

# **Combined Assurance Status Report 2025/26**



**South Holland District Council  
March 2026**

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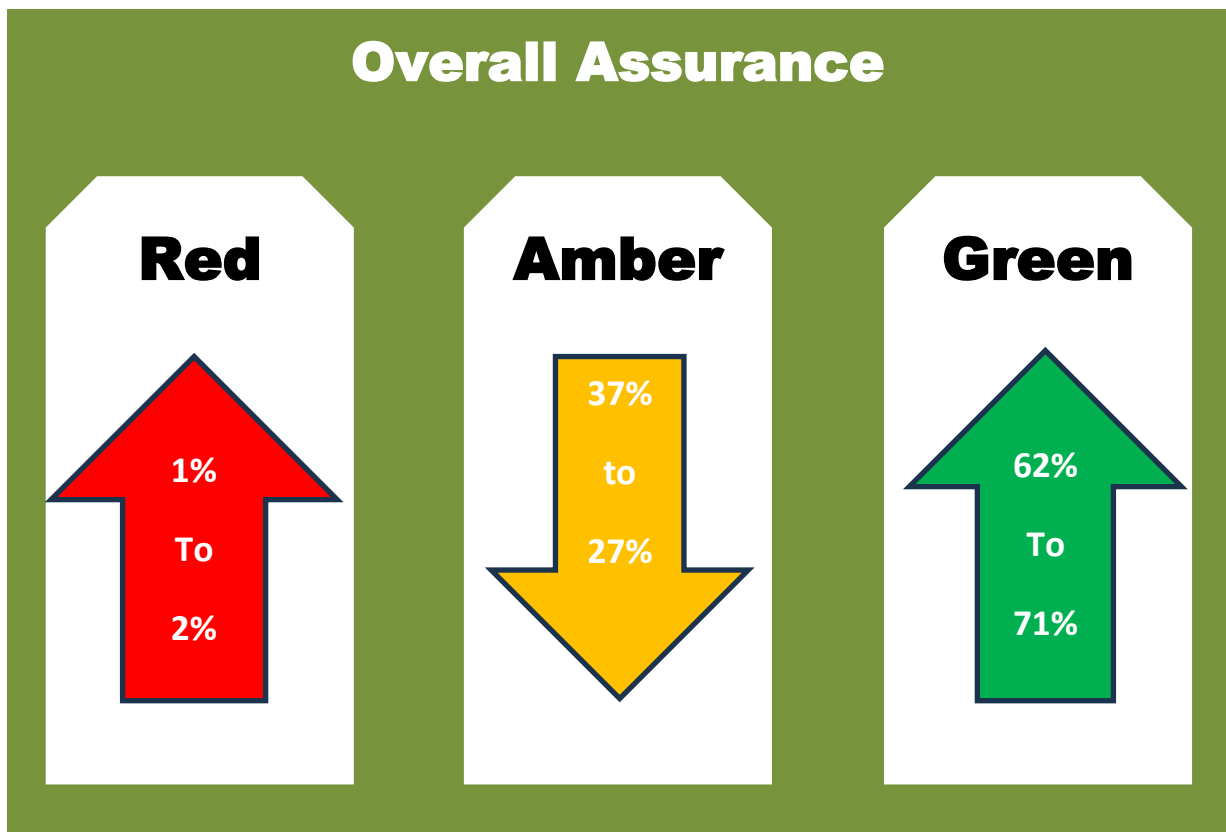
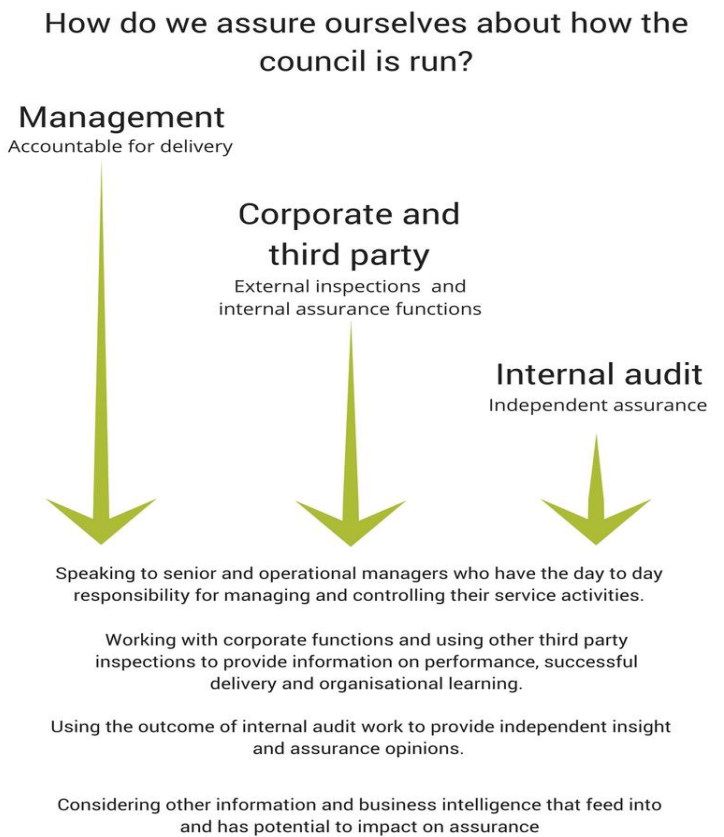
Key	Risk
<b>Red - Very High /High</b>	High impact on resources, significant costs likely, high impact on service delivery
<b>Amber - High/Medium</b>	Medium or short-term impact on resources, cost covered within existing financial plans, low impact on service delivery
<b>Green - Medium/Low</b>	Monitor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

