Combined Assurance Status Report 2021/22

Newark and Sherwood District Council
March 2022

Contents

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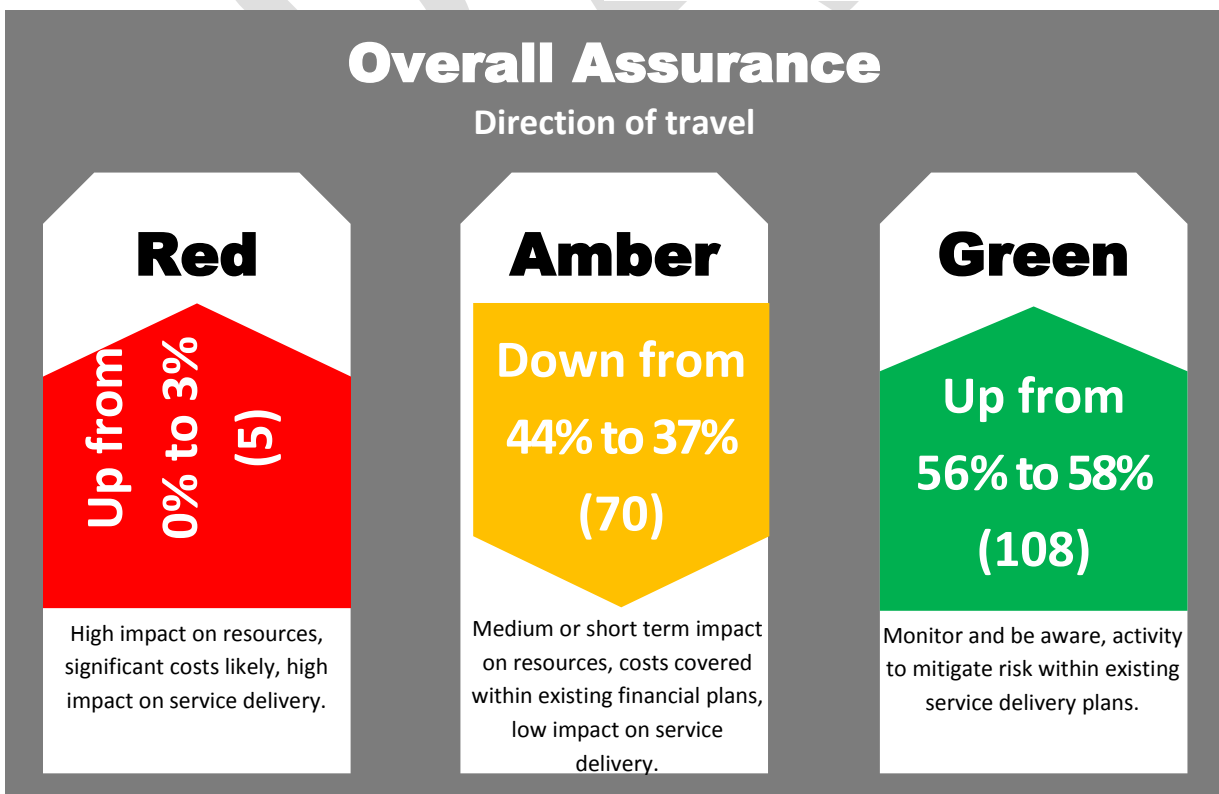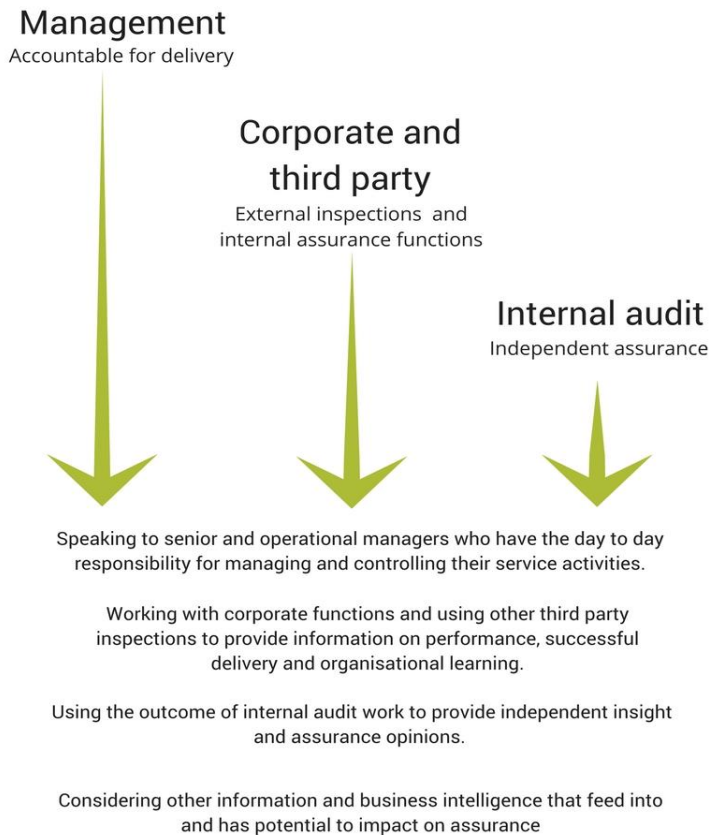
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Overview of Assurance

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.

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

Speaking to senior and operational managers who have the day to day responsibility for managing and controlling their service activities.

Working with corporate functions and using other third party inspections to provide information on performance, successful delivery and organisational learning.

Using the outcome of internal audit work to provide independent insight and assurance opinions.

Considering other information and business intelligence that feed into and has potential to impact on assurance

Overall Assurance
Direction of travel

Red	Amber	Green
Up from 0% to 3% (5)	Down from 44% to 37% (70)	Up from 56% to 58% (108)
High impact on resources, significant costs likely, high impact on service delivery.	Medium or short term impact on resources, costs covered within existing financial plans, low impact on service delivery.	Monitor and be aware, activity to mitigate risk within existing service delivery plans.

Note: 2% of the activity is unknown. These relate to four emerging issues covered within Housing, Health & Wellbeing and Customer Services & Organisational Development directorates.

Chief Executive's Summary

It goes without saying that the past couple of years have been incredibly challenging.

At times, the energy and resources that we've applied to COVID has felt all consuming, yet we've continued to maintain or improve the standard of the vast majority of our front-line services.

In addition, and building on our experience of resettling Syrian families, we've stepped up to the challenge of accommodating families from Afghanistan and are currently preparing to support families from Ukraine.

