



**REPORT TO: PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
26 JUNE 2017**

REPORT BY: CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

**PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
ANNUAL REPORT – 2016/17**

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 2016/17 financial year.

2. Recommended that this Annual Report for the 2016/17 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 2016/17 financial year was –

Councillor Sue Bell (Fareham BC)	
Councillor Keith Evans (Fareham BC)	
Councillor Alan Scard (Gosport BC)	
Councillor Dennis Wright (Gosport BC)	Chairman
Councillor Tony Briggs (Havant BC)	
Councillor David Guest (Havant BC)	
Councillor Lee Mason (Portsmouth CC)	Vice-Chairman
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 2016/17 financial year:

13 June 2016	19 September 2016	12 December 2016
20 March 2017		

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 2017 - 2022

5.1 The purpose of the Development Plan is to look at medium term developments in the period to 2022, and in the longer term beyond 2022, 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 2017.

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 12 December 2016, approved a comprehensive Finance Strategy for 2017/18, 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 2016 meeting also approved the revenue budget for 2017/18 together with a revised capital works programme, and the repairs and renewals programme for 2016/17 & 2017/18. In approving the budget, the Joint Committee also set the levels of fees and charges operable from the 1 April 2017.

The Committee's actual income and revenue expenditure (for the financial year ending 31 March 2016) was reviewed and noted by the Joint Committee at its meeting on the 13 June 2016.

(b) Annual Financial Return for 2015/16

In June 2016 the Joint Committee approved and published its annual financial return 2015/16.

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) Internal Audit Report for 2016/17

At the September 2016 meeting the Joint Committee considered a report on Internal Audit work carried out during 2016/17 in accordance with the 5 year plan previously approved by the Joint Committee. Overall, for the areas audited, the report found that adequate controls were in place and working effectively. Improvements were suggested to some areas of performance management and monitoring.

(d) Risk Management

In March 2017 the Joint Committee received a comprehensive report providing the opportunity for members to review the risk management framework that is in place. A Risk Management Strategic Framework and Policy, together with revised Strategic and Operational Risk Registers was approved the Joint Committee. This followed a periodic review by the officers of the registers and the action plan.

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.

(e) 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 – *completed and operational from Autumn 2016.*
- Crematorium logo – *adopted December 2015 to improve image and web site theme.*
- South Chapel – Upgrade and Refurbishment – *Work completed December 2015.*

(f) North Chapel Refurbishment Project

Following the successful refurbishment of the South Chapel, the Joint Committee has expressed a wish to carry out a suitable project to update and improve the environment of the North Chapel. The Joint Committee during 2017/18 will be considering a design brief, budget and timescale for this project.

(g) Repairs and Renewals Programme

Various minor items of work were undertaken during the year. A range of other work has been undertaken or authorised during 2016/17, and this includes -

- Works to Crematory and committal areas
- Paving works cleaning and re-pointing
- Internal redecoration- charge and cremation room
- Roofing Programme – inspection and cleaning
- External redecoration – rolling programme
- Water feature – review and investigation of options and proposals
- Provision of accessible door to main office
- Internal redecoration – South Cloister Toilets
- Staff Room Refurbishment

(h) 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 3,424 registered cremations (an increase from the 3,240 cremations undertaken in 2015/16).

Since September 2016 the Joint Committee has introduced a public comments register, the details of which are reported to the Joint Committee for monitoring at each meeting.

(i) 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 Crematorium received the prestigious Gold Award in the 2016 South and South East Britain in Bloom Awards. The criteria for the award included not only the quality of the grounds but also the appearance of buildings together with environmental and related matters.

In December 2016 the Joint Committee approved a report on arrangements for the continued provision of horticultural and grounds maintenance services during 2017, and arrangements to invite tenders for a new grounds maintenance contract to commence in January 2018.

(j) 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.

(k) Recycling of Metals Scheme – Charitable Payments

During the year the Joint Committee approved the submission of applications for the Rowans Hospice and Macmillan Nurses under the metals recycling scheme operated by the Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Management.

Both applications were successful and resulted in significant payments from the scheme. The ICCM criteria requires that nominations have to be for local or national death related charities which have as their core function bereavement related support or service.

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 the environment in which the crematorium operates to ensure that the high standards of service continue to be maintained in the most cost effective and efficient way.

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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 2017