

Combined Assurance Status Report 2022/23



**Boston Borough Council
January 2023**

Contents

Overview of Assurance	Page 1
Chief Executive's Summary	Page 2
Strategic Risk	Page 3
Deputy Chief Executive's Key Messages	
Communities	Page 5
Corporate Development	Page 7
Programme Delivery & SIRO	Page 8
Growth	Page 9
Strategic Partnership Working (PSPS Delivered services)	Page 10
Key Projects	Page 11
Key Partnerships	Page 13
Emerging Risks	Page 12

The contacts at Assurance Lincolnshire are:

Lucy Pledge CMIIA, QIAL
Audit and Risk Manager (Head of Internal Audit)

Lucy.pledge@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Matthew Waller CMIIA
Internal Audit Manager

Matthew.Waller@lincolnshire.gov.uk

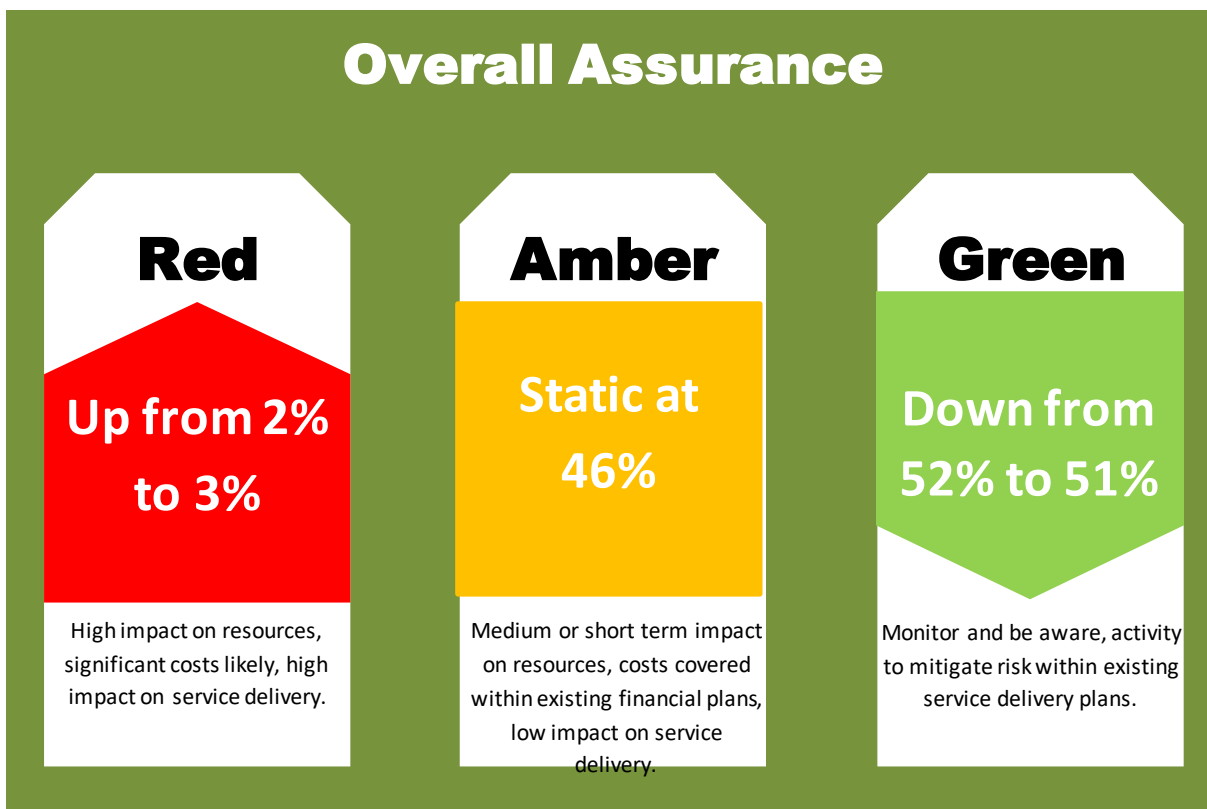
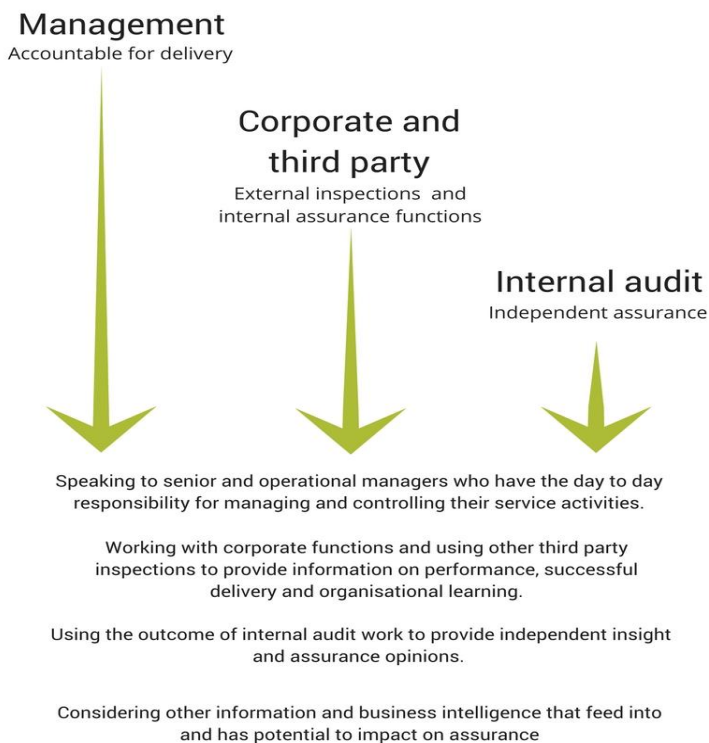
Overview of Assurance

