



**REPORT TO: PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –
MONDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**REPORT BY: CLERK TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE,
TREASURER TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE
and
THE MANAGER AND REGISTRAR**

**PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 RESPONSE &
REVISED BUDGET 2020/21**

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the response of Portchester Crematorium to the Coronavirus Covid-19 Pandemic; advise on the financial implications and present a revised budget for the current financial year.

2. Recommended (1) that the grateful thanks of the Joint Committee be placed on record for the action taken by staff in responding to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

(2) that the proposed revised budget account estimates, set out in Appendix A, be approved.

3. Background

3.1 A meeting of the Joint Committee was scheduled to take place on Monday 23 March 2020, but this had to be cancelled when it became clear by lunchtime that day that a quorum of members was unlikely to be present. During the preceding week strong concerns were being expressed nationally about the increasing spread of the virus and the impact this could have on all aspects of everyday life.

3.2 During the week of the 23 March parliament approved emergency legislation and the government introduced a raft of regulations, which have been subsequently extended and amended as appropriate. The Regulations were made in response to the serious and imminent threat to public health posed by the incidence and spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus.

4. Impact of Emergency Regulations on Crematoria

4.1 In accordance with the initial emergency legislation, limitations were placed upon the number of mourners at each service, and crematorium grounds were closed to visitors, except for funerals. Government advice was that mourners should be immediate family members.

4.2 The emergency regulations also changed procedures relating to death certification. This included removing the requirement for the second confirmatory medical certificate (Cremation Form 5) so we only receive one medical certificate (Cremation Form 4) from a doctor, and introducing the electronic transmission of documents.

5. How Portchester Crematorium has Responded

5.1 The Crematorium Manager has full delegated authority to act in respect of the operation and running of the Crematorium facilities. Leading up to and during the pandemic it was necessary for the Crematorium to prepare and subsequently respond to this national emergency in a variety of ways, as explained below, to ensure the safety of staff and mourners and those attending the crematorium. By their very nature some of these changes have necessitated the need to revise the previously approved budget, which is addressed in Section 7 of this report and Appendix A.

5.2 **Crematorium grounds** - On 26 March the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force. These included a provision that during the emergency period crematorium and burial grounds and buildings must be closed to members of the public, except for funerals or burials. As a result notices were displayed the following day at the crematorium entrance and within the grounds that the site was closed to the public, other than for those attending a funeral service. The gates were also locked outside of opening hours. The grounds were patrolled periodically by crematorium staff to ensure compliance.

5.3 Subsequently, the Government amended the regulations relating to access to crematoria and crematorium grounds and gardens, effective from 22 April. The effect of this change meant the grounds surrounding the crematorium and garden of remembrance were to be open for visiting. The book of remembrance room remained closed, although the books could be viewed from the windows on the outside, until it could be safely re-opened on 13th July 2020. A digital version of the Book of Remembrance is also available online on the web site.

5.4 **Limitation on Mourners** - The Regulations also meant that funeral services could only be attended by immediate family, in accordance with government advice, in order to maintain social distancing.

5.5 Towards the end of April, following various national media reports, the government advised that funeral services with physical attendance of mourners should continue as long as those attending adhere to social distancing and related guidance. As a result, it was decided at the Crematorium to issue the following information to funeral directors –

Alongside the Funeral Director, Chapel Attendant, and funeral staff only the following should attend:

- members of the person's household
- close family members
- or if the above are unable to attend, close friends – please note that this only applies if there is no one from the household or close family of the deceased able to attend
- attendance of a celebrant of choice, should the bereaved request this.

Taking into account the need for social distancing at 2 metre intervals, the funeral directors were also advised on the number of mourners that could be accommodated in each chapel, as follows –

South Chapel – The number of mourners has been restricted to a maximum of 15, seated no more than 2 people to a bench, unless they are from the same household, and only every other row of seating should be used.

North Chapel – The number of mourners has been restricted to a maximum of 10, seated no more than 2 people to a row of seats, unless they are from the same household. The seats in this chapel were reduced and distanced to accommodate this.

