

‘An Inspector Calls’ - Dealing with a CMA Inquiry visit – a personal (3 HOUR!) experience

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COMPETITION AND MARKETS AUTHORITY FUNERALS MARKET INVESTIGATION



How quickly things change!



Introduction

- ▶ Three Inspectors
- ▶ Request to record everything
- ▶ Brief explanation of what they wanted to get from the visits



The Icebreaker

- ▶ How many crematoria do you operator?
- ▶ How many cremators do you have ?
- ▶ So what is the average number of cremations on the whole?
- ▶ What's the break down over two sites ?
- ▶ What type of cremators do you use ?

Slowly, slowly !!

“If you want to first of all just tell us about the crematorium, the two you have got, their age, cemeteries, how the local authority thinks about services as a whole”

The response

- ▶ General back ground information
- ▶ £1.4 investment in 2012/13
- ▶ New abatement equipment Agecroft
- ▶ Refurbishment of Chapel at Agecroft
- ▶ New cremator at Peel Green
- ▶ Investment in Wesley music system
- ▶ Investment in BACAS booking system
- ▶ Plans to upgrade Agecroft Chapel

Down to Business

- ▶ Do you charge for music?
- ▶ How long are your service times?
- ▶ What does your cremation fee include?
- ▶ Can you cherry pick what you want ?
- ▶ “When you are putting together plans, how do you decide on investments and how do you come to decide what you want to do next. In terms of financing it, I think in your response you mentioned you borrowed money for refurbishments and for cremators”

Response

- ▶ We are very much linked into budgeting and finance process within the council.
- ▶ We have received a lot of capital investment over the years for roads, pathways and the infrastructural improvements of the crematorium site.
- ▶ The crematorium are in the cemeteries so we have to invest in both.
- ▶ The cost of Grounds maintenance a year which is around £400k
- ▶ Maintenance of the cremators
- ▶ Staff cost
- ▶ Plant and machinery

Do you offer any reduction in cost for service at different times?

The response

- ▶ We offer a direct cremation with no service which is 30% less than our normal Cremation fees
- ▶ We also offer a 20% reduction in fees for the 9.40am.
- ▶ Normal Fees £778.00 including Cremation, Chapel, Medical Referee and environmental fee.
- ▶ Direct Cremation £545.00
- ▶ 9.40am Full services £622.00

Other key issues the service are facing

- ▶ Available Burial Space (cost of land)
- ▶ Condition of Buildings and Infrastructure Crematorium
- ▶ Closed Churchyards
- ▶ Memorialisation
- ▶ Grounds Maintenance
- ▶ Plant and Machinery
- ▶ Cultural Need, Ethnic Funerals
- ▶ Population Growth
- ▶ Funeral Poverty

“I think one of the things we found quite interesting was the Salford Funeral and I think just a couple of things it would be quite interesting to explore”



Thank you !!

Our commitment to tackling Funeral poverty in the city of Salford

- ▶ ‘Funeral poverty’ is recognised within the Salford City Council Anti-Poverty Strategy and has key actions which look to the development of a strategic approach to tackling funeral poverty in Salford
- ▶ Frozen all price increases on fees and charges from 2015 until 2018
- ▶ Worked in partnership with the Anti-Poverty Charity Quaker Social Action and through the Citizens Advice Bureau supported the Fair Funeral Campaign.
- ▶ Abolishment of burial and cremation fees for children under 18
- ▶ In September 2017 we started work on “Salford Resident Funeral Service” which was launched in September 2018.
- ▶ April 2018 reduced cost for less popular time slots (20% reduction).
- ▶ April 2018 introduce direct cremations(30% reduction).

Fees and Charges 2015/2018

Frozen

Cremation Society		
Highest Cremation Fees league table		
Year	Fees	League Table Ranking
2015	£740.00	79
2016	£740.00	103
2017	£740.00	126
2018	£740.00	156
2019	£762.00	167

Salford Resident Funeral Service

How much is it?

The service is a fixed price so you know exactly what you will need to pay:

- ▶ Cremation £2,286
- ▶ Burial £2,330

What do you get?

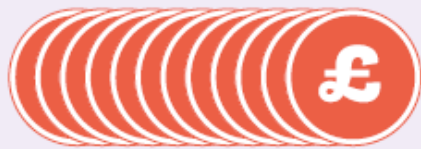
- ▶ Collection of the deceased (from within the city)
- ▶ Use of the funeral director's chapel of rest (for families where transport is unavailable a collection service is available to visit the chapel of rest by arrangement). Visits to the chapel of rest are available:
 - ▶ anytime Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm
 - ▶ by appointment with 24 hours notice for visits Monday to Friday between 5pm and 7pm
 - ▶ by appointment with 48 hours notice for visits Saturday and Sunday between 10am and 12pm
- ▶ Arranging and supervising the funeral
- ▶ Hearse and one following limousine to carry six passengers on the day of the funeral
- ▶ A suitable oak (or similar) finished coffin, with engraved nameplate, interior and appropriate handles
- ▶ Cremation costs/burial costs
- ▶ Additional costs such as doctor fees, or having the clergy of your choice for the crematorium or grave side service.

The Royal London National Funeral Cost Index 2018

Funeral costs stabilise and individual debt at an all-time high

£3,757

Average
funeral cost



£1,744*

Average debt that
people are taking on



*Of the 12% that struggled to pay for a funeral

Savings for the Residents of Salford in the first year

5 burials

42 Cremations

Saving

£69,137

If I could give any advice to others

- ▶ Use the opportunity to promote your Service
- ▶ Tackle Funeral poverty
- ▶ Provide a high quality service that adapts to the needs of the bereaved.
- ▶ AGMA Group. (Value of Networking)
- ▶ APSE (Benchmarking)
- ▶ ICCM Charter for the bereaved (Gold Standard)
- ▶ Customer Service Excellence award
- ▶ Be proud of what you have achieved
- ▶ Most of what our service provides cannot be judge purely in financial terms

Any Questions