Juggling such unplanned events alongside our day-to-day responsibilities and an ambitious Community Plan is not always straightforward and carries risk. We want to retain our ambition for our local community but at the same time recognise the danger of overstretching ourselves and the importance of good governance.

We therefore need to continue to strengthen levels of assurance throughout the organisation and, in particular, where the need to do so is greatest. The forthcoming changes to our governance arrangements will bolster the current Audit and Accounts Committee which will further assist with the management of the key risks identified.

This being said, I am satisfied that we are not only aware of our key risks but have measures in place to mitigate and manage these.

Link to Community Plan Objectives

The Council updated their Community Plan in February 2019. As part of the assurance process the activities and projects have been mapped against each of the 7 Objective for 2020 – 2023 set out below.

The Council has been undertaking significant development work around the Performance Management to ensure key and meaningful performance indicators are measured, monitored and where necessary improvement action put in place to address areas where the performance is not achieving the desired outcomes.

Currently, the progress on the Performance Indicators is reported to four operational Committees and with effect from June 2022, these will be reported to the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee and the Cabinet via the Leader's Portfolio under the new governance model. Detailed below are our Community Plan objectives and the identified performance indicators, which we are currently measuring and monitoring. We continue to refresh and identify any additional performance indicators which are relevant and meaningful to support achievement of the set objectives.

Create Vibrant and self– sufficient local communiteis where residents look out for each other and actively contribure to their local area

Success measures
% of residents who felt belong to their immediate neighbourhood
% of funding allocated to local causes
% of residents attending a digital skills course who now feel more confident in using our services online

Deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth

Success measures
Number of council owned commercial units currently let.
Number of businesses supported through advice, mentoring or financial help.
Monitoring of unemployment rates and number of supported persons finding employment Monitoring annual value of the district's visitor economy through independent national data.

Create more and better quality homes through our roles as landlord, developer and planning authority

Success measures
Number of homes delivered by the Council's development Company (Arkwood Development).
Number of dwellings completed through our role as a landlord, developer and planning authority.

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Link to Community Plan Objectives

Continue to maintain the high standard of cleanliness and appearance of the local environment

Success measures
% of fly tipping incidents removed within 24 hours of reporting.
% of graffiti reports removed within 24 hours.
% of residents satisfied with the cleanliness of their local area.

Enhance and protect the district's natural environment

Success measures
% of our parks maintaining green flag status
% of residents satisfied with green spaces in the district

Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and increase feelings of safety in our communities

Success measures
Number of enforcement actions undertaken.
% reduction in level of all crime.
% of residents satisfied with their local area as a place to live.
% residents with improved feelings of safety.
% reduction in number of ASB incidents.

Improve the health and wellbeing of local residents

Success measures
Develop and provide opportunities for inactive people' to increase levels of physical activity and sport.
Number of residents provided and supported with general energy advice.
Number of private sector residents participating in the Council's fuel poverty alleviation schemes in the district.

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	Risk Rating	Level of Combined Assurance	Risk description and risk control position
SR101 Financial sustainability - General Fund	Amber	Amber	Ensuring financial sustainability of the general fund to allow the council to undertake its core functions, deliver services, meet its corporate priorities and objectives. Controls are in place and are suitably controlling the risk within the agreed risk tolerances. Further actions may be in place and these are not deemed to be substantial.
SR102 Financial sustainability - HRA	Amber	Amber	Financial sustainability of the HRA to ensure the council is able to provide, maintain and develop its housing stock. Some controls are in place and additional controls/actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk. Implementation of the additional controls/actions is ongoing. Once implemented in full, they will mitigate the risk to be within agreed risk tolerances.
SR103 Safeguarding	Amber	Amber	Maintaining corporate safeguarding arrangements to ensure suitable and appropriate management of the councils safeguarding duties. Controls are in place and are suitably controlling the risk within the agreed risk tolerances. Further actions may be in place and these are not deemed to be substantial.
SR104 Failure to deliver growth infrastructure	Red	Red	Facilitating the provision of local infrastructure to ensure growth within the district to meet agreed plans & corporate priorities. Some controls are in place and additional controls/actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk. Implementation of the additional controls/actions is ongoing. Once implemented in full, they will mitigate the risk to be within agreed risk tolerances.
SR105 Contract/supply failure	Amber	Amber	Managing contracts with key suppliers, including NSDC wholly own companies, to ensure the continued delivery of an effective service and ensure delivery of the council's priorities and objectives. Some controls are in place and additional controls/actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk. Implementation of the additional controls/actions is ongoing. Once implemented in full, they will mitigate the risk to be within agreed risk tolerances.

Strategic Risks

Risk	Risk Rating	Level of Combined Assurance	Risk description and risk control position
SR106 Workforce	Amber	Amber	Ensuring the council is able to recruit, maintain and retain appropriate staffing resource to ensure it is able to deliver its services and meet its corporate objectives. Some controls are in place and additional controls/actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk. Implementation of the additional controls/actions is ongoing. Once implemented in full, they will mitigate the risk to be within agreed risk tolerances.
SR108 Emergency Response	Red	Amber	The Council's ability to effectively respond as a category 1 responder to a major emergency and maintain a suitable response without affecting essential service delivery. Controls are in place and are suitably controlling the risk within the agreed risk tolerances. Further actions may be in place and these are not deemed to be substantial.
SR109 Corporate Governance	Amber	Amber	Risk of failure in systems of governance within the council, council owned/influenced organisations and partnerships or other collaborative arrangements. Controls are in place and are suitably controlling the risk within the agreed risk tolerances. Further actions may be in place and these are not deemed to be substantial.
SR110 Data Management & Security	Red	Red	Deliberate or unintentional loss/disclosure of personal, sensitive, confidential, business critical information or breach of information governance legislation. Some controls are in place and additional controls/actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk. Implementation of the additional controls/actions is ongoing. Once implemented in full, they will mitigate the risk to be within agreed risk tolerances.
SR111 Arkwood Development Limited	Amber	Amber	Managing performance and the relationship between the Council and Arkwood Developments in accordance with the governance agreement. Some controls are in place and additional controls/actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk. Implementation of the additional controls/actions is ongoing. Once implemented in full, they will mitigate the risk to be within agreed risk tolerances.
SR113 Community issues (Pandemic)	Red	Amber	Immediate and longer term economic and societal impact of global pandemic on NSDC communities and its business economy – specifically concerned with: deprivation, direct effect on specific communities/vulnerable persons and the local economy (new risk). Some controls are in place and additional controls/actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk. Implementation of the additional controls/actions is ongoing.

