



**REPORT TO: PORTCHESTER CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE –  
23 September 2024**

**REPORT BY: PROPERTY MANAGER, IAN COUSINS**

## **CREMATORIUM IMPROVEMENT WORKS**

### **1. Purpose**

1.1 To provide members with details of various works at Portchester Crematorium to improve facilities and services offered.

### **2. Background**

2.1 Over recent years The Joint Committee has made significant investment in the facilities at the Crematorium with works to improve the chapels, the waiting rooms, and the current major works to replace the cremators.

2.2 The market for cremation services in the United Kingdom has changed considerably in this period with the opening of numerous privately owned crematoriums and the increased popularity of direct cremations.

2.3 In the local market we have the now well-established Oaks Crematorium at Havant owned by the Southern Co-op. We have also seen the granting of planning permission in July 2023 to Mercia Crematoria Developments Ltd for a new crematorium at Lee-on-Solent.

2.4 We remain the busiest crematorium in the South-East Hampshire area due to the popularity of the site, the continued investment in our facilities and the commitment of the team employed at Portchester to deliver the best possible service.

2.5 To keep pace with public expectations we need to continue the investment in our site, facilities, and services to remain competitive in the local market for cremation services.

### **3. Improvement Plan**

3.1 Whilst we remain a popular site, the age of our building, location and planning restrictions limits the opportunities to develop outside existing facilities.

3.2 We therefore propose the following pieces of work that support and develop the existing facilities as well the development of the product and services offered.

3.3 For the built environment we develop our chapels to meet modern requirements, the majority works will focus on the South Chapel to align its facilities closer to those currently provided in our popular North Chapel.

3.4 Carry out significant works to the main toilet facilities to ensure they achieve a similar standard to a new crematorium.

3.5 We develop a revised scheme to provide a new Garden of Contemplation.

3.6 We improve our service offering and the provision of information.

### **4. Chapel Improvements**

4.1 A significant programme of works is proposed in the South Chapel which would build on the improvement made in the last successful refurbishment and further enhance the facilities offered in this chapel.

4.2 We will look to open up the space to provide greater flexibility and facilities that allow us to offer bariatric funeral services for the first time as a result of the significant investment in new cremators.

4.3 Bariatric funerals require direct level access for funeral directors and a key piece of work will provide a level surface for their equipment to successfully reach the catafalque and therefore we propose works to adjust floor levels to accommodate this change.

4.4 As a result of this we will remove the existing proscenium arch and curtain arrangement, with enhancements required to new wall finishes to part of the area and a new curtain arrangement.

4.5 To further allow flexibility in the use of the space the existing fixed seating will be removed and loose seating provided like that in the North Chapel.

4.6 The complete area will be redecorated, with adaptations to the lighting and new flooring to be provided throughout the chapel.

4.7 Within the North Chapel it is proposed that the existing catafalque will be replaced with one suitable to take a bariatric funerals service.

## **5. Toilet Improvements**

5.1 A significant upgrade to our North Chapel and Waiting Room toilets to provide an appearance that complements that delivered in the recently refurbished waiting room.

5.2 This will involve new wall and floor finishes but retain the existing layout to provide the maximum facilities possible in the space available acknowledging the high level of demand on these facilities at peak times.

5.3 The South Chapel Toilet will be redecorated whilst proposals for the former fountain area are developed.

## **6. New Garden Contemplation**

6.1 At the Joint Committee meeting on the 26 June 2023 (minute 996), members were advised on the results of a feasibility study into options to develop the existing fountain area in a new Garden of Contemplation. This included improved exit arrangements from the chapels and courtyard garden for the South Chapel.

6.2 The early costings showed the scheme at between £1.5m and £3m and with insufficient funds within the capital budget, whilst the cremator replacement programme is delivered, an alternative plan was approved to remove the fountain and replace with planting. These works have now been completed at a significantly reduced cost of £13,750.00 rather than the budgeted £75,000.00 due to efficiencies in the design and procurement process.

6.3 We now propose to develop a revised scheme to provide a new garden of contemplation in the former fountain area. This will include looking at making better use of the space, revisiting the scope of the feasibility study including the exit routes from the South and North Chapel, the garden area for the South Chapel and other building works.

6.4 It is planned that we engage an experience architect to develop our proposals and appoint specialists to allow the development of a proposal that can be brought forward for members consideration in 2025.

## **7. Services and Information**

7.1 It is proposed that we will review the service types currently provided and look to add new types of services such as the provision of bariatric services mentioned earlier above to ensure our offering remains relevant to a changing market for cremation services.

7.2 As we offer new services such as the bariatric and new memorial tree it is important that we inform the public and funeral directors what we offer at Portchester Crematorium. We propose to develop a colourful and informative brochure that details all the facilities provided, services offered, memorial offerings that are available to our local communities.

## **8. Programme**

8.1 Early investigations will be commenced this year with a plan to complete some items this financial year.

8.2 The majority of the items listed will be completed in either the 2025/2026 or the 2026/2027 financial year.

8.3 With the Cremator Replacement works due to continue to the autumn of 2025 careful planning and programming will be required to deliver both pieces of works simultaneously. Key issues will be allowing the works to be completed safely and limiting the impact on the public. Therefore, some elements of work may need to be deferred to 2026/2027 financial year.

## **9. Financial**

9.1 Initial costing suggests a budget of £362,000.00 should be allowed for delivery of all the works detailed above. These works would be funded by the previously agreed Site Improvements budget for both the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 financial years.

9.2 With the current underspend on the Renewals programme in the 2024/2025 financial year due to the impact of the cremator replacement works we will look to bring some items forward earlier where possible.

9.3 All costs are provisional at this stage, subject to survey and further investigations.

## **10. Conclusions**

10.1 The programme of works detailed allows us to continue the development of the built environment at Portchester Crematorium.

10.2 The programme allows for the development of our services and information to support the marketing of Portchester Crematorium in a competitive market.

10.3 It should be recorded that whilst these works are important the significant works to replace the cremators will take priority.

Ian Cousins  
**Property Manager**

September 2024

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