

Portchester Crematorium Joint Committee

Development Plan 2015–2020

City of Portsmouth

Borough of Gosport

Borough of Fareham

Borough of Havant

Portchester Crematorium Development Plan – 2015 to 2020

1.0 Introduction and Purpose of Plan

- 1.1 Portchester Crematorium was opened on 27 September 1958 and is now one of two crematoria in south east Hampshire. It is managed by a Joint Committee of 8 Councillors, 2 from each of the four constituent authorities of Fareham, Gosport, Havant and Portsmouth. This Plan revisits and reviews the previous Development Plan approved in March 2013. Earlier Development Plans have been produced and reviewed periodically since 1992.
- 1.2 The Plan seeks to look at medium term developments in the period up to 2020, and in the longer term beyond 2020, and to set out the Joint Committee's intended course of action. **Emboldened typeface** has been used throughout the text to indicate the future intentions of the Joint Committee.
- 1.3 The Plan has been prepared in the following sections –
2. Key Progress since the previous Development Plans.
 3. Local authorities' cremation responsibilities.
 4. The role of the private sector.
 5. Portchester Crematorium's Aims and Objectives.
 6. Standards of Service and Working Practices.
 7. Developments in Technology and Provision of Crematorium Web Site.
 8. Multi Cultural and Secular Services.
 9. Memorials Policy.
 10. Fees and Charges Policy.
 11. Financial Policies.
 12. Repairs and Maintenance
 13. Cremation Trends.
 14. Population Trends.
 15. The Chapels.
 16. Environmental Issues.
 17. The Grounds and Long Term Strategy for the Disposal of Ashes.

2.0 Progress Since the Previous Development Plans

- 2.1 The current Development Plan covering the period to 2018 was approved by the Joint Committee in March 2013 and built upon previous approved Plans. The Joint Committee has agreed that the Development Plan should be reviewed every two years.
- 2.2 Some key features highlighted in previous plans since 1996 are –
- That cremations were averaging over 4,000 a year in 1996, and although at that time it was estimated this figure could well reach 4,500 a year by 2000 in the event cremations during the past 5 years have averaged around 4,000 per year.

- That even with population growth and a possible increase in cremations there is sufficient cremator capacity at Portchester for at least the next 10 years and probably much longer.
- The existing two chapels adequately serve on most occasions the requirements of funeral services and an extension to either could not be justified.
- The Joint Committee in June 2014 agreed to a major refurbishment of the South Chapel (which is covered in more detail in Section 15) and is due to be undertaken during 2015.
- The Joint Committee decided in 2001 to provide improved waiting room facilities. A separate building, comprising two discreet well furnished waiting areas for mourners, was built to the east of the Crematorium and linked to it by two covered ways (porte-cochere's). The new facilities came into use in the summer of 2004. This has provided much appreciated accommodation to allow mourners to wait a sufficient distance from the two chapels.
- The Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities, in a report on the outcome of a visit in November 2009 commented in summary that the Crematorium is extremely well run and that its representatives who took part in the visit were impressed with the general standard of maintenance throughout. They were also impressed with the waiting rooms and porte-cochere's, and they complemented the Joint Committee on the level of investment within the service.
- Although land to the north had been identified in the past for a possible extension to the Crematorium grounds this was in private ownership. The Joint Committee was unable to acquire the land, which was subsequently laid out by a private company and opened in 2002 as the 'Portchester Memorial Gardens'.
- The provision of a garden of contemplation.
- The remodelling and refurbishment of the garden pond and waterfall.
- Difficulties that could arise with car parking in Upper Cornaway Lane when both the car park within the grounds and an overflow car park were full required management measures. The Joint Committee in 2004/2005 addressed the difficulties that had worsened since 1996 by building an extension to the overflow car park to provide an additional 43 car spaces.
- The existing six cremators were replaced and enhanced in 1998 to further comply with air quality emissions under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

- The completion during 2012 of the extensive project to install mercury abatement equipment.
- 2.3 The key features of the 2013 Plan have again been included within this document and progress with initiatives is indicated within each of the relevant sections.