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.

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



Chief Executive's Summary

The Combined Assurance reporting is now embedded within each Authority and continues to be a key piece of our annual governance framework.

It is noticeable that the traffic light scores remain broadly consistent with previous years, which is impressive given the external factors we face, such as recruitment and retention of skilled employees.

The areas identified as requiring additional assurance will help our staff develop plans to bring forward further measures as we seek to learn and develop as a provider of public services to our communities.

Finally, the largest proportion of our services sit in the amber zone, and we fully recognise the ongoing requirement to work hard and give governance and assurance a place of importance to ensure we remain aware a well-run organisation.

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	Direction Of Travel
The risk of economic hardship to local people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	High	=
The risk of long-term health issues on local people; the opportunity to work with health partners to address these	The opportunity to work with health partners to address long term health issues and deprivation, to raise awareness and promote good health, to support the sustainability of local health services	Medium	=
Risk to local businesses, lack of growth, lack of inward investment and tourism; opportunity to encourage growth and stimulate the local economy; good community relations	Town Deal and Levelling Up projects	Medium	=
Risk to the environment and future sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon Reduction Action Plan approved. • Climate Change Strategy approved. • Green Home Grants are in delivery. 	Medium	=
Impact of environmental crime (fly tipping and littering) on local people, the local area, and the reputation of the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and enforcement; • Partnership working, including with community groups 	Medium	=
Risk around the long-term balancing of the budget with economic and funding uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Financial Strategy; • Budgetary process; • Sound level of reserves • Continued close monitoring 	High	=

Key Messages

Risk	Mitigating actions	Risk rating	Direction Of Travel
Risks to service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff resources maximised under the Partnership. Working with external partners to deliver shared priorities. HR support on recruitment and retention. Training plans. Values & behaviors' work. Annual Delivery Plan, Workforce Development, policies, and procedures. 	Medium	=
Community risks shared across Lincolnshire, managed in partnership with the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Risk Register monitored by the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum (LRF) Work with partners to assess, monitor and plan for these risks together. Exercising of plans and training of staff. 	Medium	=
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

