

# **Combined Assurance Status Report 2022/23**



**Newark and Sherwood District  
Council  
March 2023**

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Deputy Chief Executive and Resources

Communities and Environment

Planning and Growth

Housing, Health and Wellbeing

Customer Services and Organisational Development

Legal and Democratic Services

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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

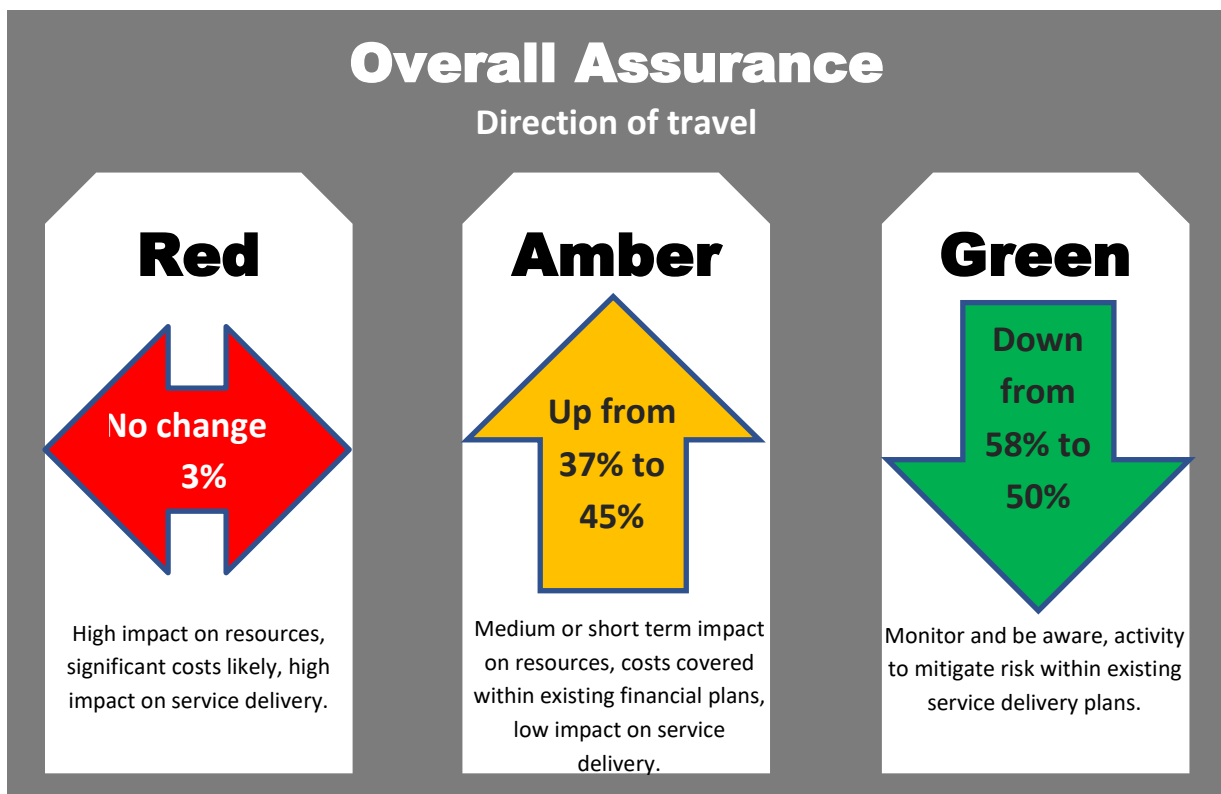
**Internal audit**  
Independent assurance

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



Note: 2% of the activity is unknown. These relate to emerging issues e.g. Levelling Up Fund Level 2, Levelling Up Regeneration Bill and new partnerships.

# Chief Executive's Summary

This Assurance Report provides a helpful and necessary stock-take of the Council's operating environment and the control measures that are employed to ensure good governance and due diligence.

The Council is ambitious for its community. This means that we take a broad perspective on our role and responsibilities and as a result, we achieve a great deal and our agenda is heavy. We wouldn't want it any other way but it means that we must take care not to over-stretch ourselves and ensure that risks are properly identified and managed.

Whilst highlighting many areas of progress and positive developments, the Assurance Report rightly draws attention to an ever more demanding and challenging context. Demand for our services has increased, from tenants and residents and local businesses. Local authority pay is under pressure and we are experiencing significant recruitment and retention challenges. Requirements surrounding regulatory compliance are increasing, especially relating to housing management and we continue to do our utmost to support the community through the Cost of Living crisis while contending with the impact of rising prices on our own operations.

These and other challenges are reflected in our risk profile and whilst significant, I am assured that we have the capacity and the capability to manage them.

As always, I'm extremely grateful for the superb support that we receive from our workforce and for the leadership of our elected members.

# Link to Community Plan Objectives

The Council updated its Community Plan in February 2019, and the next update is expected after the May 2023 Local elections when the Community Plan will be fully reviewed. 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 and implementation work around 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. This work has now been fully embedded within the Council's processes.