3.0 Local Authorities' Cremation Responsibilities

- 3.1 A local authority's powers to provide cremation facilities flow from the Cremation Acts 1902 and 1952, and Section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 3.2 Under the 1972 Act a local authority has power to provide cemeteries and crematoria within or outside its area.
- 3.3 In the case of Portchester, the Fareham, Gosport and Havant Borough Councils together with Portsmouth City Council decided in the 1950's to provide a crematorium. The authorities used powers in the Local Government Act 1933, now superseded by the 1972 Act.
- 3.4 The four local authorities entered into an agreement delegating their powers to a joint committee comprising councillors from each authority. That agreement has been revised and revisited over the years, most recently as a result of the Local Government Act 2000. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations 2001 make the provision of crematoria an Executive function (applicable to Portsmouth, Havant and Fareham) except for an authority (Gosport Borough Council) operating "alternative arrangements". This means that except for Gosport the representatives from Portsmouth, Fareham and Havant on the joint committee must be Executive Members.
- 3.5 The Joint Committee decides the overall policy for the provision of Crematorium facilities, including approving capital and maintenance works programme, the consideration and approval of accounts, and setting the scale of fees and charges.
- 3.6 Crematorium staff are employees of the Joint Committee. They are responsible to the Manager and Registrar for the day-to-day running of all aspects of the Crematorium.
- 3.7 Although most of the cremations undertaken are in respect of those who lived in the area of the four local authorities, funerals also come from the immediate hinterland.

4.0 The Role of the Private Sector

- 4.1. The private sector has a significant role in the disposal of the dead, whether it is directly in the provision of cemeteries and crematoria or through funeral directors. In addition there are ancillary services such as monumental masons, florists and other death related businesses.
- 4.2. At the present time a number of crematoria in the United Kingdom are privately owned and the services they provide vary little from that in the public sector. The only major difference is usually in the number and variation in the type of memorials offered post funeral.
- 4.3. The nearest crematoria to Portchester are The Oaks operated by Southern Co-operatives at Bartons Road, Havant (on the Havant/East Hampshire border) which opened in Autumn 2013; Southampton (local authority managed), Chichester (privately owned), and Wessex Vale at Hedge End (privately owned).
- 4.4. Portchester has a privately owned Memorial Garden located in its immediate vicinity. This private facility, whilst having very little effect on the day to day running of Portchester, does however offer bereaved families a greater choice in the way they dispose of cremated remains and how they are remembered by way of memorials. Although, inevitably there is a cost implication to this. Ideally, because of the lack of available ground within the Crematorium in which to bury ashes it would be desirable if greater numbers of remains were taken from the Crematorium for disposal elsewhere. The Memorial Gardens probably do not deal with as many disposals as could have been the case had the Joint Committee developed the land. Even so the trend to remove remains to scatter or bury elsewhere than at the Crematorium is still upwards, and this aspect is dealt with in more detail in Section 17. The Memorial Gardens have very little effect on any of the workings of Portchester Crematorium.
- 4.5. The relationship the Crematorium has with funeral directors and other 'bereavement services' is little different from any other local authority running commercial services. Virtually all of the ancillary services are in the private sector and consideration has to be given at all times to their commercial interests when considering the service that the Crematorium aims to provide.

5.0 Portchester Crematorium's Aims and Objectives

- 5.1. The Joint Committee is committed to the maintenance of high standards in relation both to staff performance and to the maintenance, repair and improvement of the fabric of the Crematorium and its assets.
- 5.2. **The Joint Committee will therefore continue and adhere to the following general policies:**
 - (a) Seek to maintain, and where possible, enhance the beauty of the grounds, as an area for quiet contemplation;

- (b) Keep the grounds open to the public subject only to such restrictions as may be necessary in the interests of security;
- (c) Seek to ensure that all works to the fabric are of high quality in keeping with an atmosphere of dignity and reverence appropriate to the purpose of the establishment;
- (d) Adhere to staff recruitment and training policies which will ensure that all members of staff reflect both in appearance and behaviour the high standards both express and implied in the Code of Cremation Practice of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities, to which the Joint Committee is fully committed;
- (e) Seek to promote the practice of cremation as an alternative to burial by ensuring that the Crematorium is an open and welcoming place whose staff understand the needs of the bereaved.

