



**REPORT TO: PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –  
24 JUNE 2019**

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

**PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –  
ANNUAL REPORT – 2018/19**

**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 2018/19 financial year.

**2. Recommended that this Annual Report for the 2018/19 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 2018/19 financial year was –

Councillor Simon Martin (Fareham BC)	Chairman
Councillor Keith Evans (Fareham BC)	
Councillor Kathleen Jones (Gosport BC)	
Councillor June Cully (Gosport BC)	
Councillor Tim Pike (Havant BC)	Vice Chairman
Councillor Leah Turner (Havant BC)	
Councillor Dave Ashmore (Portsmouth CC)	
Councillor Jeanette Smith (Portsmouth CC)	

The chair and vice-chairmanship rotates between authorities annually.

3.4 The Joint Committee met on 4 occasions during the 2018/19 financial year:

25 June 2018	17 September 2018	10 December 2018
25 March 2019		

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), Ian Cousins, Fareham BC's Property Manager, and their respective deputies, together with the Horticultural Consultant (Ashley Humphrey) 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, buildings and plant to ensure the highest standards continue to be maintained.

3.6 Until September 2018 meetings were held on a rotational basis at each of the authorities principal offices, but since December 2018 these have now been held at the Crematorium, 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 2019 - 2024**

5.1 The purpose of the Development Plan is to look at medium term developments in the period to 2024, and in the longer term beyond 2024, 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 2019.

#### **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 10 December 2018, approved a comprehensive Finance Strategy for 2019/20, providing a clear overview of the Joint Committee's financial framework. It is 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 continues to recognise that since December 2013 the operating environment of Portchester Crematorium has 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 2018 meeting also approved the revenue budget for 2019/20 together with a revised capital works programme, and the repairs and renewals programme for 2018/19 & 2019/20. In approving the budget, the Joint Committee also set the levels of fees and charges operable from the 1 April 2019.

The Committee's actual income and revenue expenditure (for the financial year ending 31 March 2018) was reviewed and noted by the Joint Committee at its meeting on the 25 June 2018.

**(b) Annual Financial Return for 2017/18**

In June 2018 the Joint Committee approved and published its annual financial return for 2017/18.

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 Plan for 2018/19 Onwards**

In accordance with the long standing 'Financial Responsibilities' Partnership document for the Crematorium, at the June 2018 meeting the Joint Committee considered and approved a report and plan from Fareham BC for Internal Audit work to be carried out from 2018/19 onwards. The work to be undertaken covers both operational and governance controls.

**(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**

Since September 2013 a number of initiatives to develop and enhance the established quality of the services provided by the Crematorium have been implemented (and monitored when appropriate by the Joint Committee) and these include -

- Provision of video screens in each chapel for family tributes.
- Video streaming of services through the internet – *An increasing take up of this valuable sound and vision service for family and friends.*
- Extending the length of two morning and two afternoon services.
- Books of Remembrance available on line.
- Crematorium Web-site refreshed and updated.
- Crematorium logo introduced to improve image and web site theme.
- South and North Chapels – Extensive upgrading and refurbishment.

**(f) North Chapel Refurbishment Project**

Following the successful refurbishment of the South Chapel, the Joint Committee in June 2017 approved a design scheme and refurbishment works for the North Chapel. The works proposed included 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 received at each subsequent meeting progress reports with the project including procurement. The works on site were undertaken in the autumn of 2018 and completed in December 2018. The Joint Committee expressed to the architect, contractor and all those involved with the successful conclusion of the project the members' appreciation of the excellent standard of work and attention to detail that has been achieved.

The scheme has transformed the appearance of the Chapel making it truly complementary to the South Chapel. It has been well received by the many users of the chapel providing a very attractive and friendly environment for services.

**(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 2018/19, and this includes -

- Office Refurbishment
- Glazing repairs
- Vestry Refurbishment
- Paving & Stone works cleaning and re-pointing

- Fencing repairs
- External redecoration – rolling programme
- Water feature – maintenance

In addition the Joint Committee has agreed that in respect of the Garden of Contemplation, close to the South Chapel, the continued operation of the water feature should be re-assessed and consideration given to options for inviting and undertaking the possible re-modelling of the 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 3,149 registered cremations (a decrease of 235 from the 3,384 cremations undertaken in 2017/18).

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 opportunity was taken to have large attractive planter tubs provided along the building frontage to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> year of the Crematorium, which opened in September 1958.

The Crematorium received the prestigious Gold Award in the 2018 South and South East Britain in Bloom Awards. This is the third 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.

Brighstone Landscapes (the grounds maintenance contractor) has continued to carry out a very high standard of work, which regularly receives public acclaim.

**(j) Recycling of Metals Scheme – Charitable Payments**

During the year the Joint Committee approved the submission of applications for the Rowans Hospice and McMillan Nurses 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.

**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 2018/19 members have been involved in one area of particular importance – making decisions regarding refurbishment and upgrading of the North Chapel, which has transformed its appearance making it truly complementary to the facilities available in the South Chapel. 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  
1 June 2019