

**REPORT TO: PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
15 JUNE 2015**

REPORT BY: CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

**PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
ANNUAL REPORT – 2014/15**

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 2014/15 financial year.

2. Recommended that this Annual Report for the 2014/15 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 2014/15 financial year was –

Councillor Leslie Keeble (Fareham BC)	Chairman
Councillor Keith Evans (Fareham BC)	
Councillor Tony Briggs (Havant BC)	Vice-Chairman
Councillor David Guest (Havant BC)	
Councillor Alan Scard (Gosport BC)	
Councillor Dennis Wright (Gosport BC)	
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 2014/15 financial year:

16 June 2014	15 September 2014	15 December 2014
16 March 2015		

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 15 December 2014, approved a comprehensive Finance Strategy for 2015/16, 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 during the 2013/14 financial year 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 2014 meeting also approved the revenue budget for 2015/16 together with a revised capital works programme, and the repairs and renewals programme for 2014/15 & 2015/16. In approving the budget, the Joint Committee also set the levels of fees and charges operable from the 1 April 2015.

The Committee's actual income and revenue expenditure (for the financial year ending 31 March 2014) was reviewed and noted by the Joint Committee at its meeting on the 16 June 2014.

(b) Annual Financial Return for 2013/14

In June 2014 the Joint Committee approved and published its annual financial return 2013/14, 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 2014

At the December 2014 meeting the Joint Committee was advised and noted that the external audit had been completed. This included an 'Issues Arising' report together with a report from the Treasurer detailing the action taken or future action required.

(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 2015 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) 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. During the year the Joint Committee continued to receive reports on progress in respect of these initiatives, as follows –

- 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.*
- South Chapel – Upgrade and Refurbishment – *Design work progressing – see item (f) below.*

(f) South Chapel Refurbishment

Following 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 scheme are that –

- The design features aim to respect the 1950's style of building;
- Light coloured wood panelling is proposed to be affixed to parts of the walls and this will be demountable and durable so that when necessary access can be obtained to services;
- Specialist lighting will be a key feature;
- New carpeting would be provided;
- Air conditioning to be installed.

The aim is for the work to be completed during 2015/16, with work being undertaken outside normal service hours.

(g) Mercury Abatement Project

In September 2008 the Joint Committee approved a comprehensive report on the project for the installation of mercury abatement equipment on all cremators at the Crematorium. The decision to proceed was taken in the knowledge of a government requirement that the overall level of mercury emitted from crematoria, taken as a whole countrywide, should be reduced by 50% by the end of December 2012.

Following competitive tenders, specialist consultants and contractors were appointed to carry out the abatement and building works to accommodate the new equipment.

By December 2012 all works were substantially complete, apart from a few outstanding matters. All 6 cremators had been operating since late summer 2012 with 100% mercury abatement, well ahead of programme.

The Crematoria Abatement of Mercury Emissions Organisation (CAMEO) has been established to operate a 'burden sharing' scheme whereby those crematoria that have carried out abatement would receive payments, financed by those crematoria that had decided not to abatement. The burden sharing

scheme started 'trading' in 2014, and Portchester received payment of some £48,000 from the scheme.

As part of their licence to operate all crematoria are required to have in place 'burden sharing', either through CAMEO (of which Portchester is a member) or by private arrangement between individual crematoria.

(h) Repairs and Renewals Programme

Various minor items of work were undertaken during the year. A range of other work is proposed to be undertaken during 2015/16, and this includes -

- Mercury Abatement project – sound attenuation
- Waiting Room toilet facilities refurbishment
- Works to Mess Room
- Internal redecoration – rolling programme
- Steam Cleaning paving – rolling programme
- Works to Crematory and committal areas

(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 3411 registered cremations (a reduction from the 3960 cremations undertaken in 2013/14).

(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.

(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) Crematorium Job Evaluation Review

At its meeting on 15 December 2014 the Joint Committee approved recommendations contained in a job evaluation review commissioned by the

Joint Committee into the pay and grading of employee posts at the Crematorium.

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.

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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
1 June 2015