

**REPORT TO: PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –  
16 JUNE 2014**

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

**PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –  
ANNUAL REPORT – 2013/14**

**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 2013/14 financial year.

**2. Recommended that this Annual Report for the 2013/14 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 2013/14 financial year was –

Councillor Peter Edgar (Gosport BC)  
Councillor Dennis Wright (Gosport BC)  
Councillor Hugh Mason (Portsmouth CC)                      Chairman  
Councillor Jason Fazackarley (Portsmouth CC)  
Councillor Dave Collins (Havant BC)  
Councillor Mike Fairhurst (Havant BC)  
Councillor Keith Evans (Fareham BC)  
Councillor Leslie Keeble (Fareham BC)                      Vice Chairman

The chair and vice-chairmanship rotates between authorities annually.

3.4 The Joint Committee met on 4 occasions during the 2013/14 financial year:

17 June 2013                      23 September 2013                      9 December 2013  
10 March 2014

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). 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 2013 - 2018**

5.1 The purpose of the Development Plan is to look at medium term developments in the period to 2018, and in the longer term beyond 2018, 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 2013.

#### **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 9 December 2013, approved a comprehensive Finance Strategy for 2014/15, 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 recognised that during 2013/14 the operating environment of Portchester Crematorium would significantly change with the opening of a private crematorium on the East Hampshire/Havant border.

The Joint Committee at its December 2013 meeting also approved the revenue budget for 2014/15 together with a revised capital works programme, and the repairs and renewals programme for 2013/14 & 2014/15. In approving the budget, the Joint Committee also set the levels of fees and charges operable from the 1 April 2014.

The Committee's actual revenue expenditure (for the financial year ending 31 March 2013) was reviewed and noted by the Joint Committee at its meeting on the 17 June 2013.

**(b) Annual Financial Return for 2012/13**

In June 2013 the Joint Committee approved and published its annual financial return 2012/13, which was then submitted to its external auditors.

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 2013, and Work Plan to 2017/18**

At the September 2013 meeting the Joint Committee was advised and noted that the internal audit, undertaken in accordance with the 2013/14 audit plan, had been completed and the recommendations agreed with officers.

Previously, at the meeting in June 2013, the Joint Committee received and approved a plan of internal audit work covering the period from 2013/14 to 2017/18.

**(d) Risk Management**

The Joint Committee introduced comprehensive risk management arrangements in a formalised way in 2006. This included the publication of a set of strategic and operational risk registers and adoption of an action plan to mitigate the higher risks. The registers and the action plan are periodically reviewed by the officers. In June 2013 (and in March 2014) the Joint Committee received a comprehensive report providing the opportunity for members to review the risk management framework that was in place. A Risk Management Strategic Framework and Policy, together with revised Strategic and Operational Risk Registers has been approved.

The Joint Committee in June 2013 also approved a set of financial regulations.

**(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. These included seeking the services of a design consultant to advise on chapel design and décor; provision of video screens in each chapel to enable personal tributes to be shown during services; video streaming of services through the internet; extending the length of some morning and afternoon timeslots; enabling all Books of Remembrance to be available for viewing on-line; and refreshing the Crematorium's web-site.

**(f) Mercury Abatement Project**

In September 2008 the Joint Committee approved a comprehensive report on the project for the installation of mercury abatement equipment on all cremators at the Crematorium. The decision to proceed was taken in the knowledge of a government requirement that the overall level of mercury emitted from crematoria, taken as a whole countrywide, should be reduced by 50% by the end of December 2012.

Following competitive tenders, Parker Torrington were appointed to act as the Joint Committee's professional consultants in respect of both the mercury abatement project and on-going maintenance. Facultatieve Technologies (FT) were appointed as the specialist abatement contractor, and Speltham Contractors to carry out building works to accommodate the new equipment.

By December 2012 all works were substantially complete, apart from a few outstanding matters. All 6 cremators had been operating since late summer 2012 with 100% mercury abatement, well ahead of programme.

The Crematoria Abatement of Mercury Emissions Organisation (CAMEO) has been established to operate a 'burden sharing' scheme whereby those crematoria that have carried out abatement would receive payments, financed by those crematoria that had decided not to abatement. It undertook a pilot trading process during 2013 with actual trading proposed to start from 2014 onwards.

As part of their licence to operate all crematoria are required to have in place 'burden sharing', either through CAMEO (of which Portchester is a member) or by private arrangement between individual crematoria.

**(g) Repairs and Renewals Programme**

An extensive programme of works was undertaken during the year, and this included –

- North Chapel – new curtains
- South Chapel – carpet replacement
- Internal redecoration – rolling programme
- Reception and office area refurbishment
- Treatment of north and west boundary fences
- Replacement compactor
- Replacement WC's in public toilets

- Upgrading North Chapel air conditioning unit
- Cremator furnace relining
- Analyser renewal to Cremators 1-6
- CCTV camera replacement and upgrading
- Garden of Contemplation seating improvements

**(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 3960 registered cremations.

**(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.

**(j) Provision of Contracted Services**

During the year the Joint Committee has considered reports in respect of various matters relating to contracted services.

**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. Much of the Joint Committee's work continues to be of a recurring but important nature.

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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 2014