Currently, the progress on the Performance Indicators is reported to the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee and the Cabinet via the Leader's Portfolio. 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 communities where residents look out for each other and actively contribute 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.

## 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	Direction of travel
SR301 Financial sustainability - General Fund	Amber	Amber	<p>Ensuring financial sustainability of the general fund to allow the Council to undertake its core functions, deliver services, meet its corporate priorities and objectives.</p> <p>Risk score has remained the same. However, risk scoring was altered at the last review to reflect a reduction in likelihood and an increase in potential severity. This has been undertaken as the Medium-Term Financial Plan includes all mitigating factors and controls to protect the budget.</p> <p>The anticipated target risk is Amber.</p>	
SR302 Financial sustainability - HRA	Amber	Amber	<p>Financial sustainability of the HRA to ensure the Council is able to provide, maintain and develop its housing stock.</p> <p>Controls are in place and further controls are pending. Risk actions have been identified however, implementation of a significant number of these actions is ongoing or planned for during the current year.</p> <p>The target risk score is Green when all actions have been fully implemented.</p>	
SR303 Failure to deliver growth infrastructure	Red	Red	<p>Facilitating the provision of local infrastructure to ensure growth within the district to meet agreed plans &amp; corporate priorities.</p> <p>Some controls are in place and additional actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk. A significant number of risk actions have not been fully implemented and work is ongoing.</p> <p>The anticipated target risk is Amber.</p>	
SR304 Contract/supply failure	Amber	Amber	<p>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.</p> <p>Some controls are in place and additional controls/actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk.</p> <p>Implementation of the additional controls/actions is ongoing. The anticipated target risk is Green.</p>	

# Strategic Risks

Risk	Risk Rating	Level of Combined Assurance	Risk description and risk control position	Direction of travel
SR305 Workforce	Red	Red	<p>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.</p> <p>Some controls are in place and additional controls/actions have been identified to reduce the current level of risk. Likelihood score has increased from 2 (likely to occur) to 3 (very likely to occur). This is due to a worsening picture re workforce issues across the nation.</p> <p>The anticipated target risk is Amber.</p>	
SR306 Corporate Governance	Red	Red	<p>Risk of failure in systems of governance within the Council, Council owned/influenced organisations and partnerships or other collaborative arrangements.</p> <p>Likelihood score has increased from 2 (likely to occur) to 3 (very likely to occur). Increase in place until new cabinet system is fully embedded.</p> <p>The anticipated target risk is Amber.</p>	
SR307 Data Management & Security	Red	Red	<p>Deliberate or unintentional loss/disclosure of personal, sensitive, confidential, business critical information or breach of information governance legislation.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The anticipated target risk is Red.</p>	
SR308 Environment	Amber	Amber	<p>Ability to meet requirements of the government's green agenda and aspirations/expectations of the NSDC community in delivering a greener/carbon neutral service.</p> <p>Likelihood decreased from 3 (very likely to occur) to 2 (likely to occur). This reduction is due to a maturing risk increasing the number of controls and actions now in place. Also, greater resource being acquired to help deliver the agenda.</p> <p>The anticipated target risk is Amber.</p>	
SR309 Regulatory and statutory compliance management	Red	Red	<p>Implementation and maintenance of suitable statutory safety compliance management systems. Some controls are in place and additional controls have been identified to further reduce the current level of risk.</p> <p>Improvements made in implementing some of the identified action, however, more work is still required to ensure all actions are fully implemented.</p>	



# Strategic Risks

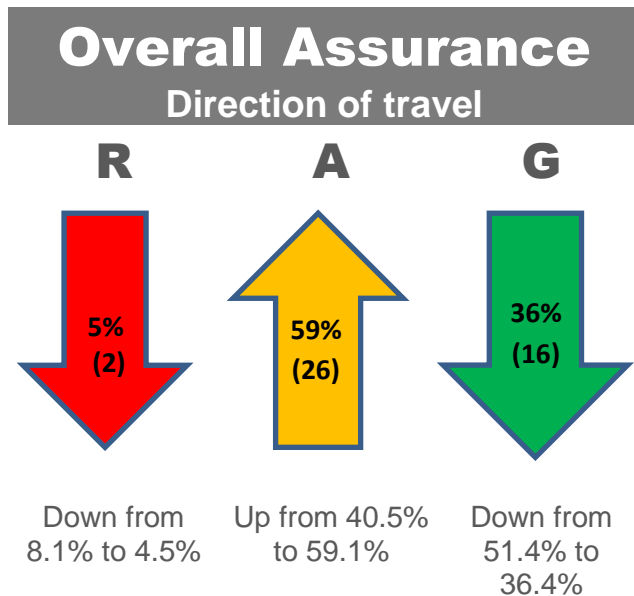
Risk	Risk Rating	Level of Combined Assurance	Risk description and risk control position	Direction of travel
			Implementation of the additional controls/actions is ongoing. The anticipated target risk is Amber.	
SR310– Cost of Living	Red	Red	To mitigate the effects of the cost of living crisis across the NSDC community (residents, businesses, tenants and colleagues) and understand support and delivery requirements. Support – increased demand on services to support those affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Delivery – amending existing and providing new services to support those affected by the cost-of-living crisis This is a new risk with several identified actions which need to be implemented. The anticipated target risk is to be confirmed.	

