

**REPORT TO: PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –  
29 SEPTEMBER 2008**

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

**PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –  
ANNUAL REPORT – 2007/08**

**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 2007/08 financial year.

**2. Recommended that this Annual Report for the 2007/08 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 2007/08 financial year was –

Councillor Anthony Briggs (Havant BC)	Chairman
Councillor John Train (Gosport BC)	Vice Chairman
Councillor Brian Bayford (Fareham BC)	
Councillor Dave Collins (Havant BC)	
Councillor Peter Edgar (Gosport BC)	
Councillor Jason Fazackarley (Portsmouth CC)	
Councillor Connie Hockley (Fareham BC) <sup>1</sup>	
Councillor Paula Riches (Portsmouth CC)	

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson (Portsmouth) was appointed by his authority as a standing deputy.

The chair and vice-chairmanship rotates between authorities annually.

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<sup>1</sup> Councillor Connie Hockley chaired the Joint Committee during the 2006/07 municipal year

3.4 The Joint Committee met on 4 occasions during the 2007/08 financial year:

25 June 2007  
24 September 2007  
3 December 2007  
3 March 2008

Minutes of each of these meetings and the reports considered are available for viewing on the Portsmouth City Council website. The Portchester Crematorium web site is currently being updated to enable this facility to be available via the crematorium's own web site.

3.5 The meetings of the Joint Committee have been supported by the Clerk (John Haskell), Treasurer (Andy Wannell), Engineer and Surveyor (Terry Garvey), Horticultural Consultant (Roger Young), and the Manager and Registrar (James Clark) who 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. Activities in respect of the Joint Committee's Core functions**

5.1 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 3 March 2008, approved a comprehensive Finance Strategy which provides a clear overview of the Joint Committee's financial framework and was 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 document was sent to each authority to note as evidence for their 2008 'Use of Resources' assessment. No comments of substance were received from any of the authorities. The strategy will be reviewed by the Joint Committee each December for incorporation into the budget setting process.

The Joint Committee at its December 2007 meeting approved the revenue budget, a revised capital works programme, and the repairs and renewals

programme for 2007/08 & 2008/09. In approving the budget, the Joint Committee also set the levels of fees and charges operable from the 1 April 2008.

The Committee's actual revenue expenditure (for the financial year ending 31 March 2007) was reviewed and noted by the Joint Committee at its meeting on the 25 June 2007.

**(b) 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 2008 the Joint Committee re-confirmed the risk management framework.

**(c) Statement on Internal Control (SIC)**

The Statement on Internal Control (SIC) was approved by the Joint Committee at its meeting on the 25 June 2007. In summary the purpose of this document is to set out the Joint Committee's responsibilities and explain the system of internal control that exists to manage risk and the arrangements for review. The SIC will change to the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) with effect from the 2007/08.

**(d) Annual Audit and Inspection Letter to Members**

The Joint Committee is advised each December that the accounts for the preceding financial year have been audited. At the December 2007 meeting members received the Statement of Accounts in a report from the Treasurer. This was accompanied by the annual audit and inspection letter from the Joint Committee's external auditors (Mazars) in which it was concluded that in all significant respects the Joint Committee had made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31 March 2007.

Mazars also submitted to the Joint Committee at the meeting in September 2007 its 'report to those charged with governance', which the Joint Committee was asked to note. There were no matters which the auditors needed to draw to the Joint Committee's attention. At that meeting the Joint Committee also noted and approved the external auditor's annual audit and inspection plan for 2007/08.

In June 2007 the Joint Committee approved and published its annual statement of accounts for 2006/07 which it then submitted to its external auditors.

**(e) Capital Works Programme**

During the year the following main works have been undertaken –

- Cremator Furnace Relining (Phase 1);
- Cremators 1-6 hearth replacement.

**(f) Repairs and Renewals Programme**

An extensive programme of works was undertaken during the year, and this included –

- Refurbishment of the glazed covered way;
- Renewal of glazing to screens;
- Repair and replacement of external and internal doors;
- Provision of CCTV cameras to car park;
- Air conditioning in the office and the music room;
- Water supply to chapel waiting rooms;
- Roof insulation to north and south chapels;
- Internal decorations;
- Redecoration of summer houses;
- Refurbishment of north chapel toilets.

**(g) Mercury Abatement**

The Joint Committee continued to receive regular reports on the progress of a scheme to install mercury abatement plant at the Crematorium. This is against a government requirement that the overall level of mercury emitted from crematoria, taken as a whole, should be reduced by 50% by the end of December 2012. If this target is not met the government has indicated that it would legislate to compel a number of crematoria to meet the criteria. Given that Portchester is one of the largest crematoria in the country, the Joint Committee has at this stage noted the likely cost involved and programming to implement such works. A comprehensive report is due to be considered in the next financial year (2008/09) so that at that stage the Joint Committee can take decisions as to when and how work should proceed and the funding arrangements. The anticipated level of expenditure is such that, if agreed, it will be likely to represent one of the largest capital projects undertaken at the Crematorium.

**(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 4,004 registered cremations.

**(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.

**(j) Appointment of Deputy Medical Referees**

During the year, following the death of one of the three deputy medical referees, the Joint Committee decided that it would be prudent to appoint two further deputies. This meant that in addition to the medical referee there are now four deputies.

**(k) Review of Cremation Regulations**

In July 2007 the government issued a consultation paper on consolidating and modernising the cremation regulations, which currently date from 1930 (although they have been updated several times since then). The Joint Committee, at the meeting in September 2007, decided not to submit any representations, but to await the final outcome of consultation. It is anticipated that new regulations will be issued by the government, possibly in the autumn of 2008, to come into effect in 2009.

**6. Conclusion**

6.1 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 is of a recurring nature. However, there will be new challenges ahead for the Joint Committee in respect of the project for the installation of mercury abatement equipment, reports upon which the Joint Committee will receive in the 2008/09 financial year. The anticipated level of expenditure is such that, if agreed, it will be likely to represent one of the largest capital projects undertaken at 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  
18 September 2008