# Overview of Assurance

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

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

We do this using the 3 lines of defence model.



## Chief Executive's Summary

The Council's exposure to its strategic risks is mitigated through the established partnership structure.

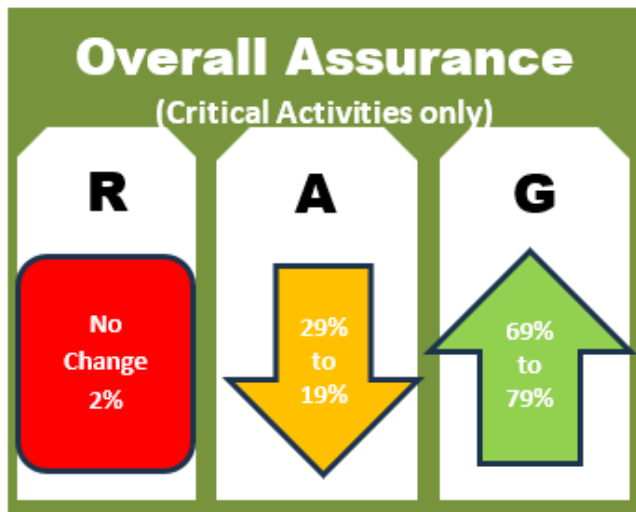
The Partnership has this year reached the milestone of identifying the 10-year savings and efficiency target of £42m – 5 years early. This is a huge achievement. In addition, over £278m of external funding has now been secured. The Partnership is in the process of reviewing its Memorandum of Agreement to ensure it remains fit for purpose now the partnership is mature.

Service performance remains high and the Council has been able to set a balanced budget for 2026/27 despite growing pressures. The governance framework remains strong, and the combined assurance work presents a stable and helpful foundation for the coming years programme of work. The Leadership team place high value in the combined assurance reports.

# Key Messages

## Communities Directorate

Health and Safety, Ground Maintenance, Play Areas, Tree Risk Assessment, Public Conveniences Internal, Green Waste, Depot, Food Waste, Refuse and Recycling, HGV Fleet Management, Street Scene, Safeguarding, Service Performance KPIs, Wellbeing, Staff Resilience, Homelessness, Housing Standards, Rough Sleeping, Housing Advice Triage, Housing Register, Temporary Accommodation, Housing Assistance (DFG and other grants), Community Safety, CCTV and ASB, Age Friendly Work, Community and Voluntary Sector, Community lottery, Licensing, Emergency Planning/Business Continuity, Land Charges, Environmental Health – Protection, Environmental Health - Food Safety, Corporate Health and Safety, Enviro-crime enforcement, Building Control, Home Energy Advice and Retrofit Team, Carbon Reduction, Climate Change and Environment, Parkwood, Markets, Recruitment and Retention, Monkhouse Lane (Spalding) and SELCP Combined Leisure and Culture Tender.