6.0 Standards of Service and Working Practices

- 6.1 Historically Portchester has always strived to provide the best quality of service it can, both through its buildings and the quality of staff it employs. This has been made more apparent with the expansion of the cloister area, the provision of new waiting rooms, as well as updating existing areas including the refurbishment of the South Chapel during 2015. The “turnover” of staff has been extremely low in the last 20 years with staff generally leaving due to retirement. Retention of staff provides experience and competence in all areas of the day to day work. The staff work flexible hours which means the provision of the service can be maintained throughout the day with no breaks.
- 6.2 As a member of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities, Portchester undertakes to abide by their Code of Practice (*a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1*).
- 6.3 Portchester Crematorium’s Manager and Registrar is a member of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management. Its ‘charter for the bereaved’ lays down minimum standards that the public are entitled to expect from any establishment dealing with the disposal of the dead. A copy of the charter is available to the public either through the office or on the ICCM web site at www.iccm-uk.com. Under this charter Portchester undertakes an annual best value assessment by way of a questionnaire on all areas of the charter, and is ranked alongside similar establishments.
- 6.4 **The Joint Committee will continue to ensure the Crematorium buildings are open for inspection by the public in addition to the more regular tours that may be conducted.**

7.0 Developments in Technology and Provision of Crematorium Web Site

- 7.1 Over the years technology has moved on and this has led to the provision of new equipment and audio players in order to maintain the standards expected for modern services, which is explained in more detail in paragraph 8.2 below. The Joint Committee has kept under review developments in technology and during 2014 secure video streaming of services through the internet was introduced, as an additional 'paid for' service.
- 7.2 The Crematorium website was established during 2005 and with the march of technology has become more of an integral part of the service that Portchester can offer. The web site is now in need of being 'refreshed'. Arrangements are also in hand to view the Books of Remembrance digitally through the internet. In addition to the general information that may be viewed on the website, hard copies of information leaflets and brochures are also available. A separate computer based system has operated for several years allowing funeral directors to book services 'on-line'.
- 7.3 **The Joint Committee will keep under review the way in which technology and the web site can be further developed in the interests of an efficient and effective, yet caring, service to the bereaved.**

8.0 Multi Cultural and Secular Services

- 8.1 Both chapels at the Crematorium are designated as non denominational although there is a removable cross in both reflecting the largely Christian nature of funerals. There is a greater trend for a less Christian type of service and more secular and humanist services. The cross in the chapel is easily removed for these services if requested. There are other Christian symbols on the building most notably on the stack and front and rear external walls of the South Chapel. These are part of the original structure and there has been no objection to these. **The Joint Committee will continue to keep under review the wishes of mourners.**
- 8.2 Secular services at present do not present a problem as the nature and style of the services conducted in the chapels is generally outside the direct control of the Crematorium staff and is more to do with officiants, family and funeral directors. Generally these services tend to take no longer than a "standard" Christian service but are generally more complex and personalised in nature. Currently the Crematorium has facilities for the playing of all forms of recorded media and these facilities have been expanded over the years by replacing equipment with the most modern available as and when it is perceived the need arises. With the trend continuing towards a more secular style of ceremony so the range and scope of equipment needed to cater for these has increased. Over the last few years slide projectors, screens, computers, recording equipment and other similar equipment have all been used. During 2014 video screens were provided in each chapel to enable personal tributes to be shown during services. **The range of provision and equipment will be kept under review.**

- 8.3 It has become noticeable over the last twenty years that the number of services held in church (prior to a short committal in the Crematorium chapel) has declined markedly. This trend is also a consideration with secular services as there is very little scope for any style of service to be held anywhere other than at the Crematorium. With the decline in the number of church committal services this is not anticipated to be a problem as the Crematorium is already managing this decline effectively. The opportunity has been taken to extend the length of some morning and afternoon services, thereby ensuring so far as possible that services where there are large groups of mourners do not adversely impact on following services.
- 8.4 **The style of service does not really affect the running of the Crematorium in any meaningful way. This will be kept under review by the Joint Committee to consider whether it may be necessary to provide extra services, although this has always been done over the years to reflect changes in technology and society.**
- 8.5 Whilst the Crematorium is available to serve the whole community and has a range of paper and web site publications to support the services its provides, **the Joint Committee will nevertheless carry out an equalities impact assessment of the Crematorium's activities and also use local citizens' panels or focus groups to check the Crematorium is being responsive to the needs of service users.**