5.6 The guidance was again updated on 9th July 2020 and as a result the restrictions at Portchester Crematorium were updated to the following –

- Alongside the Funeral Director, Chapel Attendant, and funeral staff only a modest number of close family and friends of the deceased may attend.
- Activities such as singing, chanting, requiring raised voices or playing of instruments that are blown into are not permitted.

5.7 The number of mourner remained the same in the North Chapel due to the limited space available and the South Chapel maximum was increased from 15 to 20 mourners which is still within the capacity limits of the premises so that social distancing of 2 metres can be strictly adhered to.

5.8 The contact information of any applicant/lead mourner arranging a cremation service may now be shared with NHS Test and Trace. Along with a name, contact phone number and date of visit, which we already collect for ordinary business, we will be collecting information on the number of people at the service and arrival and departure time in our chapels.

5.9 It was emphasised that although a maximum had been given on the numbers attending and who can attend the guidance does state that action should be taken to restrict the number of mourners to be as low as possible to ensure protection for the mourners gathered, with a particular focus on protecting those that are vulnerable, and reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus.

5.10 Mourners were also asked to follow advice on social distancing when travelling to and from the funeral gathering and any mourner who was showing symptoms should not attend the funeral as they posed a risk to others.

5.11 From the 8 August government regulations required the wearing of a face covering including mourners attending a funeral, with further guidance for managing funerals being issued by the government on the 11 August. In line with guidance issued by the ICCM Portchester Crematorium will allow an officiant or reader to remove their face covering at the lectern in order to take the service or carry out the reading so that the mourners can hear clearly, and those that rely on it can lip read. In such circumstances the officiant or reader should ensure that other methods of controlling the spread of the coronavirus are in place, e.g. 2m distancing and good hand hygiene.

5.12 Waiting Rooms – The waiting rooms have been closed, and mourners advised, through funeral directors, to wait in their cars upon arrival to maintain social distancing.

5.13 Web Casting – Given the reduced number of mourners permitted to be at funerals web casting has been offered, at cost, to all bereaved families. This has provided the opportunity for friends and others not able to attend to witness the funeral service. 42% of families took up this offer during April and May, and 46% took up this offer during June, July and August.

5.14 Cleaning and Sanitisation – Between each service staff arrange cleaning and sanitisation of pews, chairs, doors and hard surfaces. We asked that all celebrants, ministers, clergy and officiants shorten the time of their service in order to allow time for the staff to clean the chapel within the 30 minutes. This was following guidance issued from the Government that we must ensure processes are in place to allow sufficient time to clean and disinfect the chapels between each service. Where services have been reduced it has meant there is sufficient time to undertake this task, without delaying the next service, but where services have overrun it has at times made this a difficult task.

5.15 Increase in Funeral Services – As expected the number of services has increased over similar periods last year, and we are now seeing a decrease over the last couple of months in July and August as follows –

	April	May	June	July	August
2019	275	282	239	262	256
2020	486	414	295	209	214

Services (including walk through funerals) have been taking place throughout the working day from 8.30am to 3.30pm.

There has been close liaison with funeral directors to ensure they are aware of the action being taken and the changes it has been necessary to introduce.

5.16 The Garden of Remembrance - Throughout this emergency the staff of Brighstone Landscapes, the grounds maintenance contractor, have continued to ensure the gardens remain as attractive as ever, observing social distancing working practices.

5.17 Garden Clearance Room – A fenced compound area in front of the garage adjacent to the main car park has been identified where crates, previously kept in a closed room, can be placed in an open area. This space has been set aside for people to collect their unauthorised memorial items that were removed during the March and August 2020 garden clearances. The area was opened on the 12 September, and will be open at weekends only between 9am and 4pm, to avoid cross over with people attending funeral services. The space is limited to two people at a time, to maintain social distancing rules. The small garden clearance room has had to remain closed as it could not be made safe to open coupled with people crossing with those attending services and the amount of cleaning required.