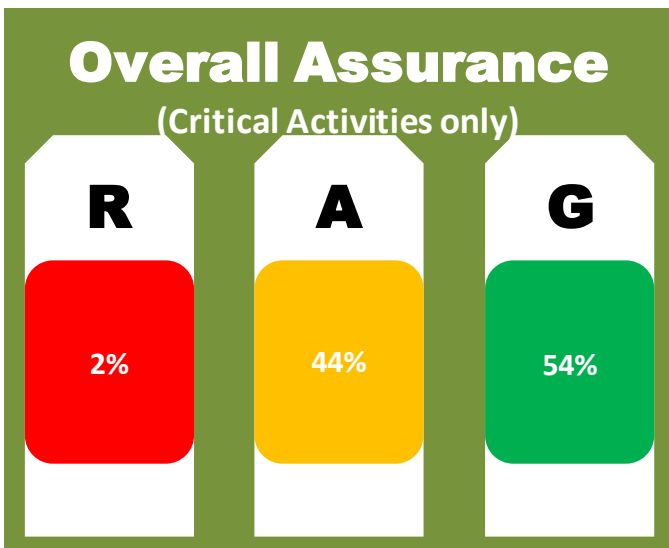
Deputy Chief Executive - Communities

Refuse and Recycling, Commercial Services, Street Scene (Parks & Grounds Maintenance) Environmental Enforcement, Street Cleansing, Green Waste, Depot, Markets, Fleet management and Maintenance, Safeguarding, Wellbeing, Affordable Homes and supported Housing Growth, Homelessness, Housing Standards, Rough Sleeping, Housing Advice Triage, Housing Register, Temporary Accommodation, Housing Assistance (DFG and other grants), Community Safety, CCTV, Licensing, Emergency Planning, Business Continuity, Land Charges, Environmental Health - Food Safety, Environmental Protection, Building Control, Green Homes, Carbon Reduction, Climate Change, Corporate Health & Safety, Geoff Moulder Leisure Centre, Sport & Play, Boston Town Area Committee.

Critical Activities	
	Housing Standards
	Housing Advice Triage
	Temporary Accommodation
	Housing Strategy
	Housing Assistance (DFG & other grants)
	Business Continuity
	Building Control
	Green Homes, Phase 2 & 3
	Carbon Reduction
	Leisure
	Cost of Living Crisis
	Affordable Homes and Supported Housing Growth

During 2022/23 the Communities Directorate has been able to mobilise its resources effectively in order to meet the aims and objectives of Boston Borough 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 a new enviro-crime contract, a new intelligence led approach to fly tipping embedded within a new fly tipping strategy and support for the local voluntary and community sector through the development of a Community Lottery and Crowd Funding platform. This is all alongside the production of other key strategic pieces of work such as a Climate Change Strategy for South and East Lincolnshire and a Community Safety Strategy that also covers the sub-region.

A key risk during the year relates to depot provision noting whilst ensuring the day job of cleansing and collecting waste for recycling/disposal continues, the Neighbourhood Services Division is making preparations for the requirements associated with the Environment Act 2021. The current depot has space limitations, and the service also needs to ensure vehicles can be washed as required, ideally



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
Depot	Commercial Services
	Green Waste
	Safeguarding
	PSPS Customer Service Liaison
	Homelessness

Key Messages

without having to travel too far and at the most affordable cost. Considerations regarding suitable future options are ongoing.

Some key pressures during 2022/23 continue to be tackled such as the cost-of-living crisis, increases in utility bills (including fuel) and homelessness. The Well-Being and Community Leadership Division within the Communities Directorate has distributed £3.1 million of Household Support Funding across South and East Lincolnshire and last year BBC agreed/signed up to a new Homelessness Strategy for Lincolnshire. During 2023/24 the Division is also looking to develop a Housing Strategy whilst ensuring other key pieces of housing related work continue to progress such as the distribution of disabled facilities grants and work within the private rented sector.

The Directorate has further helped people to convert their homes to be more environmentally friendly and having initially secured £7.2 million for green homes grant funding for the sub-region a further £15.4 million has been recently secured. To help ensure that this funding is appropriately managed the Climate Change and Environment Team is ensuring it has adequate resources and a sufficiently qualified team to deliver what is required.

Community Safety remains a priority area and during 2022/23 £400,000 of Safer Streets Round 4 Funding was secured. This funding pot is enhancing CCTV infrastructure in Boston and elsewhere in the sub-region (Skegness and Spalding).

Finally, from a leisure and culture perspective the Communities Directorate is the sponsor for a number of key projects such as the Geoff Moulder Leisure Centre refurbishment. Whilst planning permission has now been achieved the project itself will need to move to the delivery phase in the coming year. A multi-service project team regularly meets in order to progress this initiative as required.

Key Messages

Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Development

Training Plans and Budgets, Workforce Strategy & Culture, Communications, Transformation, Risk Management, Consultation, Corporate Plan, Performance, Legal Services, Data Protection, Information Management, Complaints, Members Expenses & Community Grants, Member Training, Police & Crime Panel, Electoral Registration, Elections, Scrutiny Function, Committee Services, Procurement, Fraud, Financial Resilience, Internal Audit, Contract Management, Constitution

This year has seen a significant programme of activity embedding new governance arrangements across the three organisations supporting the new partnership way of working that is still developing. One of the most notable outcomes being the Partnership Peer Review in respect of which a detailed action plan was developed and is being regularly reviewed and reported upon.