Key	Risk	Management
Red	High impact on resources, significant costs likely, high impact on service delivery	These risks present the highest risk of failure/loss and therefore require the greatest level of management. 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	Present a higher level of risk /failure. They require an action plan that identifies how the risk is to be mitigated, managed or if possible, eliminated 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	Generally acceptable and require only monitoring with no further action. 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, Corporate Property, Revenues and Benefits, and ICT and Digital Services.



Critical activities
Amber
Corporate Counter Fraud (General)
Asset register & Asset valuation
Treasury management
Capital programme
Value Added Tax
Strategic Asset Management (Including Acquisition and disposal)
Energy/Carbon Management (ESCo)
Estates Management (Corporate)
Car Parks and Lorry Park Services
Corporate Property Project Delivery
ICT Organisational Services
ICT User Education Awareness and Network Access Controls
ICT Compliance Services (PCIDSS and PSN)
ICT Applications

### Key projects

#### Amber

HRIS (iTrent) system implementation
ICT Corporate programmes and projects
32 Stodman Street project
Lorry Park relocation
Business Park development (dependent on the Lorry Park relocation)
Clipstone Holdings
Newark Hospital Car Park Construction
Delivery of the HRA Affordable Housing Programme

### Key risks

#### Red

SR209 Data Management & Security
SR213 - Regulatory and statutory compliance management

#### Amber

SR201 Financial sustainability - General Fund
SR202 Financial sustainability - HRA
Project delivery operational risks
Biodiversity Net gain legislation (impacts)

### 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 budget for 2023/24 and MTFP for 2023/24 to 2026/27 is to be approved by Cabinet on 21st February 2023 and full Council on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

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 earliest in 2025/26).

Financial modelling provided by the Council's advisers PIXEL forecasts a reduction in funding in 2025/26 from the business rates reset of circa £3.7m. This is clearly a significant reduction in funding; however the Council's finances are in a

# Director's Key Messages

strong position and the MTFP sets out measures to deal with this anticipated reduction in funding.

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 2026/27. 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 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 2026/27.

## Arkwood Developments Limited

The MTFP includes a minimum estimate £2.150m of dividends from 2023/24 to 2026/27. 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.

## Corporate Property Strategy and Delivery

In 2022/23, the Asset Management and Car Parks Business Unit was further restructured and re-purposed. The Business Unit's responsibilities have grown and developed significantly over the last two years. The responsibilities of this Business Unit include 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 Housing Revenue Account(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; re-location of the lorry park and development of a business case for SisLog, acquisition and development of the Clipstone Holding site, and development of the car park for the NHS Trust on the recently acquired site on Bowbridge Road.

Review of the Council's land and property assets and to identify suitable opportunities in accordance with the Council's Acquisition and Disposal Policy.

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

# Director's Key Messages

**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 are being considered together with redevelopment options for the current lorry park site.

The data management system, Concerto has now been fully implemented.

## ICT and Digital Services

The Digital Strategy and Plan is imbedded within the core activities of the Council and progress on delivery of the actions underpinning the Strategy are regularly reported to the Portfolio Holder for ICT and Digital Services.

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.

In addition, the Corporate Information Governance Group (CIGG) made up of key officers from across the Council is now well established. The Board undertakes operational and strategic risk reviews of cyber, information security and information governance activities. This provides Senior Leadership and Members assurance that data is held, processed and transmitted securely and any risks associated are captured.

Successful key digital projects, delivered in 2022/23, include:

- Replacement and improvement of two key line of business systems; HR/Payroll system and Housing asset management system.
- Implementation of a DLUHC funded Housing Repairs Online solution – reducing telephony contact and providing a 24/7 service.
- Migration of data to cloud storage, reducing need for large capital replacement in future years and providing resilient solutions for our data needs.
- Development 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.
- 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

# Director's Key Messages

channel of communication.

- Further Cyber Resilience; Implementation of a Cyber Security Strategy, Cyber360 and Cyber exercising with the LGA, whilst ensuring systems are up-to-date, that risk to information and data held on the corporate network is manageable and within risk tolerances.

In the next 12 months, the following digital projects will be delivered, as identified in the Digital Strategy Action Plan, Digital Strategy and Cyber Security Strategy and Plan:

- Replacement of the Housing Management System, providing our tenants with a modern and customer focused system that aims to improve processing times, communication, and efficiency.
- Suitable devices, support and training for members post May 2023 elections.
- Replacement of the Palace Theatre ticketing solution and website.
- Improving our community digital offer and cost of living initiatives, providing residents and tenants with a range of digital solutions.
- Further migration of data to the cloud reducing our reliance on physical infrastructure.
- Internal communication improvements with a new intranet for staff and members.
- Implementation of modern network solutions providing cost saving and improving our network security.
- Analogue to Digital work programme; careline, telephone lines and analogue broadband replacement and solutions.
- Improving our compliance culture; working towards ISO27001 compliance.

