

## **MINUTES** **MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH**

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 2pm**  
**Webex Meeting**

### **Present:**

Cllr Pat Barden  
Cllr Audrey Buckley  
Cllr Declan Burgess  
Cllr Danny Collins  
Cllr John Coonan  
Cllr Pat Dunphy  
Cllr Pat Fitzgerald  
Cllr Michael Gleeson  
Cllr Pat Hayes  
Cllr Niall Kelleher  
Cllr Mike Kennelly  
Cllr Mary Linehan Foley

Cllr Eileen Lynch  
Cllr Michael McCarthy  
Cllr Susan McCarthy  
Cllr John McDonald  
Cllr Conor McGuinness  
Cllr Norma Moriarty  
Cllr Katie Murphy  
Cllr Brian O'Donoghue  
Cllr Ken O'Flynn  
Cllr Jody Power  
Cllr John Sheehan  
Cllr Mikey Sheehy  
Cllr James Tobin

### **Apologies:**

Cllr Mark Fitzgerald  
Cllr Sean O'Donovan

### **In Attendance:**

Dr Orla Healy, A/ Chief Operations Officer, South/South West Hospitals Group  
Mr Priscilla Lynch, Head of Service, Health and Wellbeing, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare  
Ms Derval Howley, Head of Service, Health and Wellbeing, South East Community Healthcare  
Members of the HSE South Forum Office staff

## **1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2021**

On the proposal of Cllr Michael Gleeson seconded by Cllr Pat Hayes, the Minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2021 were approved and adopted by the members.

## **2. Chairperson's correspondence**

## **3. Committees**

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

- (a)** South East Committee Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2021
- (b)** South West Committee Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2021

## **5. Notices of Motion**

(a) Cllr. Michael Gleeson moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That the HSE Forum South would inform if there is a HSE employed practicing Physiotherapist in the Killarney area to treat public clients and particularly Stroke victims some of whom have extreme difficulty accessing the service in Tralee because of distance and degree of disability."

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Gleeson thanked Mr Fitzgerald for this written reply. He highlighted a case of a constituent recovering from stroke and requires physiotherapy and is living 40 km from Tralee. Ms Priscilla Lynch in response advised that there are 4 Physiotherapists available in the Killarney Service. However at times depending on an individual's assessed need post stroke, it may be in their best interests to attend the specialist physiotherapy service located in Tralee. Ms Lynch advised that there are some transport supports available if the Cllr needs to make direct contact in their regard. A person may avail of the services in Killarney, if they are deemed suitable for same.

(b) Cllr Declan Burgess moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"With HIQA demanding that the new 60 bed residential unit be operational at Saint Patrick's Hospital, Cashel, by the end of 2021, and with time running out rapidly, this meeting be advised as to the progress to date, if any, and when a Planning application will be lodged?"

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Burgess acknowledged the written reply. Derval Howley outlined that with the pandemic, in consultation with the HIQA, residents had successfully transferred to Our Lady's building. She also stated that HSE Estates continue to be very focussed on priority Covid-19 upgrade works. The next step will be a cost benefit analysis. Cllr Burgess thanked Dr Howley and requested to be kept informed of any updates.

(c) Cllr Mikey Sheehy moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That this forum supports my call for the South/South West Group to initiate a system for tele-consultations where a central, identifiable, phone number is used by consultants and other medical staff when contacting patients."

A written response from Dr Orla Healy, Interim Chief Operations Officer, South/South West Hospital Group was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Sheehy stated that there are cases whereby Consultants are ringing patients from mobile numbers with no caller identification showing. This can frighten older people in particular who are wary of answering calls where the caller identification is withheld. It is not possible for the patient to try and return the call without a number to ring back. Cllr Sheehy appreciated the written reply and in particular that an identifiable number will be used by hospital Consultant staff.