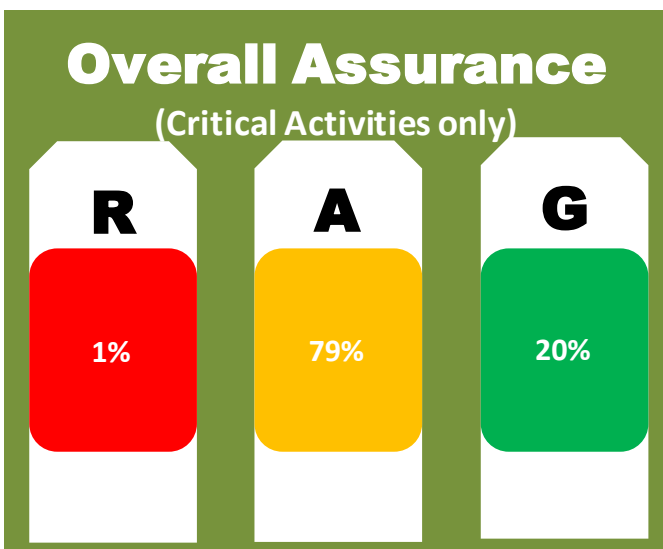
The Transformation agenda has also seen significant activity with the development of the Partnership IT strategy which will assist services and also the provision of resources to support service changes through the Workforce Development Strategy and service review proforma.

The key areas of Risk Management and Procurement have seen renewed focus and enhanced resources with a complete review of all Risks and the establishment of a new team within PSPS to provide procurement advice a considerable step change from previous resource levels. A new performance management system has also been implemented to support the partnerships performance reporting processes.

A key area of work was the alignment of the Contract Procedure Rules across the partnership and the constitution will continue to be a key area for future review.

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

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



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
Corporate Governance	Transformation (inc. Digital)
	Data Protection & Corporate Compliance
	Procurement
	Finance Skills and Knowledge
	Contract Management
	Constitution

Key Messages

Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery & SIRO

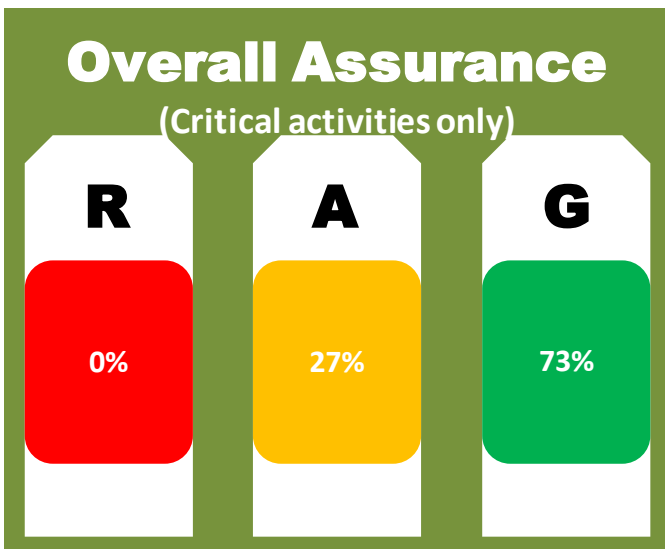
Towns Fund Delivery, New Homes Capital Programme, Princess Royal Sports Arena, Strategic Asset Management, Land & Property, Redstone Caravan Park, Riverside Industrial Estate, Cleaning – Caretakers, Car Parks, Public Conveniences, Crematorium & Cemeteries.

It is pleasing to note that 73% of our critical activities are rated as green and that there are none rated as red.

All critical activities are actively monitored, and we have measures in place to address the small number of critical activities rated as amber.

Income levels generally, are down compared to previous years and under budget as we continue to move on from the effects of Covid.

They will continue to be monitored during the year and are reviewed on a monthly basis by the assets and delivery team.