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
Tree Risk Assessment	Play Areas
	Green Waste
	Refuse and Recycling
	HGV Fleet Management
	Homelessness

Critical Activities
Housing Advice Triage
Temporary Accommodation
Corporate Health & Safety

The Communities Directorate continues to deliver a wide range of essential frontline and regulatory services, with overall assurance remaining stable for 2025/26. The majority of critical activities sit within green or amber, showing strong operational performance despite sustained demand and workforce pressures.

Key strengths include refuse and recycling, green waste, homelessness prevention, temporary accommodation, community safety, safeguarding and corporate health & safety. These areas continue to perform well, maintain compliance and respond effectively to resident need.

One activity remains red rated: Tree Risk Assessment. This reflects historic backlogs and specialist capacity issues. An improvement plan is being developed to strengthen compliance and reduce organisational risk.

Amber rated services such as play areas, HGV fleet management, homelessness, temporary accommodation and environmental health continue to experience pressure due to rising demand, recruitment challenges and increased statutory duties. Workforce resilience remains a theme across several teams. Investment in training, development and partnership support is helping to stabilise the position.

National policy change is a significant driver of future pressure. The Environment Act, waste reform (including food waste collections), damp and mould requirements and wider climate change duties all present new responsibilities and financial implications.

## Key Messages

Looking ahead, priorities include addressing the remaining red assurance area, building resilience in high-pressure services, implementing new legislative duties and continuing to develop the workforce to support our communities.

# Key Messages

## Corporate Development Directorate

Income Management, Rent Control, Tenancy and Estate Management, Tenancy Statement, Right to Buy Scheme, Business Support, Management of NEC Housing System (Northgate), Decent Homes Capital Investment Programme, Landlord Compliance, In house Repairs Team, Aids and Adaptations, Tenant Engagement & influence, Delivery, Training Plans and Budgets, Workforce Strategy & Culture, Media Communications, General Communications, Transformation Support, Website Accessibility, Corporate Plan Delivery Monitoring, Performance, Legal Services, Community Governance Reviews, Code of Conduct Matters, Complaints, Data Protection & Corporate Compliance, FOIs, Member Expenses, Designated Councillor budgets, Electoral Registration, Elections, Member Training, Committee Services, Risk Management, Scrutiny Function, Finance Skills and Knowledge, Corporate Governance, Peer review/Action Plan Partnership, Towns Fund Long Term Funds, Levelling Up Funds (Spalding), New Homes Capital Programme, SIRO, Service reviews, Savings, Financial Resilience, Procurement and Contract Management, Constitution Alignment.

Media Communications
Transformational Support
Website Accessibility
Complaints
Data Protection & Corporate Compliance
Financial Skills and Knowledge
Levelling Up Funds (Spalding)

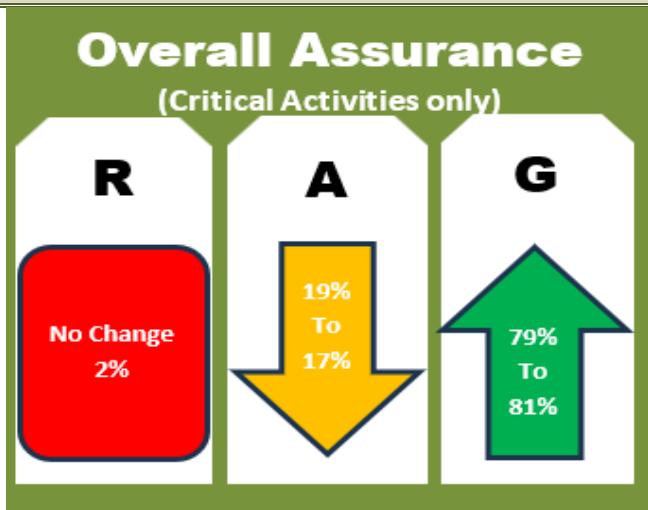
[The Council has set a balanced budget without the need for an efficiency target, which is a positive position for the Council to be in, albeit future years remain financially challenging for the Council.