9.0 Memorials

- 9.1 The Joint Committee has maintained a consistent policy against the provision of permanent memorials although these are sometimes desired by families at the time of bereavement. Although some private crematoria see the sale of such memorials as a valuable addition to their income the Joint Committee has taken a long term view not to sacrifice the simple beauty of the gardens for the sake of the increased income that would arise. **The Joint Committee will continue this policy unless and until there is sound evidence that it no longer represents the considered views of the wider community.** With the availability of the privately owned Portchester Memorial Gardens to the north of the Crematorium the bereaved have been encouraged to make use of these facilities. Funeral directors are asked to advise the bereaved that when a permanent memorial is desired it is more appropriate for cremated remains to be interred in that setting or a cemetery.
- 9.2 Invariably from time to time plaques, ornaments and other objects do tend to be left within the grounds. **The Joint Committee will continue the long established management policy that it should be left to the Manager and Registrar to decide when and for how long such personal objects should be allowed to remain within the grounds.** At present a certain amount of time is left before all of the grounds (usually 4-6 months) are cleared of such material. It is then kept for collection by families or disposed of dependent upon circumstances.

10.0 Fees & Charges Policy

- 10.1 The Joint Committee sets the level of fees that are charged. The present policy requires a fee to be charged for all cremations where the deceased is over the age of 16.
- 10.2 The fee that is charged covers use of the chapel irrespective of whether a funeral service takes place in the chapel. In any event, for practical purposes all cremations that are to take place are received into the Crematorium through one of the chapels. The main reason for this is that if a separate charge was made for provision of a chapel there would be nothing to stop families and funeral directors asking and expecting a double slot or greater to be granted. At present the provision of a double time slot is left to the discretion of the Manager and Registrar, who takes into account all reasons why the request has been made and whether to grant such times. The primary reason for this is that during busy times the allowance of double time slots may cause inconvenience and distress to other families wishing to arrange funerals. **The Joint Committee will continue with this policy.**
- 10.3 Medical Referees fees are included in the cremation fee, and unless and until there are legal changes involving the role of medical referees this arrangement will continue.
- 10.4 The cremation fees set (usually annually) by the Joint Committee have no provision for variation to meet, for example, specific circumstances, and there are no plans to alter this. **However, the Joint Committee will keep this arrangement under review because in coming years it may be desirable to have some variance in the way fees and charges are levied.**
- 10.5 Whilst at present it is considered unnecessary to contemplate most of these, circumstances in coming years may make it necessary to consider some or all of the above suggestions.
- 10.6 Charges are also made for entries into the Book of Remembrance, organist and use of organ, viewing of funeral service over the internet, and burying of remains from other crematoria. **The Joint Committee will continue to review all of its charges on no less than an annual basis.**

11.0 Financial Policies

- 11.1 The Joint Committee is in a strong financial position and able to meet all planned expenditure from income. Since the 1996 Development Plan the Joint Committee has been in a position to make an annual surplus which has been distributed to each of the constituent authorities. This surplus is effectively recognition of the significant original investment by each of the authorities in the Crematorium. The payment to each of the authorities also assists them indirectly to support their own cemeteries and bereavement services.

- 11.2 A comprehensive Finance Strategy is in place which provides a clear overview of the Joint Committee's financial framework and is 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. **The Finance Strategy will be reviewed by the Joint Committee each December for incorporation into the budget setting process.**
- 11.3 A Capital Works Fund has been set up to fund future major works including works to the fabric of the building. The 6 year capital programme from 2014/15 to 2019/20 totals £2,960,000. The programme is set out as being fully funded from the existing Capital Works Fund balance of £830,000 plus annual contributions over the life of the programme totalling £1,910,000. This demonstrates that the programme is heavily reliant on continued revenue contributions to the Capital Works Fund so that the programme of work can be fulfilled.
- 11.4 A forecast of income and expenditure, extracted from the approved revenue budget, is attached (*see Appendix 2*).
- 11.5 **The Joint Committee re-affirms the following long standing policies:-**
1. Sufficient reserves and provisions will continue to be made to ensure that:
 - (a) no precept will be required from the constituent authorities within the foreseeable future and;
 - (b) all anticipated capital works can be funded from revenue income.
 2. that an optimum annual surplus be available for re-distribution to each of the constituent authorities.