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
None	BBC Car Parks
	Redstone Caravan Park
	Princess Royal Sports Centre

Key Messages

Deputy Chief Executive - Growth

Towns Fund, Investment & Growth, Cultural Strategy, Vital & Viable, Rural Lincolnshire Enterprise Hub, Recovery Grants, PE21, S106, Planning Policy, Heritage, Planning Enforcement, Development Management Control, South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee

Our Planning performance indicators continue to perform strongly and there is strong satisfaction with the planning function from inward investment through economic development activity.

The performance and monitoring relating to Town Deal projects is on target and meeting DLUCH deadlines.

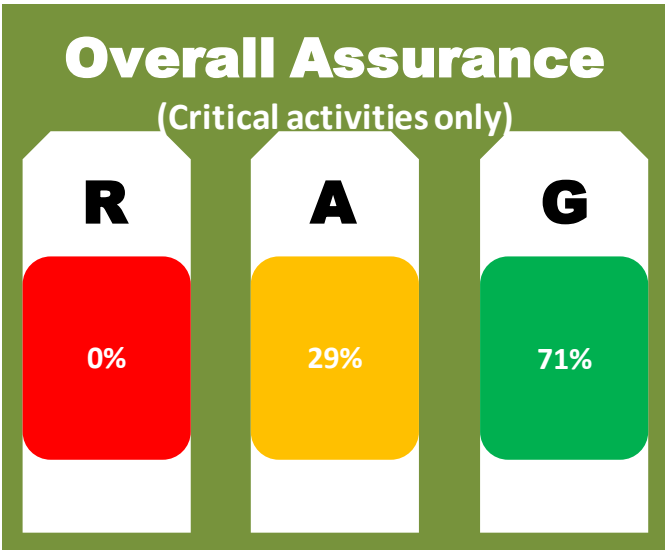
We are in dialogue with DLUCH on the monitoring and profile of the LUF submission.

UKSPF and Rural Prosperity - the first wave of funding has been committed and we have received positive feedback from DLUCH in relation to delivery of these funds.

We continue to work with partners to identify any emerging challenges and finding solutions.

Inward investment approaches have improved for Boston due to increased marketing exposure - such as attendance at UKREiiF which has generated over 300 new contacts across the sub-region.

We continue to develop the skills agenda with schools/colleges/universities and businesses.



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
None	Towns Fund – Internal Governance
	Towns Fund – LA as Accountable Body
	Towns Fund – Inception to Stage 4 Delivery
	Competitive Funding, Levelling up and Cultural
	Planning Enforcement Caravans

Key Messages

Strategic Partnership Working

Health & Safety, HR strategy, Officers and Members Expenses, Recruitment, Payroll, Equality & Diversity, Employee Relations, Systems & Reporting, Pension Scheme, Customer Services, Income, Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, General Ledger, VAT, Procurement Cards, Treasury Management, Insurance, Budget Preparation & Management, Control Account Reconciliations, New Income Management System, Council Tax, Recovery, Housing Benefits, Council Tax Support, CTS Fraud, Business Rates, ICT Governance, ICT Infrastructure, ICT Operations, ICT Projects, ICT Compliance

Critical Activities
Close Down of Accounts
New income Management System
Recovery
Housing Benefits
Council Tax Support

A significant amount of effort is being into the Partnership working with PSPSL to address some key areas of focus. The recruitment difficulties in the Finance team and the use of interims to support its work are a continued area of concern for both the company and the Council.

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 continues.

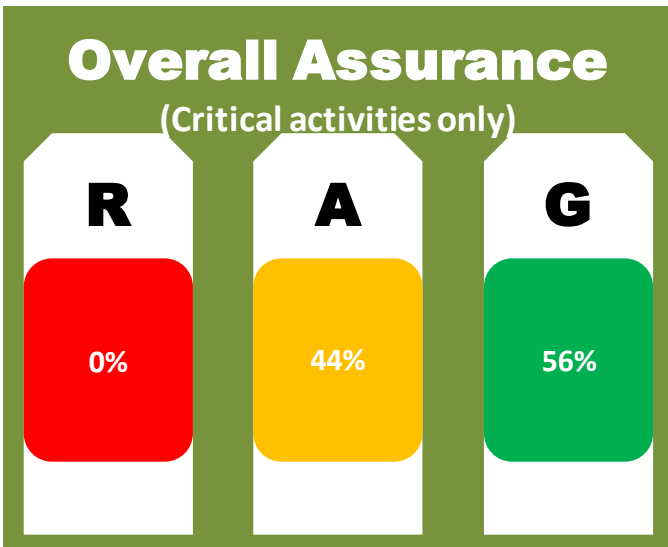
The specialist areas of the service continue to be under high demand particularly in respect of Capital, Treasury and VAT due to the complex nature of the Towns Fund projects and changes to the prudential and treasury framework.