Continued efforts and lobbying around the challenges of IDB funding have continued and £5m of sector funding support has been renewed by Government.

The Council is actively engaged in Greater Lincolnshire discussions around Local Government Re-organisation and the associated work programme, with an expected outcome on the future model of governance for Greater Lincolnshire expected in July 2026. The Council submitted its own proposal for a two Council model in November 2025. The Council has a focus on workforce resilience and planning through its Workforce Development activity as we approach LGR; and capacity in regard to LGR preparation is under continuous review.

The Council has robust arrangements in place via a specific Leadership Team Governance meeting each month to monitor key areas of the Council’s business (including performance and risk) and to seek assurance as necessary.

The past year has seen the vast majority of outstanding service reviews concluded across the Partnership with HR support. A key project for all three Councils is the implementation of Uniform – corporate ICT system and this remains ongoing.

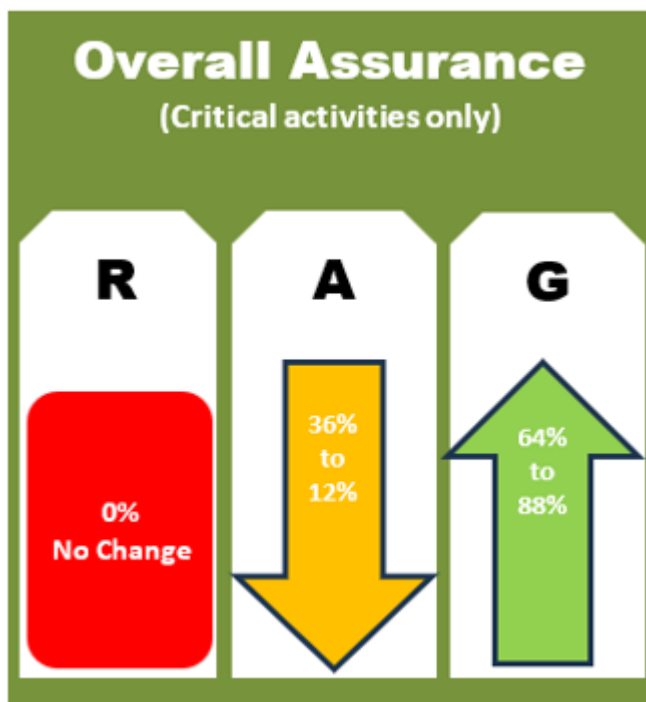


Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
Financial Resilience	Tenant Engagement & Influence

# Key Messages

## Programme Delivery & SIRO Directorate

Cleaning and Caretaking HRA assets, SHDC Maintenance HRA Assets, Cleaning and Caretaking general fund assets, Commercial Rents, Repairs and Maintenance, Car Parking, Annual Asset Valuations and Spalding Cemetery.



### Critical Activities

Red	Amber
Nil	Spalding Cemetery.

2025/26 saw significant change for the Programme Delivery Team; firstly, the team was joined by Leisure and Local Services colleagues, who brought new and varied work streams and projects onboard, strengthening the links between project delivery and service contracting, especially for the Council's new or remodelled leisure assets; better aligning teams in this way enabled greater strategic oversight, strengthening risk identification, risk

management and governance; and importantly, all service reviews were fully implemented in accordance with the decisions and controls required.