Strategic Risks

Risk	Risk Rating	Level of Combined Assurance	Risk description and risk control position
	Red	Amber	Once implemented in full, they will mitigate the risk to be within agreed risk tolerances.
SR114 Environment	Red	Red	Ability to meet requirements of the government's green agenda and aspirations/expectations of the NSDC community in delivering a greener/carbon neutral service (new risk).
			Some controls are in place and additional controls/actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk. Implementation of the additional controls/actions is ongoing. Once implemented in full, they will mitigate the risk to be within agreed risk tolerances.
SR115 Regulatory and statutory compliance management	Red	Amber	Implementation and maintenance of suitable statutory safety compliance management systems (new risk).
			Some controls are in place and additional controls/actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk. Implementation of the additional controls/actions is ongoing. Once implemented in full, they will mitigate the risk to be within agreed risk tolerances.

Note:
- Strategic risks SR07 (Loss of community cohesion) – deleted risk and replaced by SR113.
- Strategic risk SR12 (Brexit) - Suspended until next formal review. The content has been incorporated within relevant strategic risks.

Key	Risk	Management
Red	High impact on resources, significant costs likely, high impact on service delivery	Low level of confidence over the design and operation of controls, performance or management of risk
Amber	Medium or short term impact on resources, cost covered within existing financial plans, low impact on service delivery	Medium level of confidence over the design and operation of controls, performance or management of risk
Green	Monitor and be aware, activity to mitigate the risk within existing service delivery plans / management arrangements	High level of confidence over the design and operation of controls, performance or management of risk

Director's Key Messages

Deputy Chief Executive and Resources

Business Units – Financial Services, Asset Management and Car Parks, Revenues and Benefits, ICT and Digital Services and Corporate Property, Delivery and Strategy.

Overall Assurance
Direction of travel

R	A	G
8% (3)	41% (15)	51% (19)
Up from 0% to 8%	Down from 56% to 41%	Up from 44% to 51%
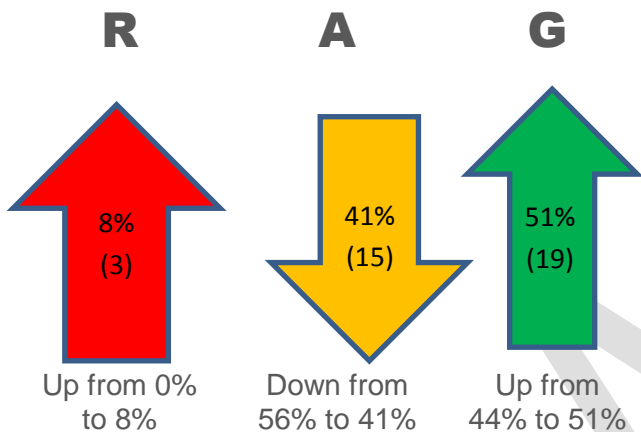
Critical activities
Red
ICT Applications
Amber
Corporate Counter Fraud (General)
Asset register and asset valuation
Treasury management
Capital programme
VAT
Strategic Asset Management (including Acquisition and disposal)
Corporate Property Project Delivery
ICT Operations
ICT Programmes and Projects
Key projects
Red
Storage Area Network (SAN) /Hosts Refresh
Amber
Procurement of HR/Payroll system

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Website and digital services
Information Management Project (ICT)
Key risks
Red
SR110 Data Management & Security
Amber
SR101 Financial sustainability - General Fund
SR102 Financial sustainability - HRA
SR115 - Regulatory and statutory compliance management

A. Finance

The Council has agreed the budget for 2022/23 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the years 2022/23 to 2025/26. The further delay in reforms of Local Government Finance has been beneficial for the Council and has enabled reserves to be set aside for the outcome of the Fair Funding review and the business rates reset, now anticipated in 2023/24. Financial modelling provided by the Council's advisers PIXEL forecasts a reduction in funding in 2023/24 from the business rates reset of circa £2m; from £6.44m to £4.413m. This is clearly a significant reduction in funding, however the Council's finances are in a strong position to deal with the reduction.

The MTFP demonstrates how a combination of use of the MTFP reserve, efficiency savings, and additional income from the delivery of the commercialisation plan together with dividends from Arkwood Developments Limited will bridge the anticipated funding gap. It is however imperative that Business Units work collectively to realise the savings and additional income beginning in 2023/24 through to 2025/26. This position will be kept under review as part of the quarterly financial monitoring under the council's performance management framework.

Commercial Plan

The Commercial Strategy and the Commercial Plan (the Plan) have recently been agreed by

Director's Key Messages

Council. The Plan has been drawn up in conjunction with Business Managers of front line and support services. The Plan identifies areas of savings or income generation over the short (within existing resources), medium term (with additional resources) and over the long term (where feasibility and options will need to be considered and project plans developed. The activities need to generate additional income of £200K by 2024/25. The delivery of the activities in the Commercial Plan will be reviewed quarterly as part of the council's performance management framework.

Service Reviews and Business Process Reengineering

The MTFP includes £100K savings from service reviews and £200K from business process reengineering. The finance officers will need to work with the council's Transformation business unit and with the respective Business Managers to identify and implement plans to deliver these savings from 2023/24 to 2025/26. The delivery of the savings will be kept under review and reported on quarterly from 2023/24 as part of the council's performance management framework.

Arkwood Developments Limited

The MTFP includes a minimum estimate £1.5m of dividends from 2023/24 to 2025/26. It is not only important that the Council receives this level of dividend income from its wholly owned company but that it also seeks to maximise returns from the company via interest on loans and provision of services. The company will need a pipeline of sites to develop in order to deliver this level of minimum returns to the Council. Therefore, work needs to be undertaken to identify sites owned by the Council that could be sold to Arkwood at a fair value.

B. Corporate Property Strategy and Delivery

In 2021/22, the Asset Management and Car Parks Business Unit was further restructured and repurposed under our newly appointed

Business Manager. The Business Unit's responsibilities have grown and developed significantly since 2020/21. The responsibilities of this Business Unit includes Asset Management and Car Parks, Estates Management, Repairs, Maintenance, Surveying and Facilities Management. The team also manage the Newark Beacon business centre and the redevelopment/ tenancies at the Buttermarket.