12.0 Repairs and Maintenance

- 12.1 As a result of the ongoing maintenance programme, the buildings are in good condition and no exceptional requirements are foreseen at the present time, other than those outlined in the maintenance programme. **The Joint Committee will continue to receive regular reports on all aspects of capital and revenue works.**

13.0 Cremation Trends

- 13.1 Since the opening of the Crematorium in 1958 the number of cremations performed annually has grown steadily, from under 2,000 per year to over 4,000 in the 2013 calendar year. The operational capacity of the cremator installation, working within existing limits, is 5 - 6,000 per annum.

- 13.2 There are an average of 17 funerals each day. Generally funerals do not normally have to be booked more than one week in advance. Timing adjustments could create further spare capacity though depending on its extent, this could have some adverse effects on the standard of service provided.
- 13.3 With the opening of a new Oaks Crematorium Havant at the end of 2013 the number of funerals taking place at Portchester has decreased. It is not possible at this stage to estimate the long term impact of the new facility. However, during 2014 the number of cremations at Portchester was 3356, a reduction of 684 over the previous 10 year average. Considered reductions in revenue were allowed for in the budget for 2014/15, based on a 30% annual reduction to 2,856. However, in the first half of 2014/15 the reduction against the 10 year average figure has been approximately 15%, although it is likely that this figure will increase over time as the new crematorium becomes more established. **The Joint Committee will keep under review the number of cremations being undertaken.**
- 13.4 The table set out at *Appendix 3* shows the trends in cremation from 1960 - 2013, indicating the national percentage of cremation to burials for those years and various other cremation comparisons. These show the national rate is now fairly constant at around 73%.
- 13.5 Locally the table below gives a comparison of the burials in the 4 local authority areas covered by the Joint Committee and the percentage relationship of cremation at Portchester to burial. These figures are a guide only as they do not take into account funerals that may be undertaken from outside of the 4 areas, nor the number of cremations at The Oaks.

	Cremations at Portchester		Burials Portsmouth, Havant, Gosport, Fareham Local authority cemeteries	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
2001	4,211	(82%)	931	(18%)
2002	4,248	(83%)	854	(17%)
2003	4,372	(83%)	870	(17%)
2004	4,134	(83%)	877	(17%)
2005	3,987	(84%)	798	(16%)
2006	3,993	(84%)	758	(16%)
2007	4,000	(85%)	699	(15%)
2008	4,117	(85%)	711	(15%)
2009	4,087	(86%)	671	(14%)
2010	3,851	(83%)	816	(17%)
2011	4,015	(84%)	761	(16%)
2012	3,975	(83%)	819	(17%)
2013	4,248	(85%)	752	(15%)
2014	3,356	(82%)	723	(18%)

13.6 Following the opening of the Oaks Crematorium at Havant, the number of cremations in future years at Portchester is hard to predict, as explained in paragraph 13.3 above. Although factors such as weather conditions and flu epidemics can affect numbers there is no sign of a marked and permanent increase. The growth in our catchment area may help in maintaining the number of funerals at Portchester.

14.0 Population Trends

14.1 Set out in *Appendix 4* are estimates of population projection and age profile for the period up to 2023. This indicates that in respect of the four local authority areas –

(a) The population is projected to increase from the 2011 figure of 520,816, as follows –

2013	–	527,128 (+1.2%)
2015	–	533,165 (+1.1%)
2017	-	539,203 (+1.1%)
2019	–	545,074 (+1.1%)
2021	-	550,754 (+1.1%)
2023	-	556,675 (+1.1%)

(b) The population profile in the period to 2023 is projected to increase by 5,547 in the upper age range (85+) – a slight decrease over the figure of 5,973 reported in the 2013 Development Plan.