During the year all major projects monitored and managed through the Major Projects Board governance model continued to progress through their planning phases and into delivery. The Major Project Board continued to provide officer level strategic oversight, control and scrutiny of all schemes, externally managed as well as internally managed schemes, through its robust and consistent monitoring, evaluation and instruction to project sponsors., focussing on financial risk, delivery risk and reputational risk; the Board had particular focus on the Spalding Leisure Scheme and the asset disposal strategy in hand to support financial sustainability. The oversight of the Board continued to feed into the Senior Leadership Team's monthly Governance meetings and onward into the political governance machinery embedded within the organisation and clearly defined within its constitution.

Whilst cost pressures, time delays and occupation challenges came up within the year in relation to Council's key delivery project; the robust governance and assurance processes in place meant all issues were able to be duly considered, challenged, addressed or mitigated systematically to ensure full transparency and accountability.

Functional service delivery, risk management, financial control and performance management continued across General Fund Assets, Major Projects and Leisure and Local Services in accordance with the Council's governance framework with no critical service issues being experienced during the year.

A key achievement in year was signing a new Leisure Contract with Parkwood, following a detailed and robust procurement process, who have been contracted by all three Councils in the Partnership to manage key leisure assets for

## Key Messages

the next decade, saving the taxpayer millions of pounds over the life of the contract.

One significant SIRO incident occurred during the year in relation to a Partnership wide IT security that saw a swift, effective response and decision making by the SIRO to immediately close down a cyber threat to which the Partnership had been exposed by a third party software provider; the response was thorough, fully documented and decisive; being quickly communicated across our three organisations in consultation with the Data Protection Officer and Senior Leadership Team.

Across all Programme Delivery functions, all internal and external audit recommendations had either been addressed in year or were in the process of being proportionately mitigated

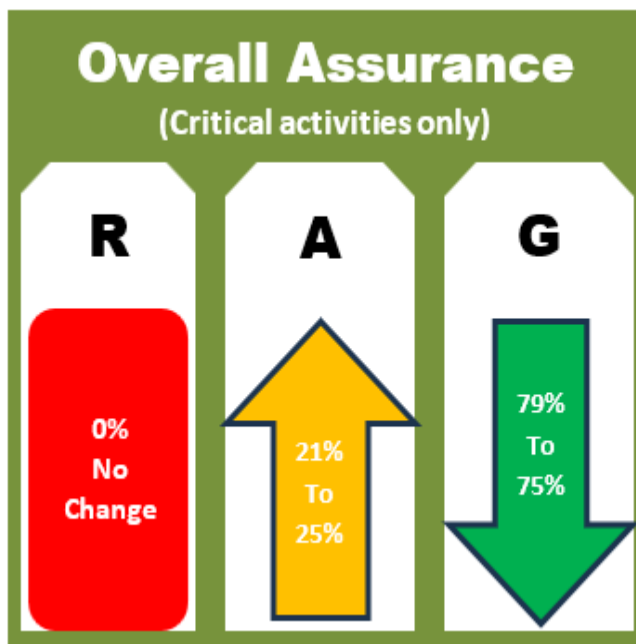
# Key Messages

## Growth Directorate

Towns Fund #1 - External Governance with Central Government Strategic contracts, Towns Fund #2 - Internal Governance, Towns Fund #3 - LA as Accountable Body, Towns Fund - Inception to stage 4 delivery, Local Regeneration Fund, Pride in Place, Delivery of South Holland Health & Wellbeing Hub, Delivery of Food Enterprise Zone, Holbeach, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund, Advice 4 Growth and Grants 4 Growth, Growth and Prosperity Fund, NPO Funding, S106, Planning Policy (Local Plan), Heritage, Planning Enforcement and Development Management Control (processing planning applications, pre applications and appeals).

During 2025-26, the Growth Directorate delivered a wide-ranging activities to enhance and develop Spalding as a place to live, work, visit and invest in. The Health and Well Being Hub, delivered through Levelling Up Fund has progressed well. The Culture & Regeneration team has facilitated the Spalding Town Board in preparing the Pride in Place Plan for Spalding Town Centre and submission to the Government. Positive liaison with the Government has continued to the receipt of £20m funding to deliver the priorities that emerged strongly through the consultation and engagement with residents, businesses, stakeholders and community partners. Sector prioritisation framework, workforce skills deep dive study and retail, hospitality, leisure and agri-food sector reviews have been completed to create evidence base for future funding bids.