The HRA Housing delivery team also moved to this Business Unit in order to make the most of shared experience, knowledge and to provide resilience to both teams. The Business Manager, supported by the surveyors, works closely with the Economic Growth Business Unit on the Towns Fund Projects, including the redevelopment of the former Marks and Spencer building on Stodman Street that was purchased by the Council as a strategic site in 2020.

The Acquisitions and Disposals Policy has recently been approved by Council which provides an important framework for the acquisition and, more importantly, the disposal of land assets. This is of particular importance when deciding on land sale proposals with Arkwood Development Limited, where the test of best value is more complex than a one-off disposal to a third party.

The Business Manager is now developing an Asset Management Strategy which will include all of the different disciplines of Corporate Property and Strategy. This strategy will be the overarching document that will ensure that all of the Council's properties are managed efficiently; will make reference to condition surveys; set out the principles of identifying assets that are surplus to need or/and need repurposing. This will enable the identification of assets that could be disposed including those that could "exclusively" be disposed to Arkwood.

In support of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, Asset Management will ensure that all procurement and decisions about property embed energy management outcomes. The condition surveys will feed back into the Asset

Director's Key Messages

Management Strategy and where appropriate will link into the Climate Change Strategy for use of renewable technology from suitable assets

Car Parks- Further improvements have been made to our car parks with the installation of a number of EV charge points. More charge points will be planned in line with the Carbon Management Plan.

Lorry Park- Further improvements have been made to the lorry park with new showers and controlled access. This has improved the facility to drivers resulting in an increase in fee income. With the demolition of the Livestock Market and the development of the Air and Space Institute, together with plans to dual the A46, options to relocate the Lorry Park will need to be considered further in 2022/23.

The data management system, Concerto has not yet been fully implemented. This should be fully operational in 2022/23.

C. ICT and Digital Services

The Digital Strategy and Plan was approved by Policy & Finance Committee on 24 June 2021 and progress on delivery of the actions underpinning the Strategy was reported to the Committee in January 2022.

A Digital Transformation Board (DTB), made up of key officers from across the Council has been established. The Board undertakes a review of all digital projects and prioritises these projects in accordance with the Council's Community Plan objectives, with criteria and weightings as bulleted below. This provides Senior Leadership and Members assurance that digital projects align with the Community Plan, accurately reflect a return on investment, provide value for money and thereby ensure a benefit to our communities and service users.

The Digital Strategy Action plan has been created with a detailed summary of strategic alignment and project detail. The action plan is a working document based on the business

planning cycle, with priority matrices and the principles established from the local digital declaration and supported by officers on the Digital Transformation Board.

Successful key digital projects, delivered in 2021/22, include

- The migration, redesign and publishing of the new look Council website; this provides a more accessible 24/7 on-line service, and improved customer experience.
- Further Cyber Resilience; ensuring systems are up-to-date, that risk to information and data held on the corporate network is manageable and within risk tolerances.
- The migration of land charges register to HMLR (Planning Development).
- Implementation of hybrid meeting devices; allowing officers the ability to communicate with colleagues both internally and externally of Council offices, ensuring our services continue at high standards.
- Implementation of Customer Services call recording; to improve the quality of our customer care and the customer journey.

In the next 6 months, the following digital projects will be delivered, as identified in the Digital Strategy Action Plan:

- Using residents' feedback to develop and implement the NSDC My Account (MyNS); to provide residents with the ability able to self-serve and to see key information about all of their accounts with the Council at any time, when it suits them, together with the ability to track existing progress.
- Implementation of Agile Devices Phase 1; improving the ability of our workforce to access information and data from any location, thereby reducing visits back to the office base.
- Delivery of digital services directly to customers to ensure digital inclusion. Reduced/low carbon initiatives. Housing Repairs, Revenues visiting officers and Planning within Phase 1.
- Delivery of exercise Natural Strength, a Cyber Resilience business continuity

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exercise; ensuring continuity of service during high-risk event.

- Investigation stage of Website Phase 2; further improvements to customer experience. Reducing the requirement to telephone for information.

- Implementation of two internal business systems; legal case management and improved service desk functionality that will streamline business processes making our services more effective and efficient.

- Enabling council e-newsletters; a modern approach to communication with communities whilst reducing paper copies produced and engaging through digital channels.

- Activation of customer webchat; a modern communication channel that continues to improve our customer service options for all customers providing an additional channel of communication.

The delivery of these key projects link to the Commercialisation Plan and to the business process reengineering savings incorporated to the MTFP of £200K in 2023/24 to 2025/26.

D. Revenues and Benefits

The Revenues and Benefits business unit has had a particularly challenging two years. The Revenues service, as well as ensuring that council tax and business rates billing was carried out on time and collection rates for both were maintained, the Business Manager and the Senior Revenues Officers worked closely with colleagues in the Finance and Economic Development Team to pay circa £52m in COVID business grant support. To ensure that grants were paid promptly to businesses, the team worked long hours and sustained their high levels of performance throughout. Similarly, the Senior Council Tax Officers worked tirelessly to pay Test and Trace grants to individuals on low income who tested positive and were therefore unable to work.

The Council Tax Benefits and Housing Benefits teams have had to administer additional hardship grants to residents whilst maintaining the speed of processing new claims and change

of circumstances. This has been challenging with performance dipping in the first 6 months of 2021/22 with a recovery in the last quarter of the financial year.

The Business Manager for Revenues and Benefits took flexible retirement in the latter part of 2021/22 and now works 3 days a week; a mini restructure / change in responsibilities was undertaken during the year. Further anticipated changes in Universal Credit and Business Rates may necessitate a realignment of the Business Unit in 2022/23, 2023/24.

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Director's Key Messages

Communities and Environment

Business Units – Environmental Services, Public Protection and Heritage & Culture.