14.2 The death projections (*set out in Appendix 5*) for each local area show the following actual and projected deaths (rounded to the nearest 100) for the four local authority areas –

2012	4,830 (actual)
2013	5,126 (actual)
2015	4,600
2017	4,600
2019	4,700
2021	4,800
2022	4,800

14.3 On the assumption that average national trends both in respect of cremation and burial continue to apply in the Joint Committee's area, and given the provision of the new crematorium in Havant, the conclusion is that there will be sufficient cremator capacity at Portchester for at least the next 15 years.

15.0 The Chapels

- 15.1 The south chapel has a seating capacity of about 80, but with standing can accommodate well over 100 persons. The smaller north chapel has seating for about 40. Both are served with well appointed waiting rooms, incorporating toilet provision in a separate building linked to the chapels by a covered walkway. The capacity of the Chapels is in line with the Department of the Environment Guidance Notes on the Siting and Planning of Crematoria issued in April 1978. Sometimes overflows occur in the south chapel but this happens infrequently. Funeral directors are usually aware when a high attendance is likely and will then suggest to the bereaved that a church service should be held before the committal. Any chapel extension could result in a loss of intimacy which would arguably outweigh any gain.
- 15.2 Occasionally the number of mourners attending a funeral exceeds the sitting and standing capacity within the South Chapel. Since the opening of both chapels the availability of continuous fixed pews, rather than individual chairs, has provided maximum seating flexibility. It also means that following a service seat rows do not have to be 'straightened' thereby possibly delaying the start of the following service. Demountable external loudspeakers to relay the service can now be installed outside the South Chapel on those limited occasions when the number of mourners exceeds capacity.
- 15.3 In September 2013 the Joint Committee approved a report detailing measures to develop and enhance the services provided at Portchester. This included proposals for improving the design and décor of the South Chapel through a scheme of refurbishment. Detailed design plans for this work were approved by the Joint Committee in June 2014, which is due to be undertaken during the summer of 2015.

16.0 Environmental Issues

- 16.1 As a matter of principle the Joint Committee seeks to minimise the environmental consequences of its operation commensurate with the need of providing a facility sensitive to the needs of its clients. The buildings have been developed at different stages but always in a manner sympathetic to the original design. It is considered important that any future works abide by this principle and that they are considered acceptable to the public. Environmental considerations can be very complex and in this development plan it is only considered practicable to outline in the broadest terms the environmental issues that the Joint Committee can reasonably influence.
- 16.2 The crematorium is a major consumer of both gas and electricity and during the life of this development plan the spending on these commodities is estimated at £124,500 in 2014/15 and £124,500 in 2015/16.

- 16.3 Most of the energy consumed is in relation to the prime purpose of the crematorium i.e. the cremation process, and the energy used is largely determined by the regulatory requirements that govern this. The Manager and Registrar routinely monitors and reports to the Joint Committee on gas consumption.
- 16.4 The Joint Committee successfully completed the installation of equipment to remove mercury from the flue gasses. One of the issues associated with mercury removal is the regulation of flue gas temperatures. At an early stage in the research process for the project it was thought an opportunity may exist to utilise waste heat in the heating of the buildings thus minimising the overall consumption of gas. **It is anticipated that part of the heating of the Crematorium buildings will be achieved through the process of utilising waste heat, at an appropriate time.**
- 16.5 In respect of the flue gasses the Joint Committee has provided high quality computer controlled cremation and monitoring equipment to ensure that it fully meets the requirement of the Environmental Protection Act. To ensure that the equipment is maintained to a high standard the principle has been adopted of engaging the original suppliers on a long-term rolling contract. Flue gas emissions are determined by a number of factors. This includes the "what goes in must come out" principle and this is an area that is largely outside the direct control of the Joint Committee.
- 16.6 The buildings are heated by a combination of systems largely brought about by the incremental development of the buildings. **When suitable opportunities arise consideration will continue to be given by the Joint Committee to issues of sustainability and possible rationalisation of these systems to achieve both environmental and cost benefits.** The buildings are largely insulated to accord with modern requirements and whenever appropriate the opportunity is being taken to upgrade the building's insulation.
- 16.7 The crematorium does have large roof areas that could be used to trap the sun's energy and convert this to useful energy. This is a field that has developed considerably in recent years and shows possible potential for energy savings. This is an option that has been examined in the past and will continue to be kept under review. **Within the timescale of this development plan it is proposed to consider investigating the possibilities for utilising "alternative" technologies to generate electricity on the site. The Joint Committee will continue to review environmental aspects of the Crematorium's operations.**