Dr Orla Healy advised that as part of the emergency response to the pandemic, it has been necessary to decrease the footfall in our hospitals. There are electronic web-based platforms for telehealth being implemented such as "Attend Anywhere". Dr Healy also advised that as part of the hospital appointment system there are call and recall systems in place. With regard to the recall system, Cllr Sheehy advised that one patient managed to get in contact with the Consultant whilst another was discharged to the General Practitioner as opposed to being rescheduled. Dr Healy noted these concerns and advised that issues raised in Cllr Sheehy's correspondence will be taken on board and shared with the hospital.

(d) Cllr Eileen Lynch moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"That an update be received on Capital Works underway in Mallow General Hospital."

A written response from Dr Gerard O'Callaghan, CEO, CUH Group was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Lynch thanked Management for this comprehensive reply. She had further queries in relation to the top two floors (inpatient and rehabilitation) coming on stream at the same time and an update on the appointment of Contract Administrator/Project Manager. Dr Healy responded advised that it would be unlikely that rehabilitation would be available at the same time as inpatient beds. It is understood that a Business Case is currently being developed in this regard. Dr Healy confirmed that HSE Estates have engaged a Contract Administrator/Project Manager to oversee the build. Preparatory groundworks are ongoing onsite at present. Ms Lynch indicated that she would revert with update on Contractor when available.

(d) Cllr Mike Kennelly moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That the HSE give members an update on the return of the out of Hours Medical centre run by South Doc in Listowel."

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Kennelly outlined his frustration with this matter as there seems to be no real update at this time. He noted that the reply advised of an anticipated meeting with Southdoc on

30<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Cllr Kennelly stated that the Out of Hours GP Service in Listowel is closed at this time and this is a serious issue for the people of Listowel and North Kerry. At this time, the lowest number of Covid cases is in Kerry – so the pandemic cannot be used as a reason for continued closure. Cllr Kennelly stated that he is seeking a decision on this matter as he has been continuously pushing for a re-opening of the service which has not happened to date. Ms Priscilla Lynch advised that the HSE are seeking to follow due process and have written to Southdoc in relation to service resumption and a meeting is scheduled for 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Ms Lynch stated that she would arrange for the HSE to revert to Cllr Kennelly following this meeting. Ms Lynch also indicated to Members that there are other mechanisms available if anyone needs to access out of hours emergency services.

## **6. Questions**

(a) Cllr. Michael Gleeson put forward the following question:

"In view of the isolation and prolonged loneliness that so many of our relatives and neighbours have endured for almost the past twelve months in Nursing Homes - public and private - that the Government, HSE and Local Authorities would formulate new and vibrant housing policies for the elderly whereby people would be enabled to live with reasonable freedom and independence in a collective setting of appropriate sized group housing and with appropriate supports. It is wholly unconscionable that the existing system would be accepted as the norm into the future."

Cllr Gleeson stated that he was aware that Public Housing is not the direct remit of Health. However the welfare of older people is a concern for the HSE and particularly during this pandemic, where for instance many living in nursing homes have been isolated from their families and endured significant loneliness. It is incumbent on government, Local Authorities, HSE to respect older people who are entitled to live in communities rather than nursing homes. Cllr Gleeson cited as an example the positive example Cluid Housing in Killarney which affords people the opportunity to live with dignity and privacy.

In addition Ms Lynch advised Members that she was pleased to note in line with national guidance visits to nursing homes will recommence. In addition the HSE including Health & Well-being are involved in ongoing work to support well-being in older age through different initiatives and approaches such as Community Call, working with Local Authorities and voluntary agencies and the roll-out of HSE Living Well Self-Management Support Programmes.

Derval Howley advised Members of the work of the Positive Ageing Group, the Older People's Council and the ongoing work with ALONE. Dr Howley also referenced work in relation to Enhancing Digital Accessibility for Older People.

A discussion was held among the members and the following was decided to write to the Department of Housing and Planning on this issue of concern. Members fully supported Cllr Gleeson on this important issue. It was also agreed to invite a representative from ALONE to present an update on their services to the RHF South.

(b) Cllr. Declan Burgess put forward the following question:

"Jigsaw the Youth Mental Health Centre delivery has been delayed yet again. Can management please give an update into the commencement of the Jigsaw project in Tipperary?"

