



**REPORT TO: PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –  
13 JUNE 2016**

**REPORT BY: CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE**

**PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –  
ANNUAL REPORT – 2015/16**

**1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to place on record and inform members of the principal work of the Joint Committee during the 2015/16 financial year.

**2. Recommended that this Annual Report for the 2015/16 financial year be noted and received and that it be sent for information to each constituent authority.**

**3. Background**

3.1 The Joint Committee operates under a Memorandum of Agreement between Fareham Borough Council, Portsmouth City Council, Gosport Borough Council and Havant Borough Council. Two members from each of the constituent authorities make up the 8 person Joint Committee. The constituent councils have delegated to the Joint Committee all the powers of the constituent authorities with respect to the provision and maintenance of the crematorium.

3.2. The agreement sets out the constitution of the Joint Committee; the objectives of the crematorium and relationships between the constituent authorities. The agreement also sets out the minimum number of meetings (three) to be held annually for the general business of the Joint Committee, although in practice to meet various statutory reporting deadlines four meetings are held.

3.3 The membership of the Committee in the 2015/16 financial year was –

Councillor Sue Bell (Fareham BC)	
Councillor Keith Evans (Fareham BC)	
Councillor Tony Briggs (Havant BC)	Chairman
Councillor David Guest (Havant BC)	
Councillor Alan Scard (Gosport BC)	
Councillor Dennis Wright (Gosport BC)	Vice-Chairman
Councillor Ken Ellcome (Portsmouth CC)	
Councillor Robert New (Portsmouth CC)	

The chair and vice-chairmanship rotates between authorities annually.

3.4 The Joint Committee met on 4 occasions during the 2015/16 financial year:

15 June 2015	14 September 2015	14 December 2015
14 March 2016		

Minutes of each of these meetings and the reports considered are available for viewing on the Portchester Crematorium Web Site, which has a direct link to the Portsmouth City Council website where the documents are stored.

3.5 The meetings of the Joint Committee have been supported by the Clerk (John Haskell), Treasurer (Andy Wannell), Engineer and Surveyor (Terry Garvey), and their respective deputies, together with the Horticultural Consultant (Ashley Humphrey) and the Manager and Registrar (James Clark). They report to the committee on financial and procedural matters including the operation of the crematorium and the quality of the service provided, which includes the grounds and buildings and plant to ensure the highest standards continue to be maintained.

3.6 Meetings are held on a rotational basis at each of the authorities principal offices, with full public notice of and access to these meetings.

#### **4. The Joint Committee's Role and Responsibilities**

4.1 The Joint Committee decides the overall policies to be adopted including approving a capital and maintenance works programme, consideration of and approval of accounts, and setting the scale of fees and charges. These could effectively be described as the Joint Committee's core functions.

#### **5. Crematorium Development Plan 2015 - 2020**

5.1 The purpose of the Development Plan is to look at medium term developments in the period to 2020, and in the longer term beyond 2020, and to set out the Joint Committee's intended course of action. The plan seeks to cover the principal strategic and operational issues relating to the crematorium's functions. The Development Plan is reviewed biennially; the current plan being approved in March 2015.

#### **6. Activities in respect of the Joint Committee's Core functions**

6.1 Action taken in respect of each of the core functions can be briefly summarised as follows:

##### **(a) Financial Policies including Fees and Charges**

The Joint Committee, at its meeting on the 14 December 2015, approved a comprehensive Finance Strategy for 2016/17, providing a clear overview of the Joint Committee's financial framework. It also aimed at providing added assurance to the Committee and to the constituent authorities that sound and effective arrangements are in place to manage the Crematorium's finances. This strategy built on similar strategies approved annually by the Joint Committee since 2008. The current strategy also recognises that since December 2013 the operating environment of Portchester Crematorium

significantly changed with the opening of a private crematorium on the East Hampshire/Havant border. (See also (i) below – monitoring the levels of service).

The Joint Committee at its December 2015 meeting also approved the revenue budget for 2016/17 together with a revised capital works programme, and the repairs and renewals programme for 2015/16 & 2016/17. In approving the budget, the Joint Committee also set the levels of fees and charges operable from the 1 April 2016.

The Committee's actual income and revenue expenditure (for the financial year ending 31 March 2015) was reviewed and noted by the Joint Committee at its meeting on the 15 June 2015.

**(b) Annual Financial Return for 2014/15**

In June 2015 the Joint Committee approved and published its annual financial return 2014/15, which was then submitted to its external auditors.

The Annual Return also includes an annual governance statement (AGS). In summary the purpose of the AGS is to set out the Joint Committee's responsibilities and explain the system of governance that exists for the effective exercise of the committee's functions, including internal control, preparation of accounting statements, management of risk and the arrangements for review.

**(c) External Audited Annual Return for the Year Ending 31 March 2015**

At the September 2015 meeting the Joint Committee was advised and noted that the external audit had been completed and that the auditors had provided an unqualified certificate and opinion.

