

**NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

**ASSET MANAGEMENT, CULTURE AND  
HOUSING CABINET MEMBER**

**HOME ASSISTANCE POLICY RELATED FEES**

**1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To approve an increase in the agency fees charged on grants provided through the council's Home Assistance Policy.

**2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The Housing Assistance Policy outlines the help available to homeowners or tenants to fit disabled adaptations or repair their homes. The policy has two elements. Firstly, the mandatory disabled facilities assistance and secondly, the discretionary assistance.
- 2.2 Local authorities are permitted to charge agency fees for dealing with disabled facilities grants (DFG) and other forms of assistance. Appendix one shows the rates currently charged within the Yorkshire and Humber region. We charge a 10% flat fee for all forms of assistance under the Policy.
- 2.3 Within the Humber sub-region, two local authorities charge a higher rate. Another is looking to increase their fees this year.
- 2.4 Councils rely on the money generated from fees to help meet the costs of providing these services. This year the fees target was increased to part fund the continuation of the handyman service (which completes the smaller scale adaptations) and support staffing costs.
- 2.5 Last year, agency fees on grants generated around £100,000 to support the Operational Housing service. Increasing the fees by a further 2.5% would provide an additional £25,000 (depending on the total spend on grants this year).
- 2.6 The service is under constant review to improve services for customers to increase through put and reduce end-to-end times. Increasing the agency fees can help support this by providing assistance to increase the capacity of the team.

- 2.7 The handyman service, through its minor adaptations process, ensures a quick response to small-scale work and eliminates the need for the referrals to go through the normal DFG process. The service is an important element of the whole process and an efficient way of dealing with such improvements.
- 2.8 Other teams within the council charge fees. Discussions with finance have indicated that raising the fees to 12.5% is in line with the charges applied by other areas of the council and is consistent with other councils in the region and lower than some.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 Option one – maintain agency fees at 10%.
- 3.2 Option two – increase agency fees to 12.5%.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Option one – maintaining the agency fees at the current level will inhibit the council in delivering and improving the full range of support currently provided to vulnerable and elderly people by the Home Assistance team.
- 4.2 Option two – This is the preferred option. A modest increase in line with other areas of the council will support the team to continue to deliver the full range of adaptations and the handyman service. The increase in demand for disabled facilities grants has resulted in the need for increased resources within the team.

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

- 5.1 Staffing - Option two results in more resources being available to support the Home Assistance team and in particular the disabled facilities grant process, whether that is a major or a minor adaptation.
- 5.2 Financial - the fees for the agency work come directly from the capital pots allocated to mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants and Home Assistance. Increasing the agency fee reduces the overall pots of capital. However, increasing the capacity of the team should provide better efficiency and increase the overall number of completed grants.

### **6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

- 6.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has not been completed for this report.

**7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED**

7.1 Discussions have taken place with finance regarding increasing the agency fees. They are satisfied that the proposed new rate of 12.5% is not excessive given the charges applied by other councils and the charges levied internally.

**8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 Approve the increase of the agency fees applied to Home Assistance grants from 10% to 12.5%.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

Civic Centre  
Ashby Road  
SCUNTHORPE  
North Lincolnshire  
DN16 1AB  
Author: Liz Webster  
Date: 2 September 2014

**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None**

## APPENDIX 1

Agency fees charged across the Yorkshire and Humber region (figures from the National Adaptations Group 2013)

Local Authority	Fee Charged for Service	Fee Charged if the client does their own procuring
Sheffield	12%	Same
Rochdale	10% min fee £250	Same
Bradford	All DFG's £142.96 + 15%	£142.96
East Yorkshire	16%	Same
Salford	14%	Same
North Lincolnshire	10%	Same
Rotherham	10%	5%
York	15%	Same
Hull	12.5%	12.5%
East Lindsey District Council	10%	10%
West Lindsey District Council	10%	10%
North East Lincolnshire Council	8% (increasing to 12% this year)	Same