Overall Assurance
Direction of travel

R	A	G
3% (1)	32% (12)	65% (24)
Up from 0% to 3%	Up from 18% to 32%	Down from 82% to 65%
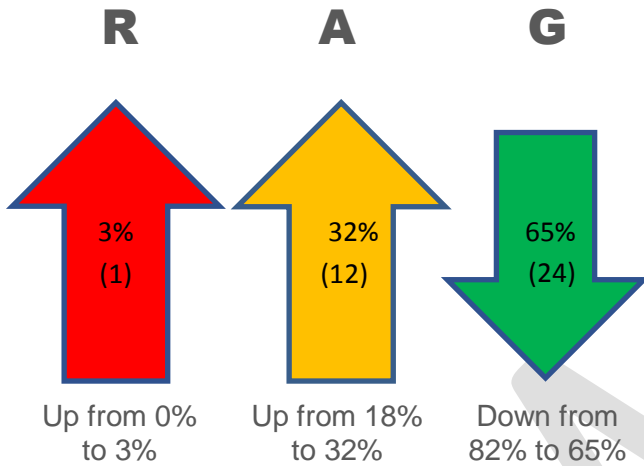
Critical Activities
Amber
Food safety
CCTV
Newark Castle
Key projects
Amber
Castle Gatehouse Project
Key risks
Red
SR114 - Environment
Amber
SR103 - Safeguarding
SR108 – Emergency response
SR113 – Community Issues (Pandemic)
Emerging issues (Amber)
Condition survey at the Newark Castle
National Waste Strategy impacts
Transport/Vehicle Maintenance/Fleet

Key partnerships
Amber
CCTV partnership
• Newark Heritage Forum • Friends of the National Civil War Centre

Significant progress has been made in terms of making Newark and Sherwood cleaner, safer and greener:

Litter levels are low - the Council has launched an anti-fly-tipping campaign 'Not in Newark and Sherwood', adopted a new policy in relation to graffiti removal, continued to facilitate community groups in litter picking, invested in a new 'Action Day Team' and more bins and brought in additional resource to enforce against anyone caught littering or fly-tipping.

Crime is down across the district on pre-pandemic levels and those reduction percentages are the best performing in Nottinghamshire. We successfully delivered the £550,000 Safer Streets Initiative and used this success to leverage in additional third-party funds to deliver a Safer Streets 2 project, which built on those successes. CCTV has been reviewed and a replacement programme is now underway.

A climate emergency has recently been declared and work is now underway to deliver the action plan, whilst influencing reductions across the wider district through our influencing, regulatory, commissioning and procurement roles. The Council has planted thousands of trees, increased its recycling percentage to its highest ever level, taken delivery of its first two electric powered vehicles and approved plans to install photovoltaics on a number of council buildings, including the leisure centres.

The Heritage and Culture Business Unit has shown great innovation to continue to engage audiences in new ways through the pandemic, whilst navigating forced closures and furlough, to ensure that the services were delivered on budget overall. Post the ending of restrictions, there is a need to continue the recovery and regain audience confidence, whilst undertaking significant works at the Castle and finalising proposals for the exciting Gatehouse project.

Director's Key Messages

Emergency response

The longevity of the Emergency Planning response to the pandemic has been unprecedented since the Second World War. Add to that the complexity of rapidly changing local, regional and national circumstances, and this has dominated emergency planning work.

The red risk reflects the ability of the Council to respond to a concurrent event in this context. However, with the easing of more and more restrictions, it is hoped that this risk target will be reduced to amber in the short to medium term.

Community issues – pandemic

The government has spent billions of pounds in response to the pandemic, whilst there have been shifts in the economy and differences in how communities have been affected by the pandemic. It is likely that there will be a longer-term impact to be felt as a result of these and other factors.

The Council has identified this as a strategic risk and a cross council group has been created to try to understand how these impacts may play out and how they can be mitigated.
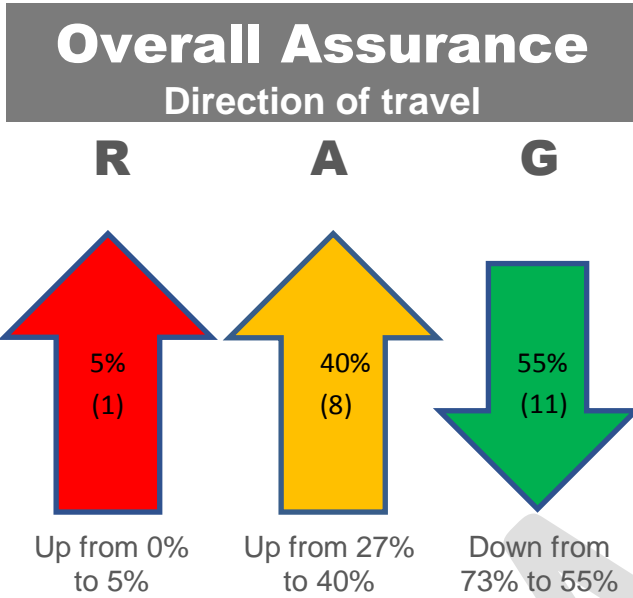
Environment

The UK Government has made a pledge for the UK to be carbon net neutral by 2050, whilst a host of Councils have followed suit with their own net neutral targets. The Council's own survey work with residents shows how important this agenda is to local residents. However, with the Council's carbon footprint only accounting for 1-2 per cent of emissions in the district, it is not yet clear how some of those national pledges (including those in the Environment Act in relation to recycling) are going to be implemented or financed. Hence, there is a risk both in terms of financing and managing expectations.

Director's Key Messages

Planning and Growth

Business Units – Economic Growth and Visitor Economy, Planning Development and Planning Policy.

Overall Assurance
Direction of travel

R	A	G
5% (1)	40% (8)	55% (11)
Up from 0% to 5%	Up from 27% to 40%	Down from 73% to 55%

Critical activities
Amber

Processing Planning Applications and Fee Income

Planning policy / LDF (including Duty to co-operate)

Key projects
Amber

Land East of Newark

Funding, designing and building, A1 Overbridge at Fernwood

Southern Link Road - Funding

Ollerton Roundabout Improvement

Newark Northern A46 Bypass / Link Road

Delivery of Newark Town Fund programmes

Key risks
Red

SR104 Failure to deliver growth infrastructure

Despite the inevitable ongoing challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic significant progress on delivery of the Council's growth aspirations has been made.

Housing numbers, both private and affordable continue to exceed delivery targets. The Council, as developer, is also now making a significant direct contribution to providing needed new homes through the continuation of the HRA Affordable Housing Development Program and Arkwood.

New road and community infrastructure has progressed, including key funding announcements for the A46 Newark Northern Bypass, Ollerton Roundabout and the A614 Corridor, and Newark Southern Link Road.

High streets and town centres continue to experience challenges, with interventions such as the Newark Towns Fund, the Heritage Action Zone, and Shop Local campaigns continuing to assist footfall and vibrancy.

The Council has cemented relationships with and between educators, businesses, investors, and residents to ensure resiliency and maximise opportunity, ambition, and potential.

