

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**HOUSING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING
CABINET MEMBER**

SERVICE STANDARDS FOR HOUSING

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This report is an update to the cabinet report on service standards for the Housing Division approved by the Housing and Strategic Planning Cabinet Member in March 2009.
- 1.2 The key points in this report are:
 - The service standards relating to energy efficiency grants, disabled facilities grants and affordable home loans have been further developed to allow more effective monitoring.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Key Lines of Enquiry related to housing identify the need for robust, clear and challenging customer-focused service standards, which are tailored to meet local needs and which are effectively monitored and the results publicised.
- 2.2 Following an advice and assistance session with the Audit Commission, service standards were produced by the Housing Division.
- 2.3 The service standards were finally approved by the Housing and Strategic Planning Cabinet Member in September 2009.
- 2.4 Since then, to allow these service standards to be monitored more effectively, significant work has taken place on streamlining the processes themselves and improving the IT support system that underpins the monitoring framework.
- 2.5 The revised service standards attached to this report covering disabled facilities grants, energy efficiency grants and affordable loans, update further those approved in September 2009 to provide a robust performance monitoring framework whilst clarifying our standards for service users.
- 2.6 Work is ongoing to develop service standards with Social Services and the Occupational Therapy Service around disabled facilities for both adults and children, the ultimate goal being able to provide clients with

realistic time scales for all elements of the process, not just those which housing are directly responsible for.

- 2.7 If implemented it is proposed to submit a full retrospective performance report on the new standards at the conclusion of the current financial year.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Option 1 – continue to apply the service standards as developed and approved in 2009.
- 3.2 Option 2 – implement the new service standards attached to this report and for reporting purposes apply them retrospectively to the current financial year.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 – this would maintain the current position.
- 4.2 Option 2 – this is the preferred option since it would help ensure clients can understand the time scales involved in the relevant processes more easily, help track the real time experience of customers through more robust monitoring and make it easier for all members of staff to know and understand the targets that they are being asked to work to.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 There are no additional resource implications.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

- 6.1 Statutory – there are specific Acts, Regulations and guidance which govern how local authorities give financial assistance and these service standards take those procedures, where appropriate, into account.
- 6.2 Diversity - publishing the standards on the website along with performance data will allow all current and future clients to see the time line for processing and completing their applications thus making the customer experience better.
- 6.3 Risk – if the service standards are not amended to produce more robust and customer orientated targets, there is a risk that the Audit Commission, when they inspect the Housing service in March, will find the service standards inadequate and reflective of a poor service.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 These service standards are the product of consultation with the relevant officers.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 To approve the new service standards attached to this report.

SERVICE DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD & ENVIRONMENT

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report - None

North Lincolnshire Council

Service Standards

Energy Efficiency Grant Assistance Process

North Lincolnshire Council will provide information on and access to energy efficiency grants for households in North Lincolnshire.

The stages of the process which are directly under our control are detailed below with targets for completion which we aim to meet.

These time scales are monitored and reported on throughout the year but they also **depend on you responding promptly when required.**

	Our target is to complete each stage within:
From receipt of an eligible enquiry to sending out a grant application	1 week
From receipt of your completed application form to allocation of the case to a surveyor who will visit to discuss the proposed work	2 weeks
From the surveyor's visit to the preparation and issue of a schedule of works to enable quotations to be obtained	2 weeks*
From the schedule of work being prepared to receipt of tenders	5 weeks
From receipt of a completed application form and quotations to approval of the grant application	1 week
From approval to sending you a letter confirming that the grant application has been approved and who the appointed contractor is	1 week
From the approval of the grant to the contractor completing the work on site (a surveyor will monitor progress on site and liaise with the contractor until the works are completed)	12 weeks**
From us being notified of the works being completed to us carrying out a final inspection	2 weeks

* In cases where there are more complex issues that require planning, building control permission and/or provision of gas supply then the overall times could vary by up to 10 weeks on average. Where this happens we will keep you informed of the likely timescales.

**The time period for completion of the works will vary depending on the extent of the work, weather conditions and other unforeseen circumstances. The contractor will be able to give you a more detailed time scale for completion once they start the works.

