FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST – 665/19

Dear Sir/Madam

Your request for information has now been considered and the information requested is provided below.

Request / Response:

1. Please indicate the last date on which a genealogist, probate researcher or tracing agent was used.

Answer: Rutland County Council do not use genealogists, probate researchers or tracing agents.

2. If a researcher has been used in the past year, on how many occasions has this occurred?

Answer: Not Applicable

3. Which company was last used and by which local authority department?

Answer: Not Applicable

4. Does the local authority have any contract with any researcher? If so, please provide the contract document, redacted as required.

Answer: Not Applicable

5. In the circumstances where the local authority was aware of the existence of relatives of a deceased person but lacked the resources or expertise to locate them, would the council use a genealogical researcher on an exclusive basis again?

Answer: Not Applicable

6. Are there plans for the council to undergo a tendering process for a researcher?

Answer: No
7. If the council previously used heir hunters or other tracing services but no longer does so, what are the reasons behind the change in policy?

Answer: Not Applicable as Rutland County Council have never used heir hunters or other tracing services.

8. What is the council’s policy and process for making a referral to a genealogical researcher?

Answer: Not Applicable

9. Please identify the measures in the existing policies and procedures for making referrals to a genealogical researcher which:
   a) protect next of kin from overcharging through a market exposure and
   b) ensure all entitled relatives are found?

Answer: Not Applicable

10. Does the local authority now publish an online list of public health funerals where there is an intestacy?

Answer:
All publicly available information regarding public health funerals in Rutland is available online at:

https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-services/funerals-and-cemeteries/public-health-funerals/?RHC_tab=1

11. If so, when is information added to the list? Is information only added to the list AFTER the researcher has exhausted their investigations or is it added at the same time that a referral is made to the researcher?

Answer: Not Applicable

12. Does the list include names of deceased individuals where a researcher has been used and family have been located who have taken over responsibility for the funeral?

Answer: Not Applicable

13. Bearing in mind the benefits to the next of kin of maintaining competition, if the local authority is not already doing so does it intend to begin using or tender for a panel of three researchers to whom each case will be referred concurrently?

Answer: This is under consideration.

14. If the local authority is still engaging in exclusive relationships with heir hunters rather than making referrals to the Bona Vacantia Division or to a panel of three and/or
maintaining a regularly updated online list, what is the justification for this? Please refer to any relevant policies and legislation.

Answer:
Not Applicable

15. Please provide any records of internal decision making or external consultation from the past year which have resulted in the local authority’s current stance on the use of genealogical researchers

Answer:
Not Applicable

16. Would the local authority welcome some formal guidance or regulation from the government or another independent body in order to provide clarity on the appropriate course of action for using private sector services which are free to the local authority but which may result in a third party being charged or prejudiced in some way?

Answer:
Yes

17. Would the local authority welcome some formal guidance from the government or another independent body to provide clarity on the appropriate course of action for when a person dies intestate in their area and there is evidence that there are next of kin but the local authority do not have the resources or skills to locate the relatives themselves?

Answer:
Yes

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If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request please contact the Head of Corporate Governance, Rutland County Council, Catmose, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6HP

You can also complain to the Information Commissioner at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House, Water lane
Wilmslow, Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545700

Yours faithfully

FOI Administrator
Corporate Support Team, Rutland County Council