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.

## B. Revenues and Benefits

The Revenues and Benefits business unit has had a particularly challenging three 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 further grant to businesses and continue to administer payment of energy support payments to residents.

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 slightly in 2022/23.

The Council's transformation officer and the Digital Transformation officer will be working with the Business Manager for Revenues and Benefits in 2023/24 to review current processes in order to identify, and implement, new more efficient ways of processing applications for Council Tax Benefits and Housing Benefits.

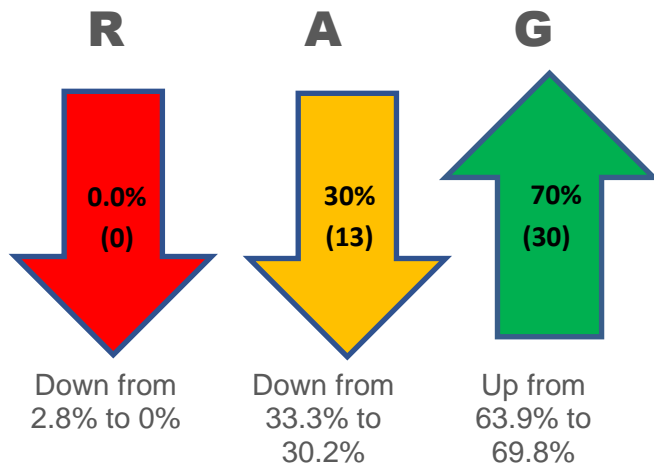
# Director's Key Messages

## Communities and Environment

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

### Overall Assurance

Direction of travel



Critical Activities
Amber
CCTV
Key projects
Amber
Development of Master Plan for the Brunel Drive sites
Parks Investment
Kerbside Glass Recycling
National Heritage Lottery – Stage 1 Development Funds
Castle Gatehouse Project
Key risks
Amber
SR203 - Safeguarding
SR207 – Emergency response
SR212 - Environment
Emerging issues (Amber)
National Waste Strategy impacts & kerbside recycling
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 remain low, the Council's Days of Actions have resumed, fly-tipping has seen a drop year on year and more volunteers across Newark and Sherwood are positively engaged in litter picking in their communities.

On an enforcement front, the Council has issued more than 3,000 fixed penalty notices for littering and other environmental crimes as a result of its partnership with WISE. The Council has also issued more than 200 Fixed Penalty Notices for fly-tipping in its own right and undertaken a number of successful prosecutions where it has been possible and appropriate to do so.

All crime is down on pre-pandemic levels with notable reductions in crime types such as burglary, robbery, theft, and theft from a motor vehicle. Whilst better offender management will have played a significant part in the reductions, there is no doubt that the Council's successful Safer Streets initiatives will have played a role too. In 2022, we were awarded just under £500,000 for a further safer streets project in Newark and a rural safer streets project too. This has taken the total funding package to more than £1 million over the past two years and has been spent on interventions such as target hardening the properties of burglary victims, Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR), CCTV, better lighting and door entry systems to communal flats.

Whilst Anti-Social Behaviour is up slightly on pre-pandemic levels, so too is the Council's enforcement activity. Over the past few years, we have obtained five Anti-Social Behaviour injunctions, six Criminal Behaviour Orders, a Closure Order on a problem property, more than 30 Community Protection Warnings and Notices and 24 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts with young people.



# Director's Key Messages

Work continues to progress on the Council's Climate Emergency. The Council has now given away or planted almost 18,000 trees, including the planting of a substantial new Jubilee Wood of 4,000 trees at Vicar Water. The garden recycling service continues to grow, and our recycling rate is now the highest it has ever been. In February 2023, the Cabinet will decide whether to introduce a new kerbside glass collection service in response to community demand. Meanwhile, Spring will see the introduction of photovoltaics onto five Council buildings, estimate to save around 100 CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent tonnes of carbon per annum.

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, the Business Unit continues to recover and regain audience confidence. This year, the service was successfully awarded Heritage Lottery Fund development funding towards the exciting plans for the Castle Gatehouse. This could potentially be worth £1.4-million and is in addition to the successful completion of the Outline Business Case for £3 million of Towns Fund money towards the same project. In Autumn, the quality of the service was recognised nationally with the award of Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation status, which brings with it almost £1 million of funding over the next three years.

## 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.

A previous red risk reflected concerns about the ability of the Council to respond to a concurrent event in this context. However, with the easing of more and more restrictions, this risk has been reduced to amber.

## 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. It is now proposed that this risk is removed as it is now reflected in the Cost-of-Living risk.