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Burgess thanked Management for the very detailed written reply and welcome that the location had been signed off along with ongoing recruitment. Dr Derval Howley advised that the Jigsaw have advised that there will be consultation with young people themselves on how they envision what any outreach service will like in terms of meeting their needs. With regard to outreach Cllr Burgess mentioned the consultation with Irish Second Level Student Unions would be beneficial. It was agreed that Dr Howley would arrange to revert further to Cllr Burgess with any further Jigsaw update on recruitment and outreach when available.

(c) Cllr. Norma Moriarty put forward the following question:

“Can we have an update on the timelines for the Cahersiveen Primary Care Centre and a description of the services that will be operating from there when opened?”

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Moriarty thanked Management for the reply and asked for clarification on whether this project is on point 4 of an 11 point action plan and on the intended opening dates. Cllr Moriarty advised Members that there is considerable work ongoing in the Cahersiveen area at present which is very positive in terms of rural regeneration. There are significant opportunities for the HSE and Local Authority to link together on the location of services and other related matters. In this regard Cllr Moriarty will provide the HSE with details of the relevant Local Authority contact person.

(d) Cllr Mikey Sheehy put forward the following Question:

“What are the short, medium and long term plans for the oncology unit and cancer services in Kerry considering the current proposed move of the service to the Bons Hospital in Tralee.”

A written response from Mr Fearghal Grimes, General Manger, University Hospital Kerry was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Sheehy acknowledged the written response from Mr Grimes. Whilst Cllr Sheehy welcomed the proactive work undertaken by HSE Management in University Hospital Kerry who ensured that a vulnerable cohort of chemotherapy day patients were safely relocated as part of the emergency response to the ongoing pandemic, he did not think it appropriate to relocate to a palliative care unit. Cllr Sheehy sought clarity on the following:

- Was it solely the Chemotherapy Day Services (Infusion Unit) that relocated or did this move include the Consultants and Oncology Nurses too?
- Where will Oncology Consultations take place?
- Where will scans/biopsies take place?
- Where will patient files be stored and how will they be accessed?
- Will a proposal for a new unit be included as part of a capital approval submission?

Dr Orla Healy responded to these questions and advised that from the outset a decision needed to be quickly made to safely accommodate these services (primarily infusions) on an interim basis at short notice with the onset of the pandemic. There has been significant work to date on a submission to build a dedicated facility on the UHK footprint. Dr Healy advised that Diagnostic Services will largely remain in UHK. A project team has been established to oversee logistical arrangements including files/patient charts and will take

account of GDPR requirements. There have been patients transferring between hospitals over the course of the pandemic and sufficient clinical information follows with transfers. The Project Team will also work through issues such as location of outpatient consultations.

(e) Cllr Pat Fitzgerald put forward the following question:

In regard to cancer survivors; are HSE medical professionals analysing the various vaccine trials data with a view to determine which vaccine may or may not be suited to their particular medical condition.”

A written response from Dr Carmel Mullaney, Director of Public Health, South East was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Fitzgerald acknowledged the written reply. He had submitted the question following contact from a constituent who was a cancer survivor and was concerned whether the vaccine had been tested on cancer survivors was there ongoing research to determine which vaccine is best for particular groups/individuals. The HSE is acutely aware of the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented for cancer patients, and their families/carers. The pandemic has caused a great deal of stress and anxiety for people living with cancer. With regard to vaccination, it is acknowledged that there are individual concerns particularly amongst vulnerable groups.

Cllr Fitzgerald stated that cancer survivors including those members of Cancer Support Groups such as Solas have concerns in relation to vaccine type and where can they go for advice and assistance.

Dr Orla Healy advised that Oncology Medical Community is well versed on the vaccine. In general, patients with cancer diagnosis will be advised to avail of the COVID-19 vaccine when it is offered to them, unless they are advised otherwise by their hospital medical team.

7. Date and Time of next meeting – 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021, at 2pm.