There remains challenges to address for the high street, meeting housing needs for our Gypsy and Traveller communities and creating greater leaning and earning opportunities for our residents.

Covid-19 Support

£50.770m in Covid-19 Support Grants have been administered throughout the pandemic, providing lifelines to hundreds of employers, employees, and residents through challenging times.

The service had also delivered, in partnership with Town and Parish Councils, a £216,000 package of Welcome Back and Reopening High Streets Safely funding.

Director's Key Messages

In addition to these central government Covid initiatives the service has designed and introduced a raft of its own support projects and programs which have been replicated by others.

This has included the Economic Growth & Covid Recovery Plan, the High Street Diversification Fund an incentivised e-commerce grant for independent business to go online (helping over 80 businesses), and a Business Growth & Resilience Programme offering a total £300,000 package of support across four key sectors of Accommodation, Manufacturing & Construction, Retail, Food & Beverage and Health & Social Care.

Economic Development & Skills

Economic support and activity has significantly increased via a raft of programs, projects, and successful competitive grant bids aimed at supporting businesses, employers, educators, students, and residents to fulfil their limitless potential.

This has included securing £25.6m of Towns Funding for Newark across 9 priority projects, £20m Levelling Up funding for the Newark Southern Link Road (SLR), and £1.26m for skills and business support programs within the District via the Community Renewal Fund.

The Kickstart initiative has supported over 80 people into employment, training and gaining new qualifications.

Additionally, the Council has hosted a Growth Conference and undertaken numerous events to support the economic development of the area from Teenage markets to procurement events.

Newark Southern Link Road

The Council, in partnership with the County Council and master developer, Urban & Civic, have secured £20m of funding support from the Government's Levelling Up Fund, towards delivery of the road, in addition to the Council's Capital contribution.

The LUF monies will be released to the Council (as the accountable body) following execution of a Memorandum of Understanding, agreeing the funding profile and project outputs to be monitored through an evaluation framework.

However, given the passage of time from planning approval to the new highway standards for both NCC at the A1 end and National Highways at the A46 end. This work is underway, with NH committed to a funding contribution at the A46 end.

Ollerton Roundabout Improvement

The Council is committed to working with Nottinghamshire County Council in delivering improvements to Ollerton Roundabout, identified as a key project in the Nottinghamshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan and featuring as a key the County Council's A614/A6097 Major Road Network scheme.

Department for Transport has confirmed approval of the outline business case, allocating £24.4m to the scheme, designed to support growth and development through reduced congestion at key intersections, improving the predictability of journey times and providing more traffic capacity for future growth.

Proposed works to the roundabout have an estimated cost of c.£7.4 million, including:

- enlarged conventional roundabout – 5 arms instead of 6
- capacity increases
- speed limit reduced on approaches
- 2x toucan crossings
- scheme requires third party land – VIA East Midlands will try to purchase all land by negotiation

Newark Northern A46 Bypass / Link Road

The A46 Newark Northern Bypass features as one of the schemes in National Highways' (NH) second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2). Since NH's public consultation in early 2021, which presented possible options for improving the A46 between the Farndon and Winthorpe

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Director's Key Messages

roundabouts, the Council has continued to engage with NH and a wide range of stakeholders to contribute local knowledge in the development of a preferred route option for improving this section of the A46.

A decision on the preferred route is expected early this year, with a view to construction commencing in the latter half of 2025. However, it is important to note that the October 2021 Budget cut NH's budget by more than £3 billion, with confirmation of which RIS2 schemes will be impacted or cut still to be announced. However, given NH's ongoing commitment to finding an optimal solution for integrating the SLR roundabout on the A46, the Council remains optimistic of the former continuing, while Midlands Connect continues to lobby Government about the strategic importance of this section of the A46 in the wider context of the Trans Midland Trade Corridor.

Failure to deliver growth infrastructure (SR104)

The Levelling Up Funds of £20m have been secured in principle from the Department of Transport for the Newark Southern Link Road (SLR) and a preferred route announcement for the A46 is expected at the end of February 2022.

We have also now commissioned Highways England to progress with the next stage of the A1 over-bridge design work and continue to assist and influence the Non-Strategic Road Network proposals across the A614/617 corridor and Ollerton Roundabout.

Whilst progress is positive, with big steps forward taken I am mindful that until the SLR monies are secured, the final design fixed, and tenders for construction received the risk profile remains high.

Likewise, the other infrastructure priorities need to progress further before the level of risk and likely impact can be reduced.

Director's Key Messages

Housing, Health and Wellbeing

Business Units – Housing and Estates Management, Health Improvement & Community Engagement, Housing Management and Asset Management, Housing Income and Leasehold Management and Housing Development, Regeneration and Housing Strategy.

Overall Assurance
Direction of travel

R	A	G
0% (0)	52% (23)	43% (19)
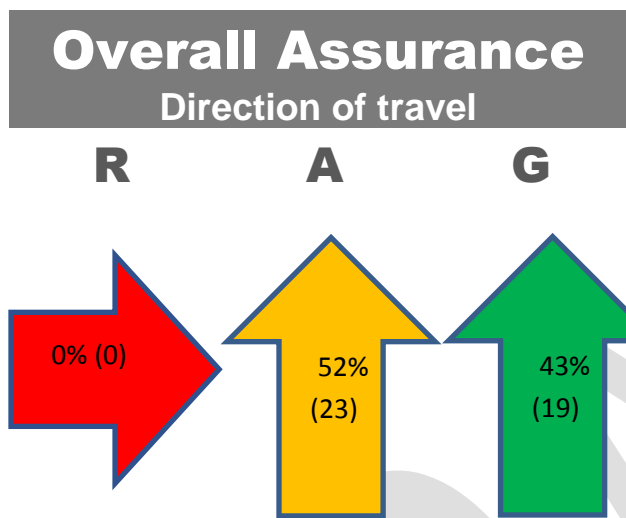
No RAG rating for 5% of the directorate activities. These relate to two emerging bills. There are no previous year comparative figures (new directorate).

