holder accountability
Financial Resilience
Scampton
End of life plan for plant replacement/repair



## Overall Comments

### Elections Act

Elections Act Tranche 2 means that new legislation and guidance will be introduced and will impact on electoral administrators, campaigners and voters. The impacts are unclear at this stage.

# Management Team's Key Messages

## General Election

A General Election must be called by January 2025. Delivery is a significant programme of work.

## Recruitment

Recruitment is challenging and a Workforce Development Plan is being developed.

## Operational Resilience

There has been high volume of changes across the Council since 2022 including new projects, new system implementations, and continued adapting to new ways of working and implementing changes to legislation. Operational Capacity, adequate skill sets and service resilience to be considered in each area.

## End of Life plan for Plant

There is not a comprehensive end-of-life plan for plant replacement/repair meaning that there are constant reviews on plant, and it is very much led by the breaking down of plant or plant repair once it is damaged. Systems in place to manage this but these are still developing and contain some gaps in information.

## Sustainability, Climate and Environment Strategy Project risk

Change in National Policy which could undermine the approach to deliver net zero and also the lack of clarity of funding for initiatives.

## Devolution

Consultation has now concluded; the Council awaits further developments in this area.

## Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project

WLDC now working through 5 Development Consent Orders for the delivery of Nationally Significant Solar Developments. Our area continues to be sought after due to grid connection availability together with other factors. Funding will continue to be sought through Planning Performance Agreements although the capacity and resources

required for this work area continues to be significant and to some extent unknown.

## Sport and Physical Activity

Enhanced requirements for work in this area and whilst budget has been identified there is currently no resources aligned to the delivery.

## Non-adoption from cultural strategy

Delay to adoption is causing concern with teams and risks to securing future funding.

## Income from leisure contact

Leisure facility is 50 years old and starting the service is debating about a refurb or replacement facility. The risk is the inability to provide service because of break or damage to the facility it is currently in. Although the service is working on a plan at the moment. Leisure provider in the current state does not wish to extend contract.

## Failure to deliver food waste on time.

The service has mitigation in place and are doing everything they can to prepare and plan for this change but there will be key decisions that need to go through management and committee. There will be conflict and debate around environmental vs financial impacts.

## Financial Resilience

WLDC is not able to address future budget gaps due to the non-delivery of cost savings from the T24 programme.

## Scampton

There is risk and uncertainty regarding the future of the site.

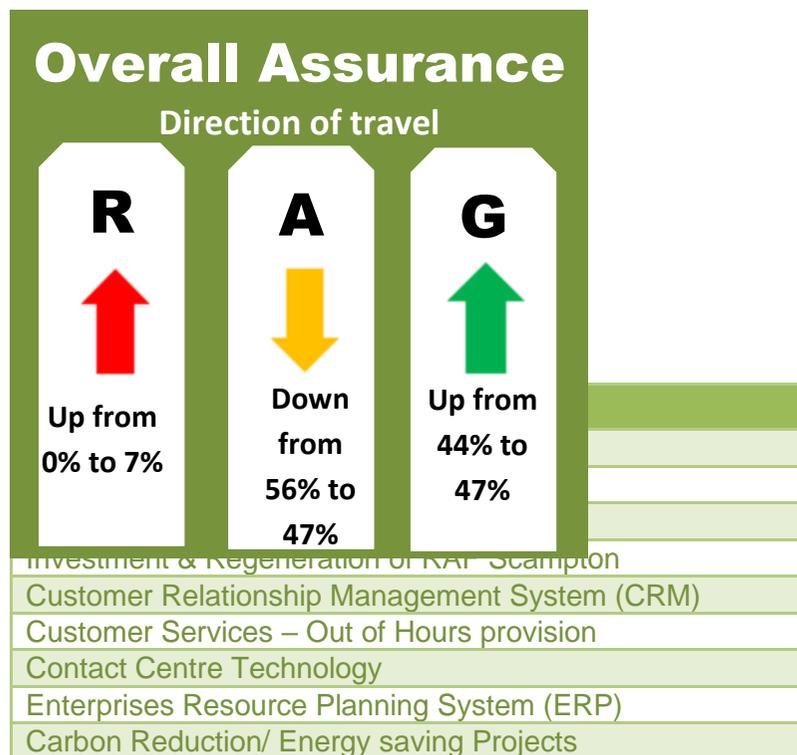
## Failure to deliver Environmental targets.