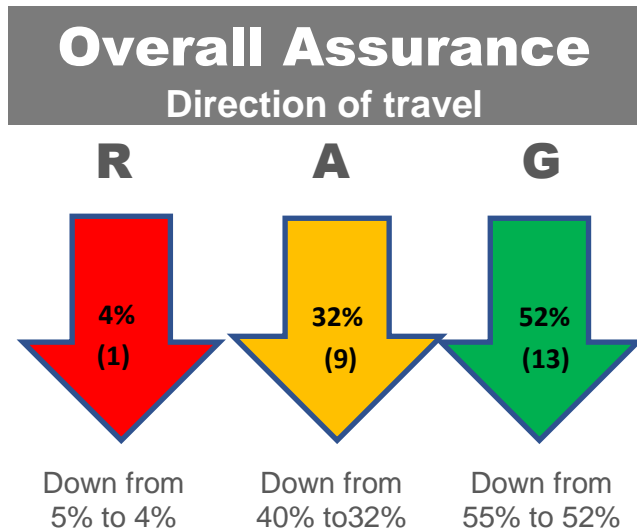
## Environment

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.



No RAG rating for 2% of the directorate activities. These relate to Levelling-up fund Level 2, Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill and general economic impacts.

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
Gypsy and Travellers Community
Delivery of Newark Town Fund programmes
Key risks
Red
SR204 Failure to deliver growth infrastructure

Significant progress continues to be made on key Council priorities, notably the Newark Towns Fund priority projects, many of which have moved to the delivery phase.

Housing numbers, both private and affordable continue to significantly 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. The Council has worked closely with National Highways on the A46 Bypass, enabling colleagues to accelerate the project to allow a Development Consent Order in July 2022 for an expected start on site in March 2025. Likewise, securing the £20m Levelling Up Round 1 and NCC Contributions for the Newark Southern Link Road is expected to finally secure a start on site in March 2023 for completion by March 2025. Ongoing liaison with National Highways and Nottinghamshire County Council is required for the A1 Overbridge and A614 Corridor improvements respectively.

High streets and town centres continue to experience challenges, with residents identifying decline as a key priority. Interventions such as the Newark Towns Fund, the Heritage Action Zone, and Shop Local campaigns continuing to assist footfall and vibrancy. Work the Newark Masterplan, Edwinstowe Forest Corner, and Ollerton Hub will be future priorities.

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

There remain challenges to address meeting housing needs for our Gypsy and Traveller communities which will be tackled through ongoing work on the Council's Development Plan.

# Director's Key Messages

## Cost of Living

The Directorate continues to support business and industry, building upon the Economic Growth & Covid Recovery Plan, and Economic Growth Strategy.

We continue to sign-post grant and support opportunities and undertake key-account management.

## 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 £3.1m from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to address challenges across key thematic areas of Communities and Place, Business and Skills etc.

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

## 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. This has been supplemented with securing an additional £3m contribution from NCC alongside working with National Highways to design and secure funds for revisions to the scheme allowing an optimum interface between the SLR and A46 Bypass.

The Council continues to act as curator and accountable body to ensure delivery, agreeing the funding profile and project outputs to be monitored through an evaluation framework.

## Ollerton Roundabout Improvement

The Council continues to be 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 A46 Bypass

The A46 Newark 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 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 preferred route has been published with NSDC working with National Highways to address issues and accelerate delivery. The scheme remains on track for a March 2025 start and is a key priority of Midlands Engine, Midlands Connect, and every planning, highway,

# Director's Key Messages

and LEP authority from the Humber Ports to Tewkesbury.

## **Failure to deliver growth infrastructure (SR104)**

Progress on the Newark Southern Link Road has been significant. If a contract is let for its construction in Q4 2022/23 the level of risk exposure to delivering growth will significantly reduce.

Highways England are commissioned 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 risks remain until such time as the SLR, A46, and Ollerton Roundabout have progressed to delivery stage. Cost inflation remains a significant risk.

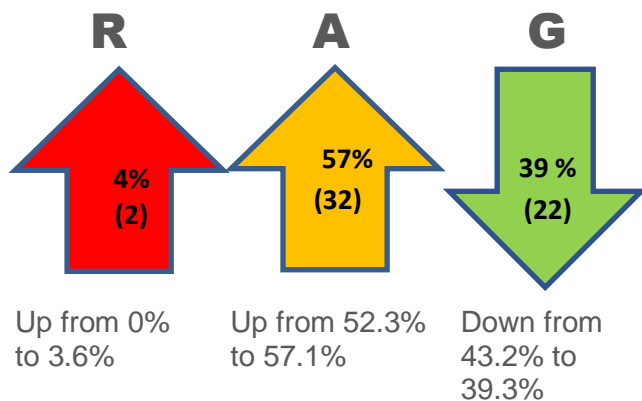
## Director's Key Messages

### Housing, Health, and Wellbeing

**Business Units** – Housing Strategy and Regeneration, Housing and Estates Management, Housing Management and Asset Management, and Housing Income and Leasehold Management.

