

**REPORT TO: THE PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
1 DECEMBER 2008**

**REPORT BY: THE CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE AND THE MANAGER
AND REGISTRAR**

PROVISION OF INTERNET BROADCASTING OF SERVICES – ‘WEBCASTING’

Purpose

1. To update the Joint Committee on the outcome of the investigations made by the Manager and Registrar into the provision of the internet broadcasting of services, where this has been specifically requested by a family, and to recommend a way forward.

Recommendation

That the Manager and Registrar, Clerk and the Treasurer, be asked to explore further with RSInnovations quality, technical, security and related issues for the provision of the Internet broadcasting of services and that a further report be submitted to the next meeting.

Background

2. At the meeting on 23 June 2008 the Joint Committee considered a report regarding an approach that had been received from a company seeking to provide the internet broadcasting of services where this had been specifically requested by a family. The Joint Committee agreed that the Manager and Registrar, in consultation with the Clerk and the Treasurer, be authorised to investigate the provision of the Internet broadcasting of services and to report back to a future meeting on ways and means by which this can be achieved.

3. In addition, the Portchester Crematorium Development Plan 2008-14 (Section 7), makes clear that the Joint Committee will keep under review the way in which technology and the web site could be further developed in the interests of an efficient and effective, yet caring, service to the bereaved.

4. This report therefore provides members with the outcome of the investigations that have been made.

Result of Investigations and Enquiries

5. The Manager and Registrar was initially approached by a company, (RSInnovations) indicating it was willing to set up the service free of charge and take a commission from the charge made for each service for which it was used. Following the Joint Committee's decision in June, enquiries were made to ascertain what other companies or options may be available for the provision of this service.

6. In addition to RSInnovations, two other companies were approached, of which one (currently operating at Southampton Crematorium) runs its service through their own music system. Southampton also had to pay the initial set up costs. Portchester does not use this music system and as there are no plans to do so this option has not been pursued further. The second firm has advertised in the trade journals and it was approached to provide a quote. Following a site visit to Portchester, this company provided a quotation for the initial setup of £1950 per chapel plus a usage fee of initially 50% reducing on a sliding scale down to a minimum of £35.

7. RSInnovations propose that the company would install all the necessary hardware and software at no charge and maintain the webcasting service, paying the Joint Committee a commission each time the service is used. RSInnovations would liaise with funeral directors to 'market' the availability of the service. A funeral service would only be webcast on the internet where this had been specifically requested by the family and to view the service over the internet would require a password/pin to be entered via a secure site. This password/pin would be made available to the funeral director acting on behalf of the family. The Manager and Registrar's staff would be responsible for 'activating' the webcasting service as and when required, so to that extent there would be a small cost implication.

Options Available

8. As mentioned in the previous report considered by the Joint Committee in June 2008 it is unclear what the potential usage for this service may be and it could be some time before any initial setup cost (if incurred by the Crematorium) could be recouped. For example, it is understood that at present Southampton has a take up of about 2-3 services per week.

9. Given the continuing interest shown by RSInnovations, who are prepared to bear the cost of an initial trial (followed if successful by a fixed term agreement), it is suggested further discussion takes place with the company. Initial discussions have taken place with the proprietor of RSInnovations on a range of matters relating to this project. However, officers consider further discussion necessary in order to be satisfied on a range of issues, including –

- The quality and reliability of service, and technical specifications including an off-site webcasting demonstration using the Internet ;
- Security and integrity of the system;

- The duration of the proposed trial arrangement;
- Responsibility as to the administration, maintenance and running costs;
- The fees to be charged, promotion, publicity and ability to deliver the service.

10. The alternative could be to place an advertisement seeking expressions of interest in the running of such a service (at no cost to the crematorium) and then decide what action to take dependent upon the level of interest shown, or at this stage decide to take no further action. Either of these options would not however provide the Crematorium with the valuable experience that is likely to be gained during a trial period.

Conclusion

11. At this stage there is no proven demand for the web casting of services although that is not to say the possibility should not be explored as to how this could be achieved as and when required. At present the Crematorium does not have the necessary equipment or expertise to run such a service. The Manager and Registrar's preferred option, subject to the outcome of further discussion, would initially be for a fixed term contract – effectively a trial period, whereby the contractor would take the initial risk. At the conclusion of the trial period the Joint Committee could then review the position as to how the service was operating and the way in which the contractor had performed.

James Clark
Manager and Registrar

John Haskell
Clerk to the Joint Committee

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

JH/me
20 November 2008