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.

Alignment of processes across the benefits function continues to take place following the transfer of the service into PSPS and is a continued area of risk until this work is completed and fully embedded.



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
None	Recruitment
	Accounts Receivable
	Accounts Payable
	General Ledger
	Budget Management
	Budget Preparation
	Control Account Reconciliation
	Financial Staff Resilience

Key Messages

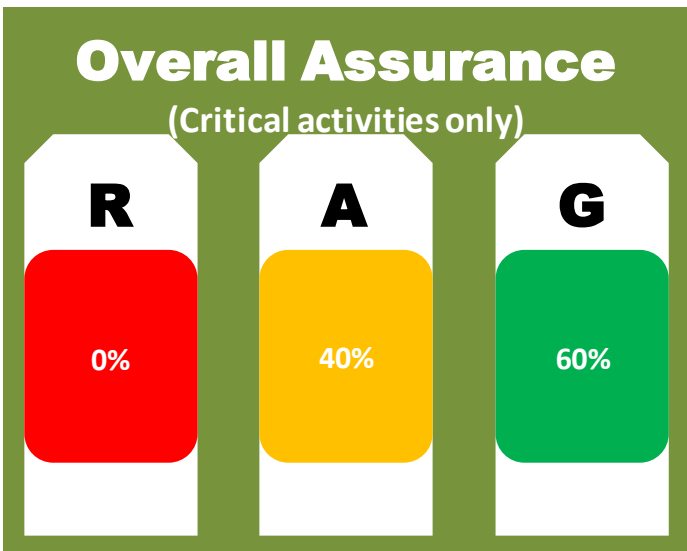
Key Projects

Strategic Alliance, Closure of BBC Homelessness system, Community led Housing, County wide review of DFG framework and re-procurement, Extra Care Housing and Supported Housing for specific Client groups, GOSS Assisted- Replacement of CRM, Telephony replacement, Implementation of U4BW (BBC, Annual Billing 22/23, Lincs Continuous SPD review, PSPS System & Process Alignment, Digitalisation.

During 2022/23 the Communities Directorate delivered a number of key projects within the borough of Boston. These included developing and launching a community lottery, a crowdfunding platform, schemes to help our most vulnerable citizens during the “cost of living crisis” such as the Household Support Fund, an envirom-crime contract and an out of hours emergency planning rota.

Effective project management arrangements have ensured these schemes have been delivered as required.

The Directorate is also the sponsor for the Geoff Moulder Leisure Centre refurbishment project where planning permission for the improvement works was secured in May 2023 with the scheme soon to go out to tender.



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
None	Lincolnshire Health and Accessible Homes
	Good Homes Agency Projects
	Business Rates

Key Messages

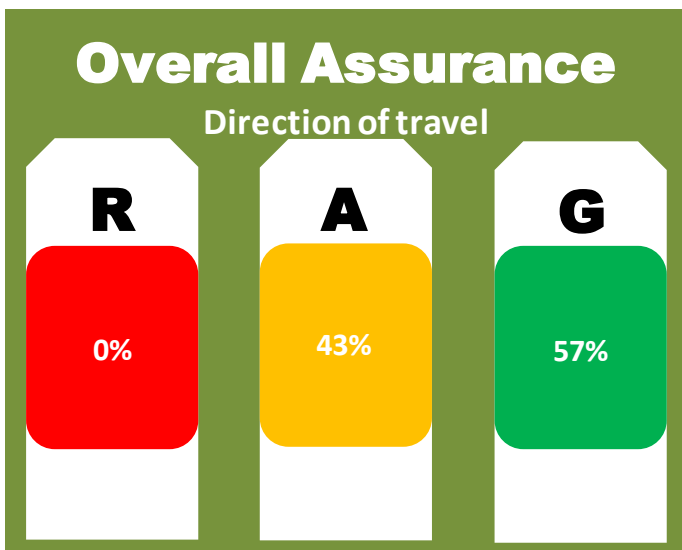
Key Partnerships

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.

PSPS, Council Partnership South and East, Homes England, Platform Housing Group, South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee, CAB, Wash and North Norfolk European Marine Site partnership, Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership, Centrepoint (Boston), Growth County / LEPs / Business Lincs / Eco Dev Officers Group.

