

PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL REMOTE MEETING of the Joint Committee held on Monday 22 March 2021 at 2.00 pm.

Present

Fareham Borough Council

Councillor Michael Ford

Gosport Borough Council

Councillor June Cully (Chairman)

Havant Borough Council

Councillor Leah Turner
Councillor Michael Wilson

Portsmouth City Council

Councillor Dave Ashmore

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Clerk to the Joint Committee explained the arrangements for the holding of this virtual remote meeting. This was taking place in accordance with the regulations issued by government to allow local authority meetings to take place remotely using video or telephone conferencing technology.

Councillor Michael Ford, appointed by Fareham Borough Council to fill the vacancy following the sad death in December 2020 of Councillor Keith Evans, a long standing member of the Joint Committee, was welcomed to the meeting.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (AI 1)

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Lee Hunt (Portsmouth CC); Simon Martin (Fareham BC)(engaged on other council business); Kathleen Jones (Gosport BC) (engaged on other council business); and Victoria Hatton (Manager and Registrar), Andy Wannell (Treasurer)(engaged on other council business), and Ashley Humphrey (Horticultural Consultant).

882. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

None

883. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 December 2020 (AI 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 14 December 2020 be signed as a correct record.

884. Matters Arising from the Minutes not specifically referred to on the Agenda (AI 4)

(a) Minute 879 - Metals Recycling Charitable Scheme

The Clerk reported receipt of a letter of thanks from the Rowans Hospice for the donation recently made.

The ICCM had recently written seeking nominations for the next round of donations and, in accordance with previous practice, the Clerk would be writing to members to seek views on who they would wish to nominate.

885. Clerk's Items - Representations regarding the Gardens Clearance (AI 5)

The Clerk reported receipt of representations regarding enforcement of the Crematorium's gardens clearance arrangements, which he asked members to take into account when dealing with section 9 of the Development Management Plan document later during the meeting.

886. Building Works and Renewals Programme (AI 6)

(TAKE IN REPORT OF THE PROPERTY MANAGER)

In submitting the report the Property Manager drew specific attention to the completion of the Book of Remembrance Room and the works programmed for the 2021/22 financial year.

In respect of the refurbishment of the waiting rooms, and in response to questions, the Property Manager explained that upgrading the facilities was now timely, given the works previously carried out to both chapels. Consideration was being given to the present seating arrangements, décor and information displays, taking into account feedback. Design proposals would be brought forward for members to consider.

The Property Manager also explained that ideas for the present water feature area were still be explored, and there would be a report back to members in due course.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

887. Manager and Registrar's Report - General Statistical Reports for December 2020 – February 2021 (AI 7)

(TAKE IN REPORT OF THE MANAGER AND REGISTRAR)

In submitting the report, the Deputy Manager advised members that the uptake of Obitus visual and audio services had exceeded that anticipated.

The staff had found the system easy to use, and was a clear benefit to families.

RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

888. Horticultural Consultant's Report – Grounds Maintenance (AI 8)

(TAKE IN REPORT OF THE HORTICULTURAL CONSULTANT)

In the absence of the Horticultural Consultant, Dave Stribling presented the general update on the Crematorium grounds, and took the opportunity to mention that there was a shortage of supply of potted plants for the conservatory.

In response to questions about ground conditions, Mr Stribling advised that it would be necessary to undertake some soil tests to check the level of ph. He commented that at present plants appeared healthy.

RESOLVED that the report be received and approved.

889. Development Management Plan 2021 - 2026 (AI 9)

TAKE IN REPORT OF THE CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE)

In submitting his report the Clerk explained that the Plan reviewed and revisited the previous Development Plan approved in March 2019. The Clerk highlighted the material changes and additions to the document, including –

- Section 6.2 – staffing changes;
- Section 6.7 – Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic;
- Section 7 – Developments in Technology;
- Section 13 – Cremation Trends – update of statistical information;

He also referred to representations which had been received recently regarding the Crematorium Garden of Remembrance clearance policy. Members were reminded that the Joint Committee had agreed that in accordance with the long standing policy against the provision of permanent memorials, plaques and other ornaments, the gardens should be cleared every 3 months. Although clearances had been carried out, several items removed to storage were reclaimed by families and re-deposited in the gardens.

Section 9 of the Development Management Plan document was relevant as it dealt with memorials policy.

A letter of representation had been received asking that the Joint Committee should enforce its no memorials policy more vigorously and not allow the replacement of items which had been removed. The complainant, who had spoken to other visitors, said they expressed dismay at the disregard of the regulations to the detriment of the environment and the majority who observed them. Objects left in the gardens detracted from the overall appearance of the

gardens but they also led to other families believing they too could place items. The complainant asked that more regular clearances be carried out to enforce the regulations.

The Clerk also advised that in the recent past other representations had been received complaining that items were being removed. Both the Manager and the Clerk had been involved in responding to these complaints explaining clearly the Crematorium's long standing policy. Complainants were also reminded that the application form for cremation signed by families made clear that memorials, plaques, vases, ornaments and artificial flowers are not permitted in the gardens.

Arising from consideration of the Plan (and representations regarding the gardens clearance policy) the following main points arose –

- The long standing no memorials policy was correct and the clearance arrangements must continue to be enforced;
- Memorials left in the gardens took various forms (some like 'shrines') and often spread over areas where other families ashes were scattered, unintentionally causing offence. In turn this deprived other families from placing flowers at the spot where their relatives ashes had been scattered;
- The need to make visitors more aware of the regulations;
- The problems that arose when families planted bulbs in the grounds. This was an issue that could be considered as part of proposals for the future of the area of contemplation;
- The introduction of vases and racking adjacent to the Book of Remembrance Room might hopefully bring about a change of attitude of visitors.

The Clerk advised the Joint Committee that Regulation 10 set out the rules regarding the grounds. However, he suggested, and members agreed, that the current wording of Regulation 10 be redefined in public notices to provide greater clarity and simplification of the requirements of that regulation.

The Clerk also reminded members of the long established management policy that the Manager had authority to take action at her discretion to remove (between general grounds clearances) items that are not permitted to be left in the gardens. Usually a mini sweep of the gardens was undertaken most mornings to remove items that gave rise to health and safety risks or were considered harmful to the environment. To carry out more intensive clearances more frequently would have an impact on staffing and resources.

RESOLVED

(1) that the Portchester Crematorium Joint Committee Development Management Plan 2021 - 2026 be approved and adopted.

(2) that the Development Management Plan be next reviewed in 2 years' time.

890. Date of Next Meeting (AI 10)

RESOLVED that the next meeting be held on Monday 21 June 2021 at 2pm

The meeting concluded at 2.50 pm.

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Chairman