

**REPORT TO: PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
23rd March 2020**

REPORT BY: THE MANAGER & REGISTRAR

**PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM CHAPELS –
PROVISION OF NEW MULTI-MEDIA SYSTEM**

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out for consideration the provision of the 'Obitus' 'Maestro' multi-media system in both chapels to deliver music, webcast and tributes for families and funeral directors which are required for modern-day services.

2. Recommendation

That an agreement be entered into with Obitus to upgrade the Crematorium's current audio-visual system with the provision of a Maestro multi-media system in both chapels for music, visual tributes and web casting, at a cost of £9,430, and monthly recurring cost of £1,033.

Bigger visual tribute screens in both chapels, an overflow screen in the South lobby, repeater screens in each music room plus touch screen controller for lecterns at a cost of £15,150.

New concert-quality sound systems for both chapels, amplifiers, CD player, microphones, digital audio processor and controller & new black metal racks at a cost of £16,554.

Current Issues

3.1 Over the last 5 years, with the introduction of screens in both chapels and modern technology advancing, there has been an increase in demand for webcasting, visual life tributes and music requests, and also in the way that services are conducted by celebrants and family requests. In summary, these changes and advances in technology have –

- Led to increasing pressure on staff to learn and operate multiple devices at short notice – this carries significant risk of failure to deliver adequately the music for service.
- Taken staff away from their normal duties to test devices and CD's.
- Meant that funeral directors have to make extra trips to bring the media for testing.
- Sometimes meant that crematorium staff have to rely on wi-fi to obtain music at short notice which can be unpredictable at times due to interference from machinery.

- Added stress to families.

3.2 Given these recurring issues investigations have been undertaken to consider what changes and improvements may be required, and what multimedia equipment is available from suppliers.

3.3 There are two leading companies specialising in the provision of audio-visual systems for crematoria – Obitus and Wesley. Demonstrations of each company's system have been seen at other crematoria locally. I have undertaken an evaluation of each system, taking into account user feedback, and have concluded that Obitus have a system that would be preferable for installation at Portchester, in terms of quality and user friendliness. Obitus is tried and tested with many crematoria now moving from Wesley to Obitus,

4. Obitus - Background

4.1 Obitus are bereavement audio-visual specialists, working with over 130 crematoria around the UK. The company supplies both equipment and ongoing service/support (Music, Webcasting, Visual tributes, all the AV: screens, speakers etc.)

4.2 Obitus have said it manages over 150,000 funerals each year, including 190,000 hours of live webcasting and 12,000 tributes.

4.3 Obitus are the fastest growing supplier of these services. Research of local crematoria, funeral directors and civil celebrants suggests almost all have a strong preference for Obitus over other suppliers.

4.4 All nearby crematoria now have similar systems provided either by Obitus or Wesley and there is expectation Portchester should also have a more up to date system. For example, the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) and the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) crematorium scorecards now mark down crematoria without good audio-visual provision.

5. Benefits of New Obitus 'Maestro' System

5.1 Obitus has developed a system named 'Maestro' which has been specifically developed with the unique operational requirements of chapels in mind. The system can either be operated from the main screen, or remotely via push-button or touch-screen controls. It is the latest and most advanced chapel management system on the market. This would make life much easier and less stressful for chapel staff, allowing them to concentrate on frontline services for families.

5.2 The system includes webcasting, slideshows, holding pictures and access to a vast library of music/hymns all at the touch of a button. The system also has the flexibility to use devices e.g. USB, CDs etc. which are currently used, but would guide funeral directors to use the new media system where possible.

5.3 The quality of the live video system for webcasting is very high and DVDs, Blu-rays and USBs can be created for services, even if ordered after the service has taken place. This is a service improvement for families.

5.4 As an optional upgrade, there would be the ability to relay the service video to where it is required – for example into the foyer as well as the chapel when there is a very large attendance; provision of external repeater displays; and mobile screens. This should give a better experience to mourners attending the funeral.

5.5 The Obitus media team edit photos, videos and music together to create a professional video tribute. This offers far higher quality options to families. Although Obitus offers this service (at a cost).

5.6 Orders for music, webcasting and/or photos requested by families would be sent by funeral directors direct to Obitus via their web site and this is then relayed to the Maestro system in our chapels. This saves time for funeral directors, chapel staff and office staff, as well as reducing the risk of issues with CDs & DVDs failing to play. Music requested by families and ordered by funeral directors through Obitus is free of charge; the cost of access to the music library being included within the monthly service fee.

5.7 Many funeral directors are already familiar with using this system at other local crematoria.

5.8 Revenue can be gained through the sale of copies of DVD's or USB webcasting and/or professional visual Tributes. A table setting out recommended fees is attached. Obitus also help us to promote these services with free soft marketing materials.

6. Summary of Equipment and Financial Implications

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| 1 | Installation of a 'Maestro' player in each chapel for music and visual tributes which would re-use our existing sound system and TV screens. This will include screen/mouse/keyboard and backup power supply, install and training - One-off fee £4,200. | £4,200 |
| 2 | HD webcasting system, 2 x webcast encoders, including camera, ambient microphone, cabling, install and training – £5,230 one-off fee, plus £45 per month software support and remote monitoring | £5,230 |
| 3 | Bigger visual tribute screens in both chapels, plus an overflow screen in the South Lobby and repeater screens in each AV room, including professional video distribution, data cabling, labour and accommodation - £12,190 one-off fee | £12,190 |
| 4 | Touch-screen controller for lecterns, including cabling and install - £2,960 one-off fee | £2,960 |
| 5 | Full new concert-quality 'Martin Audio' sound system for both chapels, including lobby and outdoor speakers for South chapel, amplifiers, CD player, microphones, digital audio processor and controller, new black metal racks, cabling, labour and accommodation | £16,554 |
| 6 | Ongoing service charge for music and tributes software, which includes provision of all music, access to the Obitus.com website, | |

online ordering for funeral directors, the ability for funeral directors to contact Obitus for support, the 'auto-build' feature where all the playlists selected on the website will automatically be put onto the Maestro in the chapel, all new software updates, remote monitoring and customer support – monthly fee £1,033

Summary of costs for items (1 - 5) one-off fee, excluding VAT £41,134

Recurring monthly cost (ex VAT) - £1,033

The one-off equipment costs can be met from funds set aside for the Repairs and Renewals Programme, with this scheme being added to the Programme for 2020/21.

The ongoing maintenance costs will be met by an increase to the maintenance budget as set out in the Revenue Budget 2020/21 report item to the December meeting of the Joint Committee.

7. Additional Equipment for Future Consideration

7.1 Set out below is a summary of additional equipment that can be purchased (subject to a site survey) to supplement and enhance the service provided by the Maestro system, which would be the subject of separate quotes and future consideration:

- (a) Linking chapel together for overflow
- (b) Remote control extenders

8. Conclusion

To be able to offer the best service to families and to remain competitive we should consider having this system installed. We now have greatly modernised public areas and chapels, but it is becoming obvious to see how far we are falling behind expected modern standards for audio-visual provision. For a relatively small cost, this system would provide a major service improvement to families, reduce the risk of issues, and save significant time for both crematorium and funeral director staff.

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Manager & Registrar

For further information contact Helen Jenkins, Deputy Manager & Registrar, who prepared this report

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

VH/HJ
10th March 2020