Critical Activities

Amber

Leisure centres	Health and Safety (Housing)
Humanitarian Assistance Response Team	S106 negotiations
Resettlement Co-Ordination	HRA Self Financing Business Plan
Covid 19 Response & Recovery	Inputting and processing of housing applications
Housing - Responsive repairs	Communal Area Inspections
Housing Stores & procurement	Estate Walkabouts
Careline Services	

Key Projects

Amber

Housing Asset Management System	Housing regeneration - Yorke Drive
Apex Compliance & Asset Management software	Upgrade of SOR for costing repairs

Key risks

Amber

SR102 Financial sustainability - HRA
SR105 - Contract/supply failure
SR115 - Regulatory and statutory compliance management
Emerging issues (Amber)
Current Tenants Charter Bill
Building and Fire Safety Bill

Significant partnerships

Newark and Sherwood Resettlement Partnership
Active4Today and Southwell Leisure Centre
Capita – provision of housing management software

Combined Assurance Status Report 2021/22

Director's Key Messages

Critical Activities

Significant progress has been made in terms of integrating housing services into the Council and the creation of the new Directorate:

Overall performance is excellent across most areas of service and a number of activities have been amalgamated within the wider council structure including housing development delivery, customer services and some administrative functions. Alongside bringing maintenance of our HRA land in house to be delivered by StreetScene.

We have integrated our ASB policy, completed an overall Landlord Strategy and completed our tenancy engagement review to ensure we have a great platform for engagement with tenants and customers of our services. Our focus is on ensuring our Careline service is fit for purpose and procuring a new system with future opportunities around telecare to support our aging population.

Whilst it has been a challenging year for Active4Today, our Leisure offer has increased with the addition of Southwell Leisure Centre to secure local provision. We are working to update our strategies around facilities and playing pitches as well as continuing to work in partnership with the YMCA. It has been another intense year for HART and community engagement colleagues with number demands from partners and the community to support with grant distribution, signposting and support our food inequalities as well as keeping population health and its determinants at the front of our minds.

Income wise, so far, our tenants have been resilient to the pandemic and our performance remains strong. We have a number of projects to support tenants who experience difficulties or just to give people a great start in their tenancy. We have a large project to understand the implications of rent depooling in the current challenging climate of raised living costs.

The area of most activity is our asset and repairs, with challenges around materials, recruitment and safe systems of work impacting on key services. We are making inroads with fire safety, improved void standard, revised repairs categories and resetting our data around our stock through completing a stock condition survey programme that will inform a new asset management programme – we are cognisant that there are a number of initiatives at Government level being discussed that may impact our plans e.g. future decent homes.

Yorke Drive

This is the largest regeneration for the Council in forty years and there have been a number of significant challenges to navigate including redesign to mitigate issues found during investigations alongside changes in Government and Local Policy as well as ensuring any changes are contained within the cost envelope.

Compliance

Compliance has been and continues to be a focus and we are investing in a new system to improve our data and how we can access and report on performance. We have dipped our toes in the green/decarbonisation agenda and this continues to be area of focus and risk due to an infant market and limited knowledge of costs and skills required to achieve EPC C by 2035.

Social Housing Charter

We have reviewed our complaints policy against the Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment and completed a gap analysis based on what we know about the seven strands of the social housing charter. These proposals are not ground-breaking and as good landlord we see these as the baseline not the target for our services. Again, we have new resource to take our ambitions forward and are keeping a watching brief on developments in all aspects of activity the regulator, the Government and the Ombudsman.

Director's Key Messages

Housing Management Systems

We have been carrying a digital deficit for a number of years so have made great progress in getting our systems updated to enable us to prepare and procure our future system that will be the foundation of our modern, digital first services, enabling our face-to-face offer to focus on those areas that are more than a simple transaction. This carries inherent risk and also a resource challenge to ensure we secure a well-designed system that meets our needs – and our aspirations.

HRA 30-year business plan

We are directing our thinking into our long-term stability and how the expectations on service development will be finances. The landlord strategy has been launched which gives a long-term view

Recovery from Covid

We do not know the full extent of the legacy of covid. We have directed some efficiency savings to different areas of the Directorate but are able to respond to emerging issues. We have also strengthened our health and wellbeing team and are responding to significant changes in the health world that impact on how we work in partnership with health and other agencies.

Director's Key Messages

Customer Services and Organisational Development

Business Units – Human Resources and Training, Customer Services, Communications and Marketing, Corporate Administration and Transformation and Service Improvement.

Overall Assurance
Direction of travel

R　　　**A**　　　**G**

0% (0)　　32% (11)　　62% (21)

No change　Up from 29% to 32%　Down from 71% to 62%
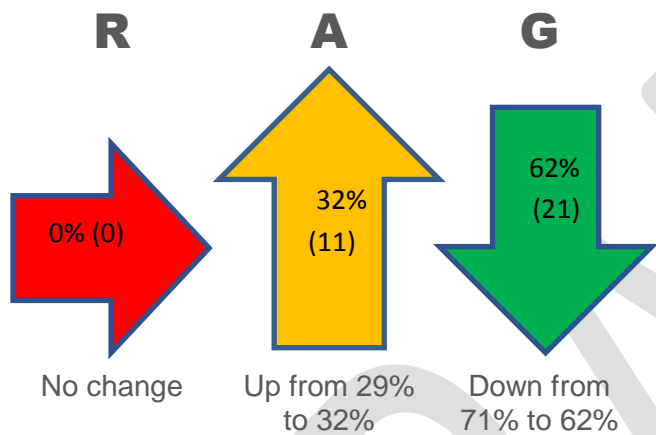
No RAG rating for 6% of the directorate's activities. These relate to two emerging issues concerning recruitment and housing & public protection restructuring.

Critical activities

Amber
Administrative services
Corporate Policy
Performance Management
Assurance functions
Contract management – General

Key projects

Amber
Alignment Project – Customer Services and Admin Services
Customer insight
Workforce Development Strategy
Car Parking Review

Key risks

Amber
SR105 - Contract/supply failure
SR106 - Workforce

Performance Management and Assurance

Great strides have been made this year to move to an organisation with a clear performance culture. Performance is reported quarterly to senior management and members. It focuses on our progress towards delivering the Community Plan (activities and PIs) as well as analysing local statistics, customer feedback and workforce statistics, thus creating a full account of the performance of the Council. This has been well received; the report is supplemented by operational performance data which is reported to the director quarterly. There has been progress in embedding a performance culture within the organisation and this will continue to develop.

The Transformation and Service Improvement team support of the work the Public Protection Business Unit and produce quarterly assurance reports to SLT. These cover compliance and risk management. Reporting is by exception and a new robust reporting template has been developed. Going forward the Risk and Safety Officer will present these reports so that areas of concern can be discussed. This approach is now embedded so the next quarter risk rating for this activity will reduce to green.