#### Overall Assurance

Direction of travel



#### Critical Activities

##### Red

Gas servicing

##### Amber

S106 negotiations	Humanitarian Assistance Response Team
Resettlement Co-Ordination	HRA Self Financing Business Plan
Covid 19 Response & Recovery	Inputting and processing of housing applications
Repairs service	Fire Safety in homes and communal areas
Housing Stores & procurement of HRA works and services	Communal area inspections
Careline Services	Estate Walkabouts
Health and Safety	Investment - property improvements and Decent Homes Standard

#### Key Projects

##### Amber

Housing regeneration - Yorke Drive	Implementation of Apex Compliance & Asset Management software
Procurement and installation of Housing Asset Management System	Upgrade of SOR for costing repairs
Procurement of Careline service	Gap analysis on Charter for Social Housing Residents
Decarbonisation for fleet vehicles and social housing stock	

#### Key risks

##### Red

SR213 - Regulatory and statutory compliance management
SR214 Cost of Living

##### Amber

SR202 Financial sustainability - HRA
SR205 - Contract/supply failure

##### Emerging issues (Amber)

Current Tenants Charter Bill
Building and Fire Safety Bill
Damp and Mould
New Decent Homes Standard
Recruitment

#### Significant partnerships

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

# Director's Key Messages

## Critical Activities

Responding to the war in Ukraine has been a key focus in 22-23 alongside the emerging challenges around energy, fuel and food with high inflation and the cost-of-living crisis. The Council have responded strongly with financial support packages that focus on maximising the performance of the Council's key services and targeting support to improve residents personal circumstances including signposting to partners.

Work around health and food security remains a key focus with District partners to maintain better health where incomes are being squeezed and residents are making tough choices for their families.

Our leisure offer, strengthened with the addition of Southwell Leisure Centre also brings additional risk around budgets with the impact of high energy costs. Renewed focus is on scrutiny of performance and ensuring Active4Today's business plan supports the wider Council objectives. In 2023-24 we will have a fresh strategic view of the Districts sports facilities and playing pitches to target support to those communities and sports that need it.

The redevelopment of Seven Hills and reduction in temporary accommodation is being managed well and delays from the demise of the previous development contractor have been minimised, with new contractors being procured.

For housing services, focus remains on delivering fundamental services, recovering the gas servicing programme performance and preparing for changes in regulation and legislation from the Charter for Social Housing Residents and Social Housing ~ (Regulation) Bill expected to be law by April 2023. Alongside focus on the sector around rent capping, stock decency and a sustained focus on building and fire safety.

## Regulatory Framework

Key elements of the Charter for Social Housing Residents have been released over the last year

including the introduction of tenant satisfaction measures and Building and Fire Safety legislation. The Council are preparing for proactive regulation and the Tenant Satisfaction Measures which start in April 2023, enabling the Council's performance to be benchmarked against other providers so tenants can clearly see performance comparison.

With an inspection regime due to commence in 2024, the Council must use this preparatory time to ensure readiness for external and internal scrutiny and ensure risks around systems, resources and culture are mitigated and managed. This is supported by the creation of the Housing Assurance Board who will oversee all regulatory compliance activity. The Council has completed self-assessments against the Housing Ombudsman Effective Complaints Handling Code, strengthening learning from developing a positive complaints culture and listening to tenants experience of services.

## Housing Strategy and Regeneration

Resettlement activities have been brought together under Housing Options and Housing Choices with resources to support service delivery for two years. This ensures consistency across the different activity streams and integrates the service to enable Community Engagement to revert to other priorities.

Yorke Drive remains a key project with risks around increased inflationary costs being regularly reviewed to ensure the key objectives of the project are met.

## Housing Services

Our careline services are being upgraded to address the switch from analogue to digital as well as procuring a new provider for our careline that responds to current needs of users and helps keep them safe in their homes.

Getting to know you visits are a key tool to manage risk of failing tenancies and failing properties with processes in place to raise issues around damp, mould and property issues



# Director's Key Messages

as well as person centred issues of debt, mental health and substance misuse.

A real strength in this area is the tenant engagement framework which is reaching more tenants year on year and enabling the Council to show how tenants views are influencing and shaping housing services. The Tenant Engagement Board sees all performance and complaints data as well as sight of cabinet papers that they may wish to influence.

Professionalism of the sector will be in the spotlight over this next year, requiring the Council to review the training and qualifications offer for housing colleagues to meet the requirements likely to come from the Social Housing Bill. Alongside this, the Council is refreshing its customer strategy to refresh service standards and customer service training.

## Housing Maintenance and Asset Management

This service area is of greatest importance to tenants and carries significant risk around the decency of homes, the efficiency and energy performance and how quickly we put service failures right. Challenges in the labour market and cost of materials puts pressure on service delivery which we mitigate using a mix of in-house and contractor resources. The Council are looking broadly at pay and improving both performance and working conditions to ensure a strong repairs service can be given.