A 'town of culture' bid is submitted for Spalding. Delivery of activities through the Arts Council funded National Portfolio Organisation programme has picked up pace over the year. The Business Improvement District (BID) for Spalding is firmly established and working alongside the Council and its partners to support the businesses in town centre area. Destination Management Plan, SELCP design guide and conservation area appraisals Spalding heritage strategy have been prepared for consultation. Sector prioritisation framework, workforce skills deep dive study and retail, hospitality, leisure and agri-food sector reviews have been completed to create evidence base for future funding bids. Service reviews for Culture & Regeneration and Strategic Growth teams are now approved and being implemented. Implementation of the phase 2 service review for Planning service is underway. Evidence base for Local Plan review are being prepared in order to meet the new guidance and legislation for National Planning Policy Framework.



Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
Nil	NPO Funding
	Planning Policy (Local Plan)
	Planning Enforcement
	Development Management Control

# Key Messages

## Strategic Partnership Working (PSPS Delivered Services)

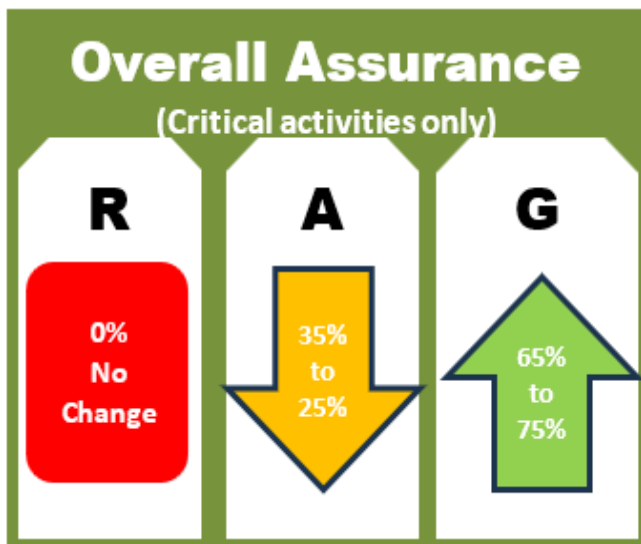
Health & Safety, General Procurement, Spend Analysis, Procurement Strategy, Contract Register, Contract Management, Social Value, HR strategy, Expenses, Recruitment, Payroll, Equality & Diversity, Employee Relations, Systems & Reporting, Pension Scheme, Customer Services, Service Projects, Complaints Legislation, Digital Transformation Projects, CRM, Onsite Incidents, Income, Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, General Ledger, VAT, Procurement Cards, Treasury Management, Insurance, Budget Management, Budget Preparation, Control Account Reconciliations, Finance Staff Resilience, Close Down of Accounts, Working with External Audit, Grant Management, Council Tax, Recovery, Housing Benefits, Council Tax Support, CTS Fraud, Single Person Discount, Business Rates, ICT Governance, ICT Organisational, ICT Physical, ICT Technological, ICT People, ICT Projects, ICT Applications, ICT Compliance.

Critical Activities	
Red	Amber
Nil	Health & Safety
	HR Strategy
	Digital Transformation Projects
	Onsite Incidents
	Council Tax
	Recovery
	Housing Benefits
	Council Tax Support
	Business Rates
	ICT Technological
	ICT Projects
	ICT Applications
	ICT Compliance

The relationship with PSPS continues to be strong with all 3 Councils having signed up to a new iteration of the company Transformation and Efficiency Programme.

From a HR perspective the service continues to see high levels of activity across all services and this is closely monitored via Leadership Team.

ICT continues to be a key area of focus and in particular ensuring robust cyber security arrangements.