5.18 **Scattering of Ashes** – The scattering of ashes was discontinued from the outset of the emergency and remained suspended until the 21 July 2020. This was at a time when regulations about public gatherings changed. In accordance with the regulations and guidance to protect the public and staff attendance is limited to 6 persons including the officiant. At present appointments are available Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and up to 10 scatterings can be undertaken each day.

5.19 **Office and working environment** – The office has been closed since the 19th March to personal callers. All enquiries are dealt with by telephone and email with the exception of staff seeing visitors for witness scattering appointments only. It has been necessary to adjust slightly the office layout to facilitate social distancing between staff as part of working arrangements.

5.20 **Medical Referees** – It was necessary to appoint a new deputy medical referee due to one of our existing deputy medical referees being classed as clinically extremely vulnerable and having to shield for 12 weeks. Dr Jonathan Britt was appointed by the Ministry of Justice on 7th April 2020 which enabled us to maintain full cover of the medical referee's rota with no issue despite the extra demands placed on medical professionals during the pandemic.

6. **Pandemic Response & Local Resilience Forum**

6.1 In the week before the emergency legislation it became clear that the Pandemic Response Plan would be activated. The Crematorium Manager addressed the issues that would require attention to ensure the crematorium could meet the (unknown at that time) increase in funerals and changes in working practices introduced by government regulations and joint advice from the ICCM and the FBCA.

6.2 To build in resilience for the present crematorium administration, two of Fareham BC's administrative staff have been seconded to work in the office.

6.3 The present 4 technicians and one senior technician undertake a range of duties on a rota basis including cremating and acting as chapel attendants. We had one experienced technician retire in July and another leave in August to relocate to Wales so we have recently recruited two new technicians that are currently undergoing their training. We have also retained the retired technician as a casual and he has been working a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to cover the scattering appointments while we catch up with the backlog from temporarily suspending appointments.

7. **Financial Considerations**

7.1 In order to ensure adequate resources are available to meet operational demands two office support members of staff (1.6 FTE) were re-deployed to the crematorium from Fareham Borough Council. Modest expenditure has been incurred in the provision of reception screens to make this area COVID-19 secure to members of the public and staff alike, along with the purchase of personal protective equipment for staff involved in attending and cleaning other public areas.

7.2 There has been some additional plant and cremation expenditure, a proportion of which is attributable to immediately higher than usual cremation numbers, but also to ensure resilience of supply over the coming months.

7.3 The fact that funerals have remained open to mourners, although with social distanced restrictions on numbers, and an increased uptake of walk through funerals, our income has not been adversely affected and consequently is higher than we would have anticipated at this early point of the financial year and to date exceeds additional costs incurred.

8. Revised Budget 2020/21

8.1 The revised budget has been set to a break-even level. The budget variations are shown in the following table, and explained further below.

	Actuals 2019/20 £	Base Budget 2020/21 £	Revised Budget 2020/21 £	Variation £
EMPLOYEE RELATED EXPENDITURE	290,205	290,300	296,900	6,600
PREMISES RELATED EXPENDITURE	617,713	672,500	719,200	46,700
SUPPLIES AND SERVICES	249,972	246,600	282,100	35,500
CAPITAL CHARGES	363,302	305,800	305,800	-
SPECIAL EXPENDITURE	1,100,708	1,070,000	1,210,000	140,000
GROSS EXPENDITURE	<u>2,617,437</u>	<u>2,585,200</u>	<u>2,814,000</u>	<u>228,800</u>
GROSS INCOME	<u>2,621,900</u>	<u>2,585,200</u>	<u>2,814,000</u>	<u>-228,800</u>

8.2 Gross income is estimated to be higher than the original base budget as a direct consequence of the pandemic and higher cremation numbers experienced at its height during April and May. Estimated projections have been made for the remainder of the year, but it is hoped that we will not see similarly extremely high numbers through the autumn and winter.

8.3 Premises related expenditure has increased overall by £46,700; from £672,500 to £719,200 allowing for increased utility expenditure and cremator maintenance, along with the cost of the cleaning regime that has been implemented.