The Council have sought to review stock condition of 48% of its stock to reset investment planning based on current data. Significant investment is required to ensure homes remain decent and meet future Decent Homes standards, whilst also seeking cost effective opportunities to decarbonise stock whilst keeping the costs of running a home affordable to tenants. Availability of skilled trades to fit and maintain gas heating alongside the support required to support tenants with operating new systems are significant risks as we move away from gas and look to achieve Energy

Performance Certificate C by 2035. A consortium bid will help the Council test new technologies and benefit from shared knowledge and resources.

## Compliance

Compliance has been and continues to be a focus and we a new system for both asset and compliance data will improve our knowledge of housing stock and compliance responsibilities, reducing risks of operating contracts outside of a system, including standard performance reports to manage programmes and contractor management.

## Housing Income and Leasehold Management

Our arrears 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. Rent de-pooling will be explored to ascertain the benefits and challenges as well as how any scheme would be implemented.

## ICT Systems

Significant progress has been made procuring and implementing a new compliance system to provide greater assurance around the management of our key health and safety responsibilities as well as enabling us to model future investment plans based on stock condition surveys. Procurement of a new housing management system is also underway to ensure we know our tenants, our homes and our data so we have efficient modern, agile digital services and meet the requirements of the consumer standards.

This is an opportunity to take a fresh look at processes to reduce duplication, achieve better value for money and provide a better customer experience for tenants and applicants. Resourcing this project will need careful management to ensure we keep existing services operational whilst designing, implementing and training out a new system carries inherent risk and also a resource

# Director's Key Messages

challenge to ensure we secure a well-designed system that meets our needs – and our aspirations.

## **HRA 30-year business plan**

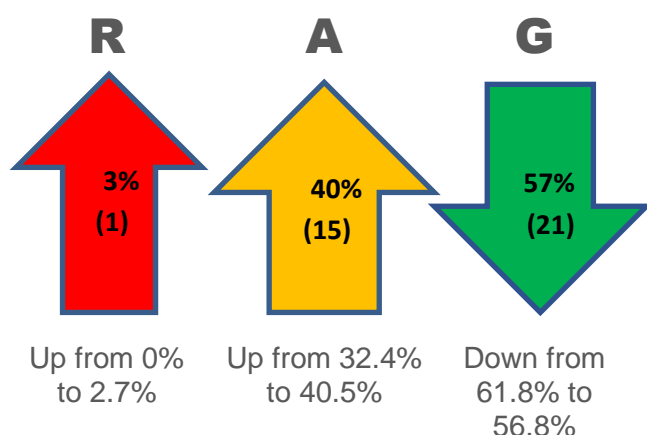
We are directing our thinking into our long-term stability and how the expectations on service development will be financed. The landlord strategy gives an overview of key activities and services that must be delivered, prioritising safety and essential services. The impact of stock condition survey information will impact investment plans and the risk that our stock condition is out of kilter with our current data, the analysis is being prioritised to update assumptions in the business plan.

# 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



Critical activities
Amber
Recruitment and retention
Training
Equality and diversity
Corporate policy
Assurance functions
Contract register
Reputation management
Key projects
Amber
Customer strategy
Customer Comments Review
Implementation of new HRIS (iTrent)
Workforce Development Strategy
Document consistency project
Public Switch Telephone Network
5 x Service reviews

### Key risks

#### Red

SR206 - Workforce

#### Amber

SR205 - Contract/supply failure

Mail handling – emerging risk

### 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 2023/24

# Director's Key Messages

## Human Resources and Training

The new HRIS (iTrent) has been implemented, whilst there have been the usual teething problems with any new software, phase 1 is now complete. Work will begin this year on phase 2 which will include the full recruitment. The improved functionality will provide greater assurance in all aspects of the HR function and the organisation's responsibilities as an employer.

The approved Workforce Development Strategy has a comprehensive action plan for implementation, which covers 4 years of work. This will include a revised approach to training which focuses on the skills gaps of the organisation.

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.

Work will be undertaken this year to look at our job evaluation model which hasn't been reviewed for a number of years. The aim will be to ensure the Council has a relevant and effective way of evaluating jobs and their demands.

The level of the living wage and national pay awards have resulted in an erosion of pay differentials which will also be examined as part of the wider review of the job evaluation model.

## Customers (Customer Services and Customer Feedback)

Customer services is a well-established business unit which reacts accordingly to customer demand. It has an excellent record in service delivery, with an impressive track record of dealing with 95% of all calls at first point of

contact. This is especially remarkable when considering the wide range of service and software applications the team interact with. The team continue to deal with more complex enquiries and have knowledge and skills at depth as well as breadth.

The team is well managed and able to deal with fluctuation demands.

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.

Training for all business units on how to deal effectively with complaints is being rolled out across the Council.

The Customer Strategy is being developed with a working group of members as part of the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee. It will lead to an agreed customer charter on the levels of service all customers can expect.

The customer services Business Manager effectively monitors and manages correspondence with and from both the Housing and Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

## 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

# Director's Key Messages

contracts are added as business units raise them but historically this has been patchy.