Corporate Planning

The annual business planning cycle is now well embedded, and all Business Units have approved business plans with clear objectives and measurable performance targets, which are appropriate and linked to the Community Plan. No issues identified in this area and progressing well for 2022/23.

Human Resources and Training

With new Business Manager and the implementation of a new HR system this year

Director's Key Messages

will see fundamental changes to the support and approach provided by the HR team. The appropriate resource and expertise have been aligned to the implementation of the new HR system which will see improved functionality and be more user friendly. The improved functionality will provide greater assurance in all aspects of the HR function and the organisation's responsibilities as an employer.

The development of a Workforce Development Strategy (due to March committee for approval) will have an associated action plan for implementation. This will include a revised approach to training which focuses on the skills gaps of the organisation. The analysis of training and the evaluation of its effectiveness needs to be improved; this is covered within the action plan.

Recruitment across the board, and particularly in key activities is proving more difficult. This is a trend seen across the public sector and work is being undertaken to better promote the council as an employer of choice, the recruitment process has been amended to make it simpler and funds have been set aside to assist with recruitment difficulties. Work on this is ongoing but in a difficult marketplace will need to be kept under constant review.

Customers (Customer Services and Customer Feedback)

Customer services is a well-established business unit which reacts accordingly to customer demand. The team's resilience and adaptability has been tested during the Pandemic, supporting not only customers contacting the Council but also other business units.

The pandemic has changed the way in which customers contact the Council resulting in fewer face to face enquiries. As society continues to return to business as usual, it is not known whether customers will revert to their previous ways of dealing with the Council. The Customer Services business unit is prepared to manage

this change in behaviour and will adapt to this accordingly.

The initial management of customer feedback submitted through the corporate customer feedback system is carried out by Customer Services team leaders. The feedback is then passed on to the relevant business managers who provide responses. The council's new website now includes a feedback button on the front page to make it easier for customers to tell us about their experience. The council is an organisation that welcomes feedback and learns from all the comments which are received.

A revised complaints policy has been developed and the process and templates will be rolled out to all business units over the next few weeks to ensure the process is embedded across the organisation.

Registers

The transformation team keep a list of all policies and strategies as well as a partnership register. These are reviewed but there is reliance upon relevant business units to inform the team of any changes that take place.

The contract management register is held on Pro-contract and is accessible to our procurement provider, Welland. Smaller contracts are added as business units raise them but historically this has been patchy. Currently finance have the ability to add to the register but consideration is being given as to whether this sits better within the legal function.

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Director's Key Messages

Legal and Democratic Services

Business Units – Elections and Democratic Services, Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer responsibility
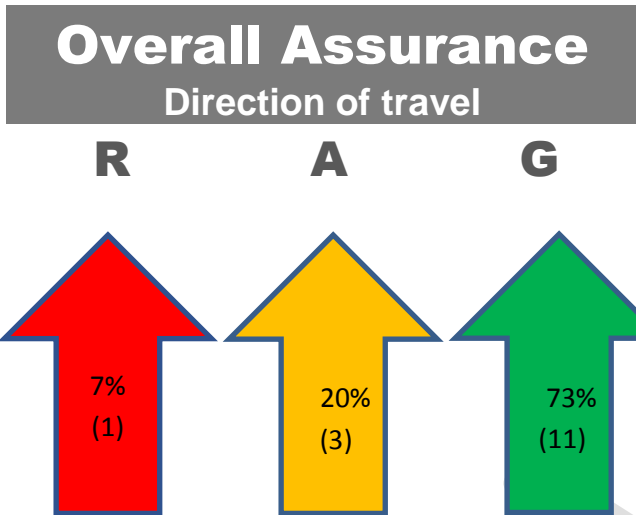
Overall Assurance
Direction of travel

R	A	G
7% (1)	20% (3)	73% (11)

There are no previous year comparative figures (new directorate)

Critical Activities
Amber
Running Electoral Registration and Elections
Key projects
Amber
Information Management Project (Digital)*
Key risks
Red
SR110 Data Management & Security*
Amber
SR109 Corporate governance

*Information Management Project (Digital) and Data Management and Security – the Data Protection Officer (Law & Information Governance BU) is actively involved in these projects, but ownership is ICT (Resources Directorate) with oversight by the Corporate Information Governance Group which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive & Resources.

Combined Assurance Status Report 2021/22

Electoral Services

In 2021-22 the Service successfully ran a County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner Election, together with 3 by-elections. There are no planned elections for 2022-23, the District Council and Parish elections being planned for May 2023.

In readiness for elections, the Service is required by law to publish the Annual Register of Electors on 1st December 2022, and to keep it updated throughout the year. Electoral reform in the form of Voter ID and some changes to postal voting is anticipated prior to the May 2023 elections.

A need for further resource has been identified, to ensure the Service can discharge its duties effectively and minimise risk for the Council. Work is underway to review the structure of the Service.

Democratic Services

The Service is currently preparing for the Council's new governance arrangements, which will take effect from May 2022. This includes updating administrative arrangements to accommodate provision for Key Decisions and individual Portfolio Holder decisions, implementing revised/new report templates, and updates to the Mod.Gov software system. The Service will have an important role in helping elected Councillors to adjust to the new arrangements, and more widely with Officers to ensure a smooth transition to Executive Arrangements.

The Monitoring Officer has responsibility for maintenance of the Council's Constitution; making the necessary amendments is a key part of change in governance arrangements.

Legal Services

Capacity is improving with the appointment of two permanent qualified legal advisors and further permanent recruitment planned for 2022-23.

Director's Key Messages

The Service is in the process of implementing installation of a legal document management system. In 2022-23 the Business Unit will aim to embed the system fully into its working practices, and ensuring professional staff spend their time on technical legal work rather than losing time on inefficient systems and administrative tasks that could be more automated, plus develop more effective and efficient performance reporting. The system is cloud-based and therefore in line with the Council's Digital Strategy and Office 365.

The Service aims to professionalise its service with Business Unit 'clients' by diarising regular reviews, to consider work prioritisation in accordance with corporate priorities and risk.

Information Governance

The Service has a new Information Governance/Data Protection Officer in post. Early objectives are to review arrangements for staff training and awareness and to ensure the Council's Privacy Notices in relation to data protection are adequate. The new post holder will also work closely with ICT colleagues in relation to the digital transformation of information management.

There is a well-established structure for information governance for the new post holder to take forward. In 2022-23 a revised process for dealing with data breaches was implemented, and a revised email policy was introduced.