A key theme across all Council directorates is delivery through collaboration and this incorporates not just internal cross team partnership but also an extensive external partnership network. This includes the Boston Town Deal Board which has continued to evolve since its inception in January 2020 and during this year refreshed its membership to include a broader skill range to support delivery of the Town Deal projects. In line with DLUCH requirements the Terms of Reference have also been revised to include a consultee status for Levelling Up Fund and UKSPF. The Board includes strategic partners, such as health, education, third sector, transportation, and a range of private sector business.

Communities Directorate has undertaken some significant partnership work during 2022/23. During this period, the Directorate developed the Healthy Living Board with responsibility for matters relating to health and well-being and the South and East Lincolnshire Climate Action Network (SELCAN) which has responsibility for leading delivery against the Climate Change Strategy which the Council agreed during this year. In addition to this the Directorate also led on reaffirming the role of the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership through the development of the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Strategy, thus helping meet the Council's responsibilities in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.



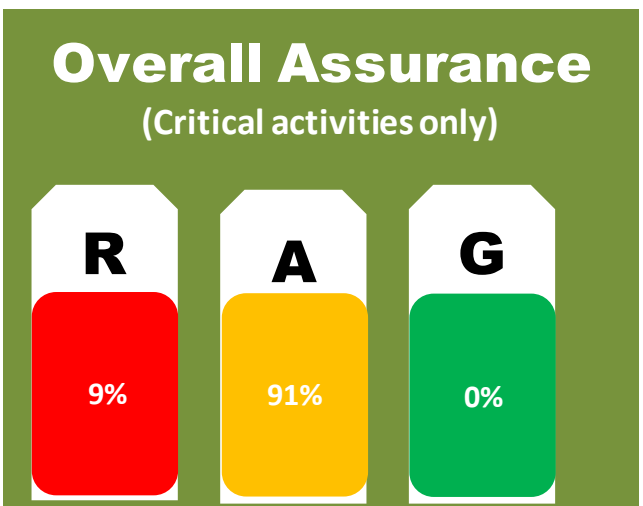
Partnership Assurance	
Red	Amber
None	Historic England
	LCC
	Environmental Agency

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.

Housing, Team Resilience, Partnership Governance, Towns Fund Financing, Housing Benefit award accuracy, Lincs wide SPD review, Transformation programme, Accounts sign off delay, Capacity, Staff Turnover, Covid impacts, PSN, SELCP Partnership Programme, Member Code of Conduct, Information Quality, Cloud Information assurance, Information Management Resilience, Transparency publication scheme, Driver shortage, Recruitment, Leisure - facility condition, Leisure - rising utility costs, Leisure - future Covid impact, Boston cemetery capacity, Recruitment & staff resilience



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
PSPS	Neighbourhood's (Ground)
Alignment	Neighbourhood's (Management)
Financial Resilience	Neighbourhood's (T&C's)
	PSPS Ability to Support Community Teams
	Staff Capacity, Recruitment, and Retention
	ASB
	Licensing
	Elections
	Licensing Committee
	Land Charges

Critical Activities
Environmental Protection
Finance
Crematorium and Cemeteries (Old Victorian Chapel)
Asset Repairs
Crematorium and Cemeteries (Planning Consent)
Staff Capacity, Recruitment, and Retention
H&S Events
Close Down of Accounts
Financial Staffing
Partnership Alignment
Alignment
Payroll
Alignment Constitution
CRM
HB CT Team
Cost of Living Crisis
Transformation Including Digital
PSPS Finance Team
Apprenticeships
PSPS
S106

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) recognises the importance of risk management, with a standing agenda item at the monthly SLT Governance meetings. Risks are also reviewed and debated by Assistant Directors at the quarterly Performance and Governance clinics. The Cabinet and Audit & Governance Committee receive a quarterly risk management report detailing the Council's Strategic Risks.

Work is continuing to embed a Partnership approach to risk management. The outcome of the internal audit of risk management will be incorporated into the draft Risk Management Framework and then presented to SLT for recommendation to Audit & Governance Committee. Plans are also in place to refresh the Council's risk appetite in 2023/24.

The emerging risks identified as part of the combined assurance work have been shared with the Insights and Transformation team to feed in to the Q1 review of risks for 2023/24.