8.4 Supplies and services related expenditure has increased overall by £35,500; from £246,600 to £282,100. This is a reflection of the increased demand for web casting of services as mourner numbers have been restricted, and increased cremation numbers affecting the level of Medical Referee expenditure. The recharge from Fareham Borough Council has increased to re-imburse the cost of the additional resource they have provided for the first half of the financial year.

8.5 Within Special Expenditure the budget for payment to the constituent authorities has been increased by £140,000. To ensure that sufficient resources are in place to finance all anticipated capital works, an annual contribution is made out of revenue income to the Committee's Capital Works Fund. As at 1 April 2020 the

opening balance of this fund was £2,660,000. In order to replenish the Capital Works Fund to levels that will meet future demands of the crematorium a budget of £235,000 is maintained for 2020/21.

9. The Months Ahead and Conclusion

9.1 Based on guidance issued we have now moved from stage 1, where the crematorium was required to remain closed except for funerals, to stage 2. We have opened the Book of Remembrance room with restrictions in place on the number of visitors allowed in the room at any one time and with a one-way flow to enter and exit the room. We have reviewed the number of mourners allowed in chapels using revised risk assessments and have resumed witness scattering appointments with the number of attendees limited to comply with social distancing. We have also provided hand sanitisers for visitors to the reception and book room areas.

9.2 Following stage 2 we can look to move to stage 3 where we can reopen the office to the public, with screens installed in the reception area ensuring social distancing is maintained. We can also then allow the collection of ashes by the applicant.

9.3 At stage 4 normal service resumes when we can remove social distancing, and unlimited mourners are allowed to attend services.

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John Haskell
Clerk to the Joint Committee

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Andy Wannell
Treasurer to the
Joint Committee

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Victoria Hatton
Manager & Registrar

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

JH/me
September 2020

REVENUE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021

	Actual 2019/20 £	Base Estimate 2020/21 £	Revised Estimate 2020/21 £
EMPLOYEES			
SALARIES	215,441.77	217,100	217,100
SALARIES OVERTIME	2,988.41	3,500	5,000
NATIONAL INSURANCE	18,503.61	19,000	19,500
SUPERANNUATION	51,069.57	49,500	51,500
FIRST AID ALLOWANCE	192.00	200	200
STAFF TRAINING	0.00	1,000	1,000
STAFF ADVERTISING	1,510.00	0	2,000
RETIREMENT GIFT	500.00	0	600
TOTAL EMPLOYEES	290,205.36	290,300	296,900
PREMISES			
R & M OF BUILDINGS	8,195.27	13,700	13,700
REPAIRS AND RENEWALS	60,245.35	115,000	115,000
FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT	0.00	0	0
R & M OF FIXED PLANT	109,572.57	85,000	96,000
R&M OF GROUNDS	70,539.15	70,000	70,000
R&M OF GARDEN IMP.SCHEME	1,461.51	1,500	1,500
R&M OF PAVED AREAS	2,575.00	0	0
ELECTRICITY	50,413.74	48,000	53,000
GAS	85,059.07	105,600	120,600
RENTS - GENERAL PAYABLE	12,424.24	12,500	12,500
NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES	197,568.00	201,000	201,000
WATER CHARGES - SUPPLY (PWC)	1,070.10	2,000	2,000
SEWERAGE & ENV. CHARGES (SWS)	1,741.49	4,500	4,500
FIRE PRECAUTION APPLIANCES	2,705.46	700	700
CONTRACT CLEANING	4,142.50	4,500	20,200
CLEANING MATERIALS	796.82	400	400
TOILET REQUISITES	156.04	100	100
REMOVAL OF WREATHS	9,047.42	8,000	8,000
TOTAL PREMISES	617,713.73	672,500	719,200
SUPPLIES AND SERVICES			
FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT PURCHASE	13,998.90	5,000	5,000
	8.13	0	0
MATERIALS (OPERATIONAL)	26.26	100	100
	496.20	0	0
FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT MAINTENA	9,689.66	18,400	18,400
FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT SA	625.00	1,300	1,300
PROTECTIVE CLOTHING & UNIFORMS	1,022.65	1,600	1,600
LAUNDRY	12.08	100	100
BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS	333.20	400	400
EXTERNAL PRINTING	4,159.80	3,000	3,000
STATIONERY	3,329.66	1,500	1,500
BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE	18,077.53	15,000	15,000
MEMORIALS CARDS	4,827.14	5,000	5,000
CONSULTANTS FEES	479.00	1,500	1,500