# Key Messages

## Key Projects

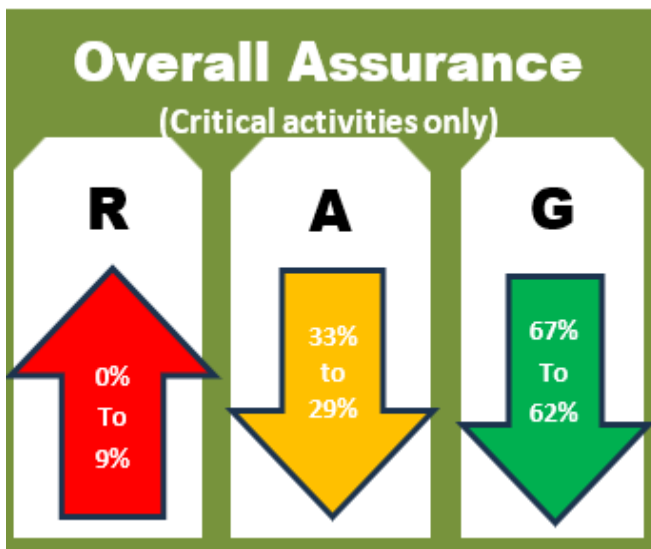
Commissioning of Volunteers, Service Review and Restructure, Rough Sleepers Initiative Programme, Sport England Place Partnership, Household Support Fund, Leisure Provision, Arts Council England National, Spalding Pride in Place, Constitutional Alignment, Programme Management (Generally), HMLR, Implementation of Uniform 2023, Upgrade/Replace 2008 Servers, Call Secure, Waste Improvement, Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard PCI DSS, PSN Compliance, AP Invoice automation, Finance Optimisation of Unit 4, Delivery of Uniform System, Shared Officer Pay Structure, Terms & Conditions of Employment, Requirements of Environment Act 2021, Alignment of the Three Councils, Transformation, Transformation – Service Reviews, Management Strategy, Social Housing De-Carbonisation Fund Projects, Housing Transformation & Service Improvement Programme, Establishing a Tenant Influence Panel, Local Plan Review, Applications/Development Projects, Amendments to Contract Procedures, Information Governance Policies, Service Review of Democratic Services and Democratic Services Alignment.

Key Projects	
Red	Amber
Implementation of Uniform 2023	Arts Council England National
Upgrade/Replacement of 2008 Servers	Waste Improvement
	Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard PCI DSS
	AP Invoice Automation
	Finance Optimisation of Unit 4
	Delivery of Uniform System
	Terms & Conditions of Employment
	Transformation
	Local Plan Review
	Amendments to Contract Procedures

During 2025/26, project governance at all levels matured even further across the Partnership. Our Partnership wide Project Management Framework provides detailed guidance and a comprehensive suite of templates to ensure a consistent approach to projects at all levels and provides us a golden project management thread irrespective of the nature, scale, value and complexity of projects.

Sitting at the top of the non-political governance arrangements in place is our Major Projects Board; the Board comprises the full Senior Leadership Team and provides executive officer oversight and instruction in respect of all 'major projects', the Board sits monthly as part of the Leadership Teams programmed schedule of meetings.

'Major projects' include all large, internally and externally managed capital schemes and other externally funded programmes for which Partner Councils are the responsible body; for example Levelling Up Schemes, Pride in Place funding allocation and Towns Fund Schemes, as well as driving forward critical activity projects such as



## Key Messages

the production of our Local Plans, the roll out of food waste collection at each Partner Council and significant IT projects that impact multiple teams and corporate business.

Where the nature, scale and complexity of projects, such as the roll out of food waste collection and the transformation of other waste collection dictates; our approach is to set up a similar 'Board' model, such as the Waste Improvement Programme Board, to coordinate, oversee and steer the detail with the leading Executive Director feeding strategic matters into the Major Projects Board.

The Board focuses on strategic risk, delivery, monitoring and programme wide impact and holds oversight of any significant internally funded projects such as the East Lindsey Investment Fund.

The Senior Leadership Team are responsible and accountable for ensuring all project matters; finance, delivery, risk and outcomes feed seamlessly into the political machinery of scrutiny, Cabinet/Executive and Council, ensuring full project and programme transparency and accurate and timely reporting to politicians.