There will be challenges in the future with the new government guidance around the council's green plan. Fleet decarbonisation has started to give a direction around electrification of the fleet. There will be a substantial cost set up costs to support the electrification of the fleet.

# Management Team's Key Messages

## Key Projects

**Objectives:** - During the Combined Assurance mapping exercise, project management was deemed to be working effectively across the Council.



## Overall Comments

### Change 4 Lincs

Whilst there is funding available until March 2025, the partnership rough sleeper service led by South Kesteven has failed to appoint an outreach worker in our area. Consequently, further pressure has been put on temporary accommodation. The service is significantly overspent, and West Lindsey will not be proposing to continue membership.

### Investment & Regeneration of RAF Scampton

The Procurement exercise was completed in 2022-23 and a development partner selected. In March 2023, it was announced by the Home Office their intention to base a large pathfinder asylum accommodation centre on site. The Council has continued to challenge this decision during 2023-24 to protect the investment and regeneration scheme.

### Customer Relationship Management System

The Council continues to develop the system to minimise reliance on legacy applications.

### Customer Services – Out of Hours provision

The Council continues to explore options for an alternative service than the County provided service currently.

### Contact Centre Technology

## **Management Team's Key Messages**

The project was approved by Corporate Policy and Resources Committee in Quarter three and procurement for replacement technology commenced in Quarter Four.

### **Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP)**

The ERP system was implemented in 2022 but further modules are available and are being added. In 2023-24 the capital accounting and fixed asset module was implemented.

### **Carbon Reduction / Energy Saving Projects**

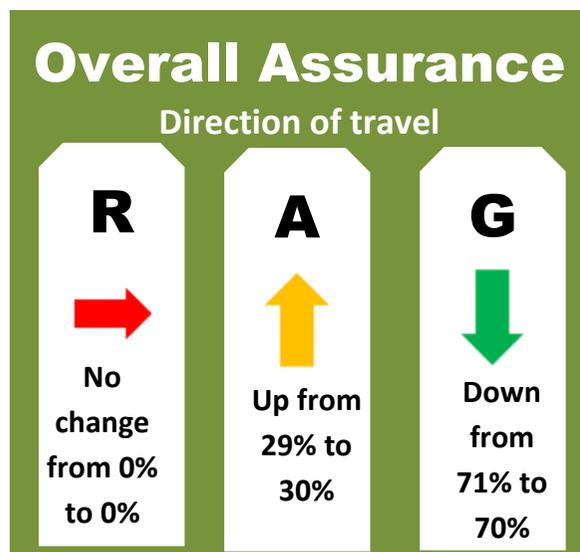
Grant funding is being sought on an ongoing basis to replace existing assets with energy saving and carbon reduction products. A vehicle fleet review has taken place but there is no carbon reduced waste vehicle available for business needs currently.

# Management Team's Key Messages

## Key Partnerships

**Objectives:** - 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.

Key Partnerships
Amber
Wellbeing Contract
Destination Lincolnshire
Lincolnshire Waste Partnership



## Overall Comments

### Wellbeing Contract

The Council employs nine people as accountable body for the group of Councils which deliver the service to the Lincolnshire Districts. Notice has been given on the existing contract with a new contract in procurement currently.

### Destination Lincolnshire

This partnership oversees the area Visitor Economy plan and manages activity and performance. There is some uncertainty around how devolution will affect the delivery of this partnership.

### Lincolnshire Waste Partnership

This partnership faces some key challenges with changes in legislation regarding collection of food waste which will affect all partners.