Please also note that we may send you a satisfaction questionnaire at the end of the process to obtain your thoughts and comments regarding our performance and how we might be able to improve the service we offer.

If you are chosen at random to receive our questionnaire, we would very much appreciate it if you could find the time to complete and return it to us so that we can continue to improve the service we provide.

North Lincolnshire Council

Service Standards

Affordable Loans for Homeowners

North Lincolnshire Council will provide information on and access to affordable loans for home improvements to homeowners in North Lincolnshire. We aim to help people who have difficulty accessing loans from high street lenders.

The stages of the process which are directly under our control are detailed below, with targets for completion which we aim to meet.

These time scales are monitored and reported on throughout the year but they also **depend on you responding promptly when required.**

	Our Target is to complete each stage within:
From your initial enquiry to contacting you to determine eligibility	1 week
From contacting you to us visiting you to discuss the options available to you, and completing initial paperwork (if you are eligible for a loan and wish to proceed to the next stage)	1 week
From us visiting you to allocation of your case to a surveyor who will visit to assess what repairs are necessary	2 weeks
From the surveyor visiting to sending out a schedule of proposed work for your approval	2 weeks*
If you want us to obtain quotations for the proposed work, we will do this, once you have approved the schedule of works. We will obtain these quotations within 5 weeks of you approving the proposed works. Alternatively, you can obtain your own quotations if you prefer, in which case we would ask that you obtain them and return them to us within the same timescale	5 weeks
From receiving the quotations for the works we will select the contractor and arrange to visit you to complete the final application forms	1 week
We then have to send the fully completed application to our partners, Homes and Loans at Sheffield City Council, as they administer the loan funding on our behalf. It takes approximately 12 weeks for them to process the application and make the funding available (unless there are circumstances beyond their control). They will notify us when the application has been approved and the funding is available.	12 weeks
From us receiving confirmation that the loan arrangement is in place to the contractor completing the work (the surveyor will monitor progress on site and liaise with the contractor until the works are completed)	12 weeks**
From us being notified that the work has been completed to a surveyor visiting to check the work has been completed satisfactorily	2 weeks

* NB In cases where there are more complex issues that require planning, building control permission and/or provision of a gas supply then the overall times could vary by up to 10 weeks on average. Where this is the case we will keep you informed of the likely timescales.

** The time period for completion of works will vary depending on the extent of the work, weather conditions and other unforeseen circumstances. The contractor will be able to give a more detailed time scale for completion once they start the work.

Please also note that we will send you a satisfaction survey at the end of the process to obtain your thoughts and comments regarding our performance and how we might be able to improve the service we offer. We would very much appreciate it if you could take a few moments to complete and return it to us.

North Lincolnshire Council

Service Standards

Disabled Facilities Grants

North Lincolnshire Council will provide information on and access to disabled facilities grants for eligible households in North Lincolnshire. The Housing Service administers disabled facilities grants to provide adaptations where an Occupational Therapist has informed us that the adaptation is necessary to meet the needs of a disabled person. The stages of the process which are directly under our control are detailed below, with targets for completion which we aim to meet.

These time scales are monitored and reported on throughout the year but they also **depend on you responding promptly when required.**

	Our target is to complete each stage within:
From receipt of the needs assessment from either social services or an Occupational Therapist (OT), to sending you an application form to complete	1 week
From receipt of your application form and completion of the means test (where applicable) to the allocation to a surveyor who will contact you	2 weeks
From the date of the initial visit by the surveyor to them preparing a proposed scheme and forwarding it to you, the OT and your landlord (where applicable) for approval	2 weeks*
Following agreement of the scheme by all parties to us obtaining competitive tenders for the work and completing the grant application pack on your behalf	5 weeks
From receipt of your completed application form and tenders for the work to us making a decision on your application	2 week
From making the decision to notifying you of it in writing	1 week
From the date of approval to the work being completed on site	12 weeks**
From us being notified of the works being completed to us carrying out a final inspection	2 weeks

* In cases where there are more complex issues that require planning, building control permission and/or provision of gas supply then the overall times could vary by up to 10 weeks on average. Where this is the case we will keep you informed of the likely timescales.

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If you are chosen at random to receive our questionnaire, we would very much appreciate it if you could find the time to complete and return it to us so that we can continue to improve the service we provide.