



**REPORT TO: PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
25 JUNE 2018**

REPORT BY: CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

**PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
ANNUAL REPORT – 2017/18**

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 2017/18 financial year.

2. Recommended that this Annual Report for the 2017/18 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 2017/18 financial year was –

Councillor Sue Bell (Fareham BC)	Vice-Chairman
Councillor Keith Evans (Fareham BC)	
Councillor Alan Scard (Gosport BC)	
Councillor June Cully (Gosport BC)	
Councillor Tony Briggs (Havant BC)	
Councillor David Guest (Havant BC)	
Councillor Frank Jonas (Portsmouth CC)	Chairman
Councillor Hannah Hockaday (Portsmouth CC) (from December 2017)	
Councillor Rob New (Portsmouth CC) (until November 2017)	

The chair and vice-chairmanship rotates between authorities annually.

3.4 The Joint Committee met on 4 occasions during the 2017/18 financial year:

26 June 2017	18 September 2017	11 December 2017
19 March 2018		

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). Terry Garvey and his deputy retired on 31 December 2017. The duties of the Engineer and Surveyor have now passed to Ian Cousins, Fareham BC's Property Manager. 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 2017 - 2022

5.1 The purpose of the Development Plan is to look at medium term developments in the period to 2022, and in the longer term beyond 2022, 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 2017.

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 11 December 2017, approved a comprehensive Finance Strategy for 2018/19, 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 since December 2013 the operating environment of Portchester Crematorium significantly changed with the opening of the private Oaks Crematorium on the East Hampshire/Havant border. (See also (h) below – monitoring the levels of service).

The Joint Committee at its December 2017 meeting also approved the revenue budget for 2018/19 together with a revised capital works programme, and the repairs and renewals programme for 2017/18 & 2018/19. In approving the budget, the Joint Committee also set the levels of fees and charges operable from the 1 April 2018.

The Committee's actual income and revenue expenditure (for the financial year ending 31 March 2017) was reviewed and noted by the Joint Committee at its meeting on the 26 June 2017.

(b) Annual Financial Return for 2016/17

In June 2017 the Joint Committee approved and published its annual financial return for 2016/17.

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) Internal Audit Report for 2017/18

At the March 2018 meeting the Joint Committee considered a report on Internal Audit work carried out during 2017/18 in accordance with the 5 year plan previously approved by the Joint Committee. Overall, for the areas audited, the report found that adequate controls were in place and working effectively. Improvements were suggested to some areas of performance management.

(d) Risk Management

In March 2018 a comprehensive report was considered providing the opportunity for members to review the risk management framework that is in place. The Joint Committee approved A Risk Management Strategic Framework and Policy. The Joint Committee also agreed that the form and presentation of the strategic and operational risk registers be reviewed taking into account current good practice. These registers and an action plan to mitigate the higher risks (formalised in 2006 as part of risk management) have been reviewed annually.

(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. Since September 2013 the various initiatives have been implemented and the Joint Committee has received reports when appropriate –

- 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. Since that time there has been an increasing take up of this valuable service for family and friends.*
- 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.*
- Crematorium Web-site – *Refreshed and updated operational from Autumn 2016.*
- Crematorium logo – *adopted December 2015 to improve image and web site theme.*
- South Chapel – Upgrade and Refurbishment – *Work completed December 2015.*

(f) North Chapel Refurbishment Project

Following the successful refurbishment of the South Chapel, the Joint Committee at the meeting in June 2017 received and approved a presentation from Robert Benn of RBA Architects on a design scheme and refurbishment works for the North Chapel. The works proposed will include wooden cladding to the walls similar to that used in the South Chapel; removal of the existing ceiling to increase the volume of the chapel; new low energy feature lighting; reorientation of the catafalque in the committal area; and replacing the existing wooden pews with individual linked chairs.

Since June 2017 the Joint Committee has continued to receive at subsequent meetings progress reports with the project including procurement arrangements which envisage tenders being invited during early summer 2018 and works on site being undertaken in late summer/early autumn 2018.

(g) Repairs and Renewals Programme

Various minor items of work were undertaken during the year. A range of other work has been undertaken or authorised during 2017/18, and this includes -

- Works to Crematory and committal areas
- Paving works cleaning and re-pointing
- Internal redecoration - charge and cremation room

- Roofing Programme – inspection and cleaning
- External redecoration – rolling programme
- Water feature – maintenance
- Provision of accessible door to main office
- Part re-surfacing of car park and main entrance area

(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 3,384 registered cremations (a slight decrease of 40 from the 3,424 cremations undertaken in 2016/17).

A public comments register was introduced in September 2016, the details of which are reported to the Joint Committee for monitoring at each meeting.

(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.

The Crematorium received the prestigious Gold Award in the 2017 South and South East Britain in Bloom Awards. This is the second consecutive year the Crematorium has received the award. The criteria for the award included not only the quality of the grounds but also the appearance of buildings together with environmental and related matters.

During 2017 tenders were invited for a new grounds maintenance contract to commence in January 2018. Following a detailed evaluation of the tenders received the 5 year contract (with option for a further 5 years) was awarded to Brighstone Landscapes, at the meeting of the Joint Committee in September 2017. This company was also the previous contractor.

(j) Recycling of Metals Scheme – Charitable Payments

During the year the Joint Committee approved the submission of applications for the Rowans Hospice and Naomi House Children's Hospice under the metals recycling scheme operated by the Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Management.

Both applications were successful and resulted in significant payments from the scheme. The ICCM criteria requires that nominations have to be for local or national death related charities which have as their core function bereavement related support or service.

(k) Retirement of the Engineer & Surveyor and Future Arrangements

At the meeting of the Joint Committee in December 2017, Mr Terry Garvey (Engineer and Surveyor) and Mr Mark Pam (Deputy Engineer and Surveyor) were presented with certificates marking their retirement after 34 years and 7½ years respectively.

Fareham BC's Property Manager (Ian Cousins) is now reporting direct to the Joint Committee in respect of Crematorium building works, capital and maintenance programmes, and related matters. Since April 2014 Fareham BC's Building Services has been responsible for assisting the Engineer and Surveyor following expiration of a contract with an external building consultancy firm.

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. Although much of the Joint Committee's work continues to be of a recurring but important nature, during 2017/18 members have been involved in two additional areas of particular importance – making decisions regarding refurbishment and upgrading of the North Chapel, and the award of a new grounds maintenance contract. During the year particular attention has again focussed upon the environment in which the crematorium operates to ensure that the very high standards of service continue to be maintained in the most cost effective and efficient way.

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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
21 May 2018