17.0 The Grounds and Long Term Strategy for the Disposal of Remains

- 17.1 At the present time an average of 60% of ashes are removed from the crematorium for scattering elsewhere. This is a trend that appears to be on the rise not only locally but nationally. This means that the remaining 40% are scattered within the grounds. The current risk assessment is in place to ensure that the grounds are able to take the number of scatterings that the Crematorium requires without causing detrimental effects on the soil structure.
- 17.2 The remaining 40% (some 1,600 cremations) are scattered within the grounds by placing them beneath the surface and into the soil directly. Taking a snapshot of the current diary, most of these scatterings are in existing locations with other family members and as such would always have to be scattered within the current layout of the garden. Approximately 20% of the 1,600 scatterings per annum are what would be termed new locations. This equates to fewer than 400 scatterings. At the present time there are areas of the garden that are able to take these scatterings and are relatively under-utilised.
- 17.3 In the opinion of the Manager and Registrar any extension to the existing grounds at the present time is not necessary as the majority of disposals have to take place within the existing layout. He believes that the trend for removals coupled with the ever increasing demand for repeat scatterings means that the demand for 'new' positions will continue to diminish and as such would render any extensions under-utilised. **The Joint Committee will keep under review the level of remains that are so removed.**
- 17.4 The disposal of cremated remains is carried out within the shrub borders. This does have a cumulative adverse effect on the condition of the soil (by increasing the alkalinity of the soil) and plants grow less well. The effect can be to some extent ameliorated by the use of pine bark mulch and top dressing (this is acidic so can help to redress the soil PH). This problem was recognised by the Joint Committee in earlier Development Plans and as a result, steps were taken to acquire an extension to the grounds to increase the area available for the disposal of cremated remains. With the number of disposals being on average 35 per week this is a reduction from previous levels.
- 17.5 Over the last 10 years the shrub beds have been mulched with bark; the new bark now being placed on a quarter of the shrub beds annually, thus allowing access to visitors throughout the year. The mulch has improved the aesthetic appearance of the borders and also conserves moisture, to the benefit of shrubs and trees.
- 17.6 The ground maintenance regime has a greater emphasis on shrub pruning, which is allowing more room around plants for remains to be placed. However, there will come a time, possibly in the next 6 to 10 years, when the remains will become an unacceptably dominant part of the soil structure. In the medium term this could be helped by the creation of new shrub beds. For example, the area in the lawn around the large Poplar *Trichocarpa* tree could

be the preferred option. The tree has canker which slowly kills the branches and if at some future stage it has to be felled consideration could be given to the site being cultivated and a new shrub bed created, subject to the ground conditions being suitable. This area becomes extremely wet during the winter months and drainage would need to be provided **The Joint Committee will keep under review the need to maintain good soil conditions both for the disposal of remains and for the requirements of the planting and will take appropriate measures to ensure a balance is maintained.**

- 17.7 The Joint Committee has in recent years reviewed its car parking facilities and this has included consideration of parking provision for cars and other means of transport. Car parking is provided, both within the Grounds (capacity for 68 cars) and an overflow car park in Upper Cornaway Lane (capacity 73). Car parking for the disabled has been provided in the Grounds. **Whilst it is appropriate to consider cars as the primary means of transport to the Crematorium the need to provide space for alternative and more environmentally friendly means of transport will be kept under review by the Joint Committee.**
- 17.8 The Manager and Registrar will consider staff transportation during the lifetime of this development plan with the objective of minimising the environmental impact of the travel to work journey.
- 17.9 **The Joint Committee will periodically monitor car parking arrangements to ensure that it is being managed in the most efficient and effective way.**

Appendices

1. Federation of British Cremation Authorities Code of Practice
2. Annual Estimates of Expenditure & Income for 2014/15 and 2015/16
3. Cremation Trends 1960 – 2013
4. Population projection and age profile
5. Actual and projected deaths in south east Hampshire

JH/me
March 2015