**(d) Risk Management**

The Joint Committee introduced comprehensive risk management arrangements in a formalised way in 2006. This included the publication of a set of strategic and operational risk registers and adoption of an action plan to mitigate the higher risks. The registers and the action plan are periodically reviewed by the officers. In March 2016 the Joint Committee received a comprehensive report providing the opportunity for members to review the risk management framework that was in place. A Risk Management Strategic Framework and Policy, together with revised Strategic and Operational Risk Registers has been approved.

**(e) Crematorium Insurance**

Following a tender exercise contracts for insurance at the crematorium were awarded to Allianz Insurance plc and ACE AUM, operative from 1 April 2016. These new contracts provide a significant saving against the 2015/16 premiums.

**(f) Developing and Enhancing the Crematorium's Services**

At the meeting in September 2013 the Joint Committee approved a report setting out a range of initiatives aimed at developing further and enhancing the established quality of the services provided by the Crematorium. Since September 2013 the various initiatives have been implemented and the Joint Committee has received reports when appropriate –

- Provision of video screens in each chapel – *introduced Spring 2014, to enable family tributes to be shown.*
- Video streaming of services through the internet – *Full sound and vision service available from Autumn 2014.*
- Extending the length of two morning and two afternoon services – *introduced during early Summer 2014, and now ensured that, so far as possible, services kept to advertised times.*
- Books of Remembrance available on line – *available from 2014.*
- Refreshing the Crematorium's Web-site – *work in progress*
- Crematorium logo – *adopted December 2015 to improve image and web site theme*
- South Chapel – Upgrade and Refurbishment – *Work completed December 2015 – see item (g) below.*

**(g) South Chapel Refurbishment**

Work to refurbish the South Chapel was undertaken during autumn 2015 outside normal service hours. It was successfully completed by Vear Building Services Ltd in December 2015, after being appointed following a tender process.

The work followed the decision in September 2013 to seek the services of a design consultant to advise on chapel design and décor. The Joint Committee in June 2014, after a presentation, appointed Robert Benn Associates (RBA) to progress a design scheme for the refurbishment of the South Chapel. The key points of the implemented scheme are that –

- The design features aim to respect the 1950's style of building;
- Light coloured wood panelling has been provided affixed to parts of the walls, which is demountable and durable so that when necessary access can be obtained to services;
- Specialist lighting plays a key feature;
- New carpeting has been provided;
- Air conditioning has been installed;
- A new curtain is still to be provided.

## **(h) Repairs and Renewals Programme**

Various minor items of work were undertaken during the year. A range of other work has been undertaken during 2015/16, and this includes -

- Mercury Abatement project – sound attenuation
- Works to Mess Room
- Internal redecoration to North Chapel, foyer and WC
- Steam Cleaning paving
- Works to Crematory and committal areas
- External redecoration – rolling programme

The Joint Committee has also agreed a range of other work to be undertaken during 2016/17, and this includes –

- External redecoration – rolling programme further work
- Paving works cleaning and re-pointing
- Staff room refurbishment
- Internal redecoration- charge and cremation room
- Water feature – review
- Provision of accessible door to main office

## **(i) Monitoring the Levels of Service**

The Joint Committee continued to receive at each meeting relevant reports from the officers on their specific areas of responsibility thus enabling members to monitor and discuss as appropriate with officers any particular aspects of the crematorium's operations. The reports included a monitoring statement from the Manager and Registrar on the levels of cremation and other statistical information for the preceding period, which showed at the end of the financial year a total of 3,240 registered cremations (a reduction from the 3,411 cremations undertaken in 2014/15).

## **(j) The Crematorium Grounds**

The annual horticultural maintenance programme continued to be implemented and this included –

- Shrub and bulb planting including the replacement of dead or dying plants;
- Tree pruning, including felling where appropriate;
- Shrub pruning;
- Maintaining the magnificent floral displays and the lawns.

The Joint Committee in December 2015 endorsed action being taken by the Manager and Registrar to increase the frequency of clearance of personal objects left in the grounds contrary to the long standing policy against the provision of permanent memorials.

**(k) Provision of Contracted Services**

During the year the Joint Committee has considered reports in respect of various matters relating to contracted services, including those providing building consultancy support services.

**(l) Recycling of Metals Scheme – Charitable Payments**

The Joint Committee in September 2015 approved the submission of an application for the Macmillan Nurses under the metals recycling scheme operated by the Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Management. A similar application was supported for the Rowans Hospice in March 2016. Both applications were successful and resulted in payments from the scheme.

**7. Conclusion**

7.1 It will be seen from this report that the Joint Committee continues to function effectively through the members appointed to serve on it by their respective authorities. Much of the Joint Committee's work continues to be of a recurring but important nature. During the year particular attention has focussed upon work to refurbish to a very high standard the décor of the South Chapel, making it a much appreciated asset by all who visit the Crematorium.

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*John Haskell*  
*Clerk to the Joint Committee*

**Background List of Documents –**  
**Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:   None**

JH/me  
25 May 2016