ADMIN.EXPENSES - FAREHAM	19,026.21	24,000	30,000
ADMIN.EXPENSES - PORTSMOUTH	12,756.12	13,000	13,000
MEDICAL REFEREES FEES	59,382.00	57,000	62,000
ORGANISTS FEES	9,441.25	10,500	2,000
ENVIRONMENTAL LICENSE	772.00	800	800
PEST CONTROL	562.08	500	500
GRAPHIC DESIGN	0.00	500	500
POSTAGES	950.12	1,200	1,200
TELEPHONES	2,279.10	4,000	4,000
COMPUTER SOFTWARE	5,058.26	5,000	5,000
WEB CAST SERVICES	3,420.00	1,500	34,500
SUBSISTANCE EXP - EMPLOYEES	277.50	700	700
COURSES/CONFRENCES (EMPLOYEES)	0.00	1,000	1,000
GRANTS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS	1,484.00	2,500	2,500
MISC INSURANCES - PREMIUM	18,412.70	18,500	18,500
ADVERTISING	0.00	500	500
NON RECLAIMABLE VAT	57,365.04	50,000	50,000
BANK CHARGES	1,399.74	2,000	2,000
SPECIAL EXPENDITURE	299.70	500	500
TOTAL SUPPLIES AND SERVICES	249,971.03	246,600	282,100

CAPITAL FINANCING COSTS

DEPRECIATION	363,302.17	305,800	305,800
TOTAL CAPITAL FINANCING COSTS	363,302.17	305,800	305,800

SPECIAL EXPENDITURE

CONTRIBUTION TO CAPITAL FUND	335,000.00	235,000	235,000
PENSION INTEREST COSTS	61,000.00	75,000	75,000
CONTRIBUTION TO R & R FUND	60,245.35	100,000	100,000
PAY TO CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES	640,000.00	660,000	800,000
TOTAL SPECIAL EXPENDITURE	1,096,245.35	1,070,000	1,210,000

GROSS EXPENDITURE

2,617,437.64	2,585,200.00	2,814,000
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INCOME

CONTRIB.FROM GARDEN IMP.FUND	-1,477.51	-1,500	-1,500
CAMEO TMAC INCOME	-12,976.78	0	0
SALES	0.00	0	0
SALE OF MEMORIAL CARDS	-7,020.79	-7,000	-8,000
-	-	-	-
CREMATION FEES	2,015,880.00	-1,982,500	-2,207,500
BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE	-51,442.43	-55,000	-55,000
ORGANISTS FEES	-21,614.97	-30,700	-8,000
WEB BROADCASTING	-3,950.01	-2,000	-31,000
MISCELLANEOUS FEES & CHARGES	-9,743.00	-7,000	-7,000
INTEREST ON INVESTMENTS	-11,917.67	-3,500	0
BANK INVESTMENT ACCOUNT	-1,329.79	-200	-200
RETURN ON PENSION FUND ASS	-43,000.00	-50,000	-50,000
CAPITAL CHARGE - ASSET RENTS	-363,302.17	-305,800	-305,800
MOVEMENT ON PENSIONS RESERVE	-18,000.00	-25,000	-25,000
EXP.FINANCED FROM RESERVES	-60,245.35	-115,000	-115,000

GROSS INCOME

-	2,621,900.47	-2,585,200	-2,814,000
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NET EXPENDITURE

-4,462.83	0	0
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