## Projects & Working Groups

The Transformation and Service Improvement team will undertake 5 service reviews within the next year. Each will have a slightly different focus, but all will be looking to improve service delivery for the customer.

The Transformation and Service Improvement team continue to support working groups of the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee as part of the new governance arrangements. Two successful working groups have completed with their recommendations taken forward; one group is currently active.

## Communication and Engagement

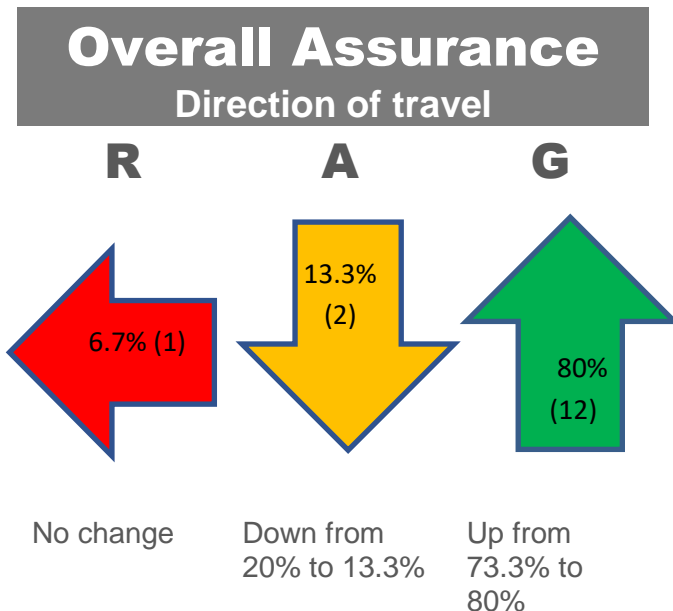
Consultation and Engagement Policy was approved July 2022, this followed a recommendation by Audit and Governance Committee and is being embedded across the Council. This places a greater emphasis on considering residents views when introducing policies and amending service delivery. A consultation and engagement calendar is held by the Communication and Marketing team to ensure an appropriate, proportionate and timely approach.

A Communications strategy is due to be considered April 2023 with a focus on a corporate voice and approach to reputation management.

# Director's Key Messages

## Legal and Democratic Services

**Business Units** – Law and Information Governance, Elections and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer responsibility.



Critical Activities
Red and Amber
None
Key projects
Amber
Information Management Project (Digital)
Key risks
Red
SR209 – Data Management & Security
Amber
SR208 – Corporate governance

## Electoral Services

In 2022-23 the Service successfully ran 1 Parish and 2 District by-elections. Elections for the entire District and all Town and Parish Councils are due to take place in May 2023. Electoral reform in the form of Voter ID and accessibility of polling stations will be in effect for these elections. In readiness for elections, the Service is required by law to publish the Annual Register of Electors on 1 December 2023, and to keep it updated throughout the year.

The need for further resource was identified in 2021-22 and the structure of the elections service was increased by 1 x FTE early in 2023 in readiness for the district-wide elections and electoral reform.

## Democratic Services

In 2022-3 the Service successfully implemented the Council's new governance arrangements, which took effect from May 2022. The Council moved to 'Executive Arrangements' or 'Cabinet System'. This meant a change in the Council's committees, the establishment of a Cabinet with individual Councillor decision-making authority, and the introduction of a Forward Plan and arrangements for Key Decisions (significant decisions in terms of spend and/or the impact), new report templates, training and guidance. The Service had 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 was a key part of change in governance arrangements.

The Service supports the Transformation Team in operating the scrutiny element of Cabinet Arrangements, via the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee and its working groups.



# Director's Key Messages

A 6-month review of the success of the new arrangements was undertaken from November 2022, with the outcome being reported back to Audit & Governance Committee in February 2023.

appreciation of risk in respect of what could happen to that information, and implement a sensible safety net of controls to reduce/eliminate the risk of problems happening; the recommended industry standard.

## Legal Services

In 2022-3 the Service successfully implemented a legal document management system and is now working on maximising its capabilities in terms for automating workflows and implementing accurate time recording. Professional staff will spend their time on technical legal work rather than losing time on inefficient systems and administrative tasks that could be more automated, and the Service can develop more effective and efficient performance reporting.

A Service Level Commitment for the internal clients has been written, as the Service further professionalises its service.

A significant new workstream has been taken on by the team – littering prosecutions using the Single Justice Procedure – assisting the Council to achieve its Community Plan objectives.

## Information Governance

Substantial Assurance was awarded in relation to an Information Governance and Data Protection audit.

The Service has reviewed arrangements for staff training and a new training package, with capability to produce corporate reports, will be launched in 2023-24, working in collaboration with colleagues in HR and ICT.

The Service is working on the design and implementation of an Information Security Management System (ISMS) in collaboration with the IT Business Unit. This is a toolkit for making sure the Council is meeting legal compliance in respect of information, via policies and procedures. ISMS is a structured framework that helps organisations to understand what their valuable information is, develop