

East Anglia Network Meeting – 5/6/18 - Cambridge

Present – South Norfolk, Norwich and East Cambridgeshire. Dave Lockwood for Finders.

Apologies – Suffolk Coastal, Uttlesford, Waltham Forest

Brief notes of conversation:

- Started off by talking about Sunday Times article – what procedures authorities follow.

SN – Opt for a burial, will try and let as many people know when it is happening, usually a local lay preacher will say a few words at the Grave, always done with dignity and respect for the deceased.

Nor – Always have a small service at the Graveside. Stress to any family that service will happen at 9:15am

EC – Opt for a cremation as there is no room left in local graveyards – Have to use crematoriums at Bury St Edmunds or Cambridge City.

Nor – Lots of space left in their graveyards, looking to develop their services to include woodland burials – Will accommodate other LA's with public graves already help Broadlands out.

All authorities bury into Common Graves.

- Discussion went on to paying for funerals –

Norwich looking at Social Fund Grant – Payment from DWP, does anyone else use it?

EC – Will ask family to look at grants

DL suggested they seek support from Citizens Advice Bureau, see if they can assist? Also Quaker Social Action and their Down to Earth Service (details on website under advice for Public)

- Paying for funerals

Norwich asked if anyone approached Banks to release monies for funerals prior.

EC – yes they try and reclaim as much as possible

SN – they have problems with banks refusing to release monies, also with the Tell US Once service, which can cause more problems than it should do. DWP reclaiming money that has gone.

EC – have a standard letter that they send to Banks to get monies back, they will share with other councils. Post Office has a standard form for closing accounts, any cash found they pay into their corporate account.

SN – problem with Death Certs and having to pay, they work for council so why do councils have to pay?

(GRO regulations unfortunately!!)

- How much work do Coroners actually do?

Nor – Have a meeting set up with local coroner's office

EC – Cambridge Coroners don't look for Next of Kin. Instead they notify the Council as soon as possible of a death. This comes following an ombudsman case, want to remove themselves from the process as much as possible. Won't place ads in the paper and there is a potential that the Council will have to deal with many more cases.

Discussion around what is coroners best practice?

Problems with Housing Associations clearing properties, not keeping items so when the Council is notified and they turn up to search there is nothing there.

Nor – trying to speak to HA's to set protocols

- Cases from Hospitals

SN – have to deal with cases from Hospital as it just falls in their area. This means that they have to deal with residents of other authorities, find that practice varies drastically across the County.

EC – Addenbrookes do some referrals but will deal with funerals normally.

- Charging

SN – they note the hours they spend on a case – Average is usually 8 hours – they then build this in to the Charge.

EC – currently don't charge for work but looking at a standard charge

DL – advice from T'sol some years ago was that £350 was seen as a reasonable charge when they enquired.

Discussion on Empty homes which falls under that legislation and not PHA.

Nor – Will leave items behind, don't want to clutter office and don't have space, they are unsure of any value.

EC - Will try and sell property of the deceased to cover costs – There is no budget for their work so they have to try and cover costs.

- Help from Charities

EC – SSAFA will help with costs of an ex-serviceman/women making sure that they aren't buried/cremated without a service.

SN – there are a few charities that they have turned to for help.

- Burials

Nor – Will only cremate if there is an indication that this is what deceased wanted

SN – will go for Common Grave but will always try to arrange funeral in the parish of the deceased to ensure that they are near home

Nor – reiterated that they have spare and that they are always willing to help another local authority with burial space.

- Searching properties

Nor – always use two staff when searching, staff take camera and photos as a record, not always possible to count cash in properties.

Question for PHA funeral website – has anyone had success in claiming from the social fund? Can they share procedures?