

**REPORT TO: PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
24 SEPTEMBER 2012**

REPORT BY: CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

**PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
ANNUAL REPORT – 2011/12**

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 2011/12 financial year.

2. Recommended that this Annual Report for the 2011/12 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 2011/12 financial year was –

Councillor Dave Collins (Havant BC)	Chairman
Councillor Leah Turner (Havant BC)	
Councillor Keith Evans (Fareham BC)	
Councillor Leslie Keeble (Fareham BC)	
Councillor Peter Edgar (Gosport BC)	
Councillor Dennis Wright (Gosport BC)	Vice Chairman
Councillor Hugh Mason (Portsmouth CC)	
Councillor Lynne Stagg (Portsmouth CC)	

The chair and vice-chairmanship rotates between authorities annually.

3.4 The Joint Committee met on 4 occasions during the 2011/12 financial year:

20 June 2011
5 March 2012

19 September 2011

12 December 2011

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 – appointed August 2011 in succession to Roger Young), 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. The meeting of the Joint Committee in September 2011 was held at the Crematorium, which also facilitated a site visit for members

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 2011- 2016

5.1 The purpose of the Development Plan is to look at medium term developments in the period to 2016, and in the longer term beyond 2016, 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 was approved in December 2010 and will next be reviewed during 2012/13.

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 2011, approved a comprehensive Finance Strategy for 2012/13, 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 by the Joint Committee in 2008, 2009, and 2010.

The Joint Committee at its December 2011 meeting approved the revenue budget, a revised capital works programme, and the repairs and renewals programme for 2011/12 & 2012/13. In approving the budget, the Joint Committee also set the levels of fees and charges operable from the 1 April 2012.

The Committee's actual revenue expenditure (for the financial year ending 31 March 2011) was reviewed and noted by the Joint Committee at its meeting on the 20 June 2011.

(b) Annual Financial Return for 2010/11

In June 2011 the Joint Committee approved and published its annual financial return 2010/11, 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) 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.

(d) Appointment of Medical Referee and Deputy

During the year the Joint Committee approved the nomination of Dr David Atchison, who was then appointed by the Ministry of Justice, as Medical Referee, following the retirement of Dr Denis Hilton, after more than 42 years service. The Joint Committee also approved the appointment of a further deputy medical referee, to fill the resulting vacancy.

(e) Mercury Abatement

At its meeting on the 29 September 2008 the Joint Committee received and approved a comprehensive report on the project for the installation of mercury abatement equipment on all cremators at the Crematorium. The Joint Committee's decisions included –

- Authorising the project to proceed in accordance with a project brief approved by the Joint Committee;
- Approving funding arrangements;

- Establishing a project board to oversee and control the project.

The decision to proceed with the project was taken in the knowledge of 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 decided it was prudent to proceed with the works required. The anticipated level of expenditure is such that it represents one of the largest capital projects undertaken at the Crematorium.

The chairman of the Project Board is Councillor Hugh Mason. Progress reports from the Project Board are submitted to the Joint Committee at each meeting.

Following competitive tenders, Parker Torrington were appointed from 1 April 2010 to act as the Joint Committee's professional consultants in respect of -

- The mercury abatement project; and
- On-going maintenance

Subsequently tenders in respect of the mercury abatement project were sought from a short list of specialised companies. These tenders were evaluated and reported to the Joint Committee in January 2011, at which it was agreed to appoint Facultatieve Technologies (FT) as the specialist abatement contractor. A separate tender was invited for the building works required to create the 'envelope' within which the abatement equipment would be housed. Following evaluation, the Joint Committee on 20 June 2011 accepted the tender from Speltham Contractors.

During the year work was proceeding in accordance with the project plan, which has included extensive building work being undertaken within and on the roof area to create the extension into which the specialist abatement works would be fitted. In addition the rear crematorium wall was re-constructed on a new alignment. A new sub-station and high voltage cable was also installed.

As at September 2012 the project is currently well ahead of programme and is operating in a fully abated mode.

(f) Repairs and Renewals Programme

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

- Hearth Maintenance to Cremators 3& 5
- Refurbishing & redecorating the Book of Remembrance fittings
- Providing granite covers to wreath bays
- Cremator Furnace Relining

- Paving repairs
- Refurbishment of Garden of Contemplation Seating
- North Chapel Waiting Room Redecoration
- External and internal redecorations

(g) 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 3,977 registered cremations.

(h) 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.

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. However, during the year the Joint Committee continued to oversee progress on the project for the installation of mercury abatement equipment. This large capital project is now drawing to a close, full abatement having been successfully achieved ahead of the December 2012 timescale.

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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
 12 September 2012