

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**HOUSING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING
CABINET MEMBER**

SERVICE STANDARDS FOR THE HOUSING DIVISION

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

1.1 This report seeks approval to adopt Service Standards for the Housing Division as set out in the attached document, to review them periodically and to make them available on the North Lincolnshire web site.

1.2 The key points in this report are:

- The Housing Division includes the Housing Standards and Performance Team, the Home Improvement Team and the Housing Advice Team. The service standards being adopted include those contained within the corporate customer care charter and specific standards related to the individual teams.
- The service standards will be monitored through out the year using the relevant databases and software and reviewed periodically.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 The Audit Commission commented in their final report following the advice and assistance session in December 2008 that there were no published service standards for operational housing services.

2.2 In the improvement plan developed following the Audit Commission report, it was agreed that service standards would be developed and published.

2.3 A search of other council websites has shown that other authorities have available on their websites detailed service standards.

2.4 The three teams within the Housing Division have produced individual service standards for their areas, which are contained within the attached document.

2.5 The service standards represent those standards normally to be expected from the housing division. From time to time, due to the circumstances of the case, it may not be possible to achieve a specific standard.

- 2.6 The service standards include those generic ones produced and adopted by the council as a whole through the customer care charter.
- 2.7 Additional work is currently ongoing to produce more detailed service standards for specific areas and these will be finalised and agreed in the next few weeks and presented as soon as possible thereafter to the Housing and Strategic Planning Cabinet Member.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Option 1 – Continue to apply the generic standards but not the service specific ones developed for each team.
- 3.2 Option 2 - Continue to apply the generic standards but not the service specific ones until all standards have been agreed fully.
- 3.3 Option 3 – Apply the service standards as detailed within the attached document and publish on the website. Add additional standards as required following completion of current work and keep the standards under periodic review.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option 1 – This would maintain the current position but fail to meet the agreed action from the improvement plan
- 4.2 Option 2 - This would maintain the current position but fail to meet the agreed action from the improvement plan
- 4.2 Option 3 - The third of the options is the most appropriate as the current service standards fail to be service specific. The changes would ensure the action from the improvement plan was partly achieved with further developments currently underway and would ensure the standards were reviewed periodically and updated as necessary.

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

5.1 Financial

There are no additional financial implications by applying the new standards as the teams are already working to them.

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

- 6.1 Environmental – there are no environmental or other resource implications resulting from the proposed standards.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 All three housing teams have been involved in the production of the service standards together with the staff performance and improvement group that was formed following the Audit Commission visit and report. Outcomes of discussions are reflected in the service standards.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves Option 3 – the adoption of the new Service Standards for the Housing Division and their periodic review.
- 8.2 That the Cabinet Member approves the publishing of the service standards on the North Lincolnshire website.
- 8.3 That the Cabinet Member agrees to consider further additions to the service standards once the current work and consultation is complete.

SERVICE DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: Nil

Housing Division – Service Standards

These are the standards of service you can expect from the Housing Division including the Home Improvement Team, the Housing Standards and Performance Team and the Housing Advice Team.

The Council's Contact Centre receive all initial enquires regarding financial assistance, disabled adaptations, handyman, energy efficiency and housing standards.

The Council's Contact Centre and Housing Division are fully committed to meeting the requirements of the Council's Customer Care Charter. Further details related to the Customer Care Charter can be found on the Council's website – www.northlincs.gov.uk

In addition, the Housing Division will ensure -

Phone:

- We will answer telephone calls within 5 rings.
- We will aim to return calls within 24 working hours.
- If we cannot give you a satisfactory reply when you telephone we will call back at an agreed time.
- We will always provide you with a contact name and number.
- On occasions when staff are away from their office, we have to use answer phones. In all cases we will get back to you as soon as we possibly can.
- Our main switchboard and call centres will answer calls from 8.30 am — 5.00 pm Monday to Thursday and to 4.30 pm on Friday*
- There will be somebody in our main offices to answer the phone from 8.30 am - 5.00 pm Monday to Thursday and until 4.30 pm Friday*
- The person you talk to will tell you what action they propose to take to resolve your query.
- If we have to transfer you to another person we will check they are there first and explain to them what your call is about so that you do not have to repeat yourself.
- Give you the name and telephone number of the correct person before putting you through.

Writing

- We will answer letters within 10 working days of receiving them.
- If we cannot give you a full reply within that time, we will acknowledge your letter and let you know when you can expect one and why there is a delay.
- Our acknowledgement will tell you when we expect to be able to respond and give you the name and telephone number of the person dealing with your contact.
- All our responses will be clear and easy to understand.

Visiting

When you visit us:

- All the reception areas in our main offices are staffed from 8.30 am - 5.00 pm Monday to Thursday and until 4.30 pm on Friday*
- If we visit you at home:
- Where appropriate, we will contact you in advance, to make an appointment to see you at a mutually convenient time.
- We will show you our council identity card (with photo), on the doorstep
- If we need to change or cancel your appointment, we will let you know.

* Except bank holidays

Assisting

How we will assist you:

- We will assist by meeting the needs of people with individual or specialist needs. For example, people whose first language is not English, hearing or visually impaired people etc. We will arrange translators or interpreters where necessary.
- Providing easy access to most of our buildings and facilities for people with disabilities.
- Using Typetalk - the council subscribes to this national relay service
- Our staff will be polite, helpful and treat all customers with respect.

- We will not discriminate because of race, age, gender, religion, sexuality or disability
- We will ensure that all our policies, strategies and procedures are available to all our Customers through a variety of mediums or on request

How you can assist us:

- By showing us the same respect and courtesy that you expect from us
- By sharing information and participating with consultation to assist us in producing and informing the Housing strategies, procedures and policies for North Lincolnshire Council.
- By refraining from using abusive language and threatening behaviour to staff
- By providing feedback and suggesting ways of how we can improve the delivery of our services

Housing Standards and Performance

The housing standards and performance team are responsible for the improvement of housing conditions through targeted regeneration and energy efficiency improvements and through advice, education and where necessary enforcement. We monitor the improvements in standards across the housing stock as well as the outcomes of the housing division with the objective of providing healthy homes, healthy lives and meeting the council priorities, such as communities that are confident and caring.

We will:

- Deal with 98% of service requests within 5 working days. Emergency requests where there is a health, safety or welfare risk to the occupier, will be responded to within 24 hours.
- Following a housing inspection we will issue 95% of schedules within 20 working days.
- Respond to 100% of requests for accreditation within 5 working days.

Advance Crosby

The following are the minimum standards for the Advance Crosby Transformational Project:

- Communication with residents/ stakeholders; twice yearly newsletter updating residents on progress and future phases.
- Maintenance and management of shuttered properties and cleared sites; twice weekly inspection with remedial action to clear on a quarterly basis unless significant hazard's occur.

The Home Improvement Team

The home improvement team are responsible for giving advice, support and guidance to help householders improve their home or provide much needed disabled adaptations using the different financial and professional assistance available. The handyman service provides minor adaptations, target hardening measures and garden services.

- We will provide you with comprehensive information on which grants and loans are available.
- When we need to carry out a preliminary test of resources calculation, we will send written notification as to your likely contribution towards grant-aided works within 15 working days of receiving your completed enquiry form.
- We will approve at least 95% of valid, formal Disabled Facilities Grant applications within eight weeks of receipt, and will approve all applications within the statutory six months set by Government.
- We will visit to assess interim grant payments within ten working days.
- We will process final grant payments and forward them to the Council's Finance Department within 10 working days of receiving a full and correct invoice, to assist the Council in meeting its Best Value Performance Indicator target to pay all invoices within 30 days.

Financial and Energy Efficiency Enquiries

- We will process from formal enquiry to application for a loan within 18 weeks
- We will refer enquiries to Warm Front within 10 working days.
- We will respond to enquiries for energy efficiency matters within 10 working days.
- We will process applications for financial assistance within 18 weeks.

Handyman

- We will complete minor adaptations for hospital discharge cases within 4 working days of receipt of a referral from occupational health.

- We will complete minor adaptations for palliative care cases within 4 working days of receipt a referral from occupational health.
- We will complete security work for domestic violence cases within 4 working days of receipt of a referral from the domestic violence unit.
- We will complete all non urgent handy man tasks within 20 days of a referral being received

Housing Advice Team

The Housing Advice Team (HAT) offers advice and help to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness or who have other housing problems—if you have a problem, the sooner you contact us the better.

- The team will try to help tenants to keep their current home, or failing that offer advice and practical help to find somewhere to live.
- We will see 95% of customers with appointments within 5 minutes of their appointment time.
- If you make a homelessness application we will:
- Make a decision in 90% of cases within 20 working days and 100% within 33 working days
- If you ask for a review of that decision, we will carry out that review within 20 working days.

Complaints

Our complaints procedure ensures that:

- If you are dissatisfied with our service, you can take it up with the person you are dealing with, or you can make a formal complaint
- Once you have contacted the council to formally complain, you will get a reply within 10 working days. If you are not happy with the council's response, tell us, and your complaint will be investigated further.
- If you are still not happy there is a final stage where an independent senior council officer will look into the case
- You can speak to a member of staff if you wish to complain or alternatively you can write to or e-mail us

No English?

For information please call:

08000 193530 (Arabic) للحصول على المزيد من المعلومات اتصل بـ:

তথ্যগুলি বাংলায় জানতে হলে এই নম্বরে ফোন করুন: 08000 193531 (Bengali)

欲知粵語版的消息，請致電: 08000 193532 (Cantonese)

हिन्दी में जानकारी के लिये 08000 193533 पर फोन करें (Hindi)

08000 193537 بە کوردی سۆزانی تەلەفۆن بۆ ژمارە (Kurdish Sorani)

Para mais informação em português contacte-nos através do telefone 08000 193538 (Portuguese)

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲਈ 08000 193539 'ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ (Punjabi)

"Warbixinta oo af Soomaali ah wac 08000 193540" (Somali)

08000 193541 اردو میں انفارمیشن کے لیے اس نمبر پر رابطہ فرمائیں۔ (Urdu)

Nie mówisz po angielsku? Po informacji zadzwoń pod numer 08000 195587 (Polish)

Не знаете английский? Для информации звоните 08000 195586 (Russian)

For information in large print, audio, Braille or to request a signer to speak to us please contact 01724 296296