

REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM

Chairperson,
Cllr. Bobby O'Connell

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MINUTES - MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH

Thursday 17th May 2018 at 2pm
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, COUNTY HALL, CORK

Present:

Cllr. John Buttimer
Cllr. John Carey
Cllr. Timmy Collins
Cllr. Henry Cremin
Cllr. John Joe Culloty
Cllr. Davy Daniels
Cllr. Michael Doyle
Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald
Cllr. Denis Foley
Cllr. Breda Gardner
Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro
Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan
Cllr. Willie Kavanagh
Cllr. Mary Linehan Foley

Cllr. Michael McCarthy
Cllr. Susan McCarthy
Cllr. Arthur McDonald
Cllr. Louise McLoughlin
Cllr. Bernard Moynihan
Cllr. Jason Murphy
Cllr. Ray Murphy
Cllr. Bobby O'Connell
Cllr. Aaron O'Sullivan
Cllr. Seanie Power
Cllr. Damian Quigg
Cllr. Mary Shields
Cllr. Joe Sullivan
Cllr. Tom Wood

Apologies:

Cllr. Deirdre Forde

In Attendance:

Dr Ger O' Callaghan, Chief Operations Officer, South/South West Hospitals Group
Mr Ger Reaney, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare
Ms Liz Kinsella Head of Mental Health, South East Community Healthcare
Members of the HSE South Forum Office staff

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday 22nd March 2018

On the proposal of Cllr. Davy Daniels, seconded by Cllr. Timmy Collins, the Minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, March 22nd, 2018 were approved and adopted by the members.

2. Chairperson's correspondence

Members were requested to switch off their mobile phones.

3. Committees

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

(a) South East Committee Meeting 16th October 2018 in Kilkenny

(a) South West Committee Meeting 18th October 2018 in Tralee

Details were noted by the members.

4. Adoption of the Annual Report

On the proposal of Cllr. Denis Foley, seconded by Cllr. Joe Sullivan, the members adopted the Regional Health Forum South, Annual Report 2017.

5. Notices of Motion

(a) Cllr. Damian Quigg moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

Deferred from March 2018 Meeting

"That this Forum support my call, for Minister Simon Harris to address the process around the elected members of the Regional Health Forums function within the Forum, and the need for reserved functions to be given to the elected members so as to ensure that there is a greater and more efficient level of accountability within the HSE the Status Quo simply isn't working and requires an immediate review."

A written response, dated 16th May 2019, from Minister Simon Harris, was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Quigg noted that the Taoiseach had been emphasising the need for greater accountability in recent days and felt that consistent with his own view, a new model of health service provision is now required. Dr. Ger O' Callaghan advised that he had been in contact with the Minister's diary secretary and that efforts are being made to meet a deputation from the HSE South Forum, in the near future.

(b) Cllr. Mary Lenihan-Foley moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"To ask the HSE South to provide an update on the HSE's approach to providing adequate GP services for the Youghal area in light of the fact that one of its GPs is due to retire"

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

Cllr. Linehan-Foley expressed her disappointment that there hasn't been a resolution, despite two HSE recruitment campaigns. Mr Reaney advised that arrangements are being made for the 374 GMS patients to have access to a GP, which is the immediate concern. Cllr. Linehan-Foley acknowledged that the Cork Kerry Community Healthcare team has

communicated extensively with patients, the IMO, the Primary Care Reimbursement scheme and the other GPs in the area.

(c) Cllr. Brendan Cronin moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"To ask for a report on the number of referrals dealt with by the Kerry Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service since January 2016, how many urgent referrals were dealt with in that period and specifically regarding the presentation of an urgent referral at weekends/bank holidays, is there a CAMHS service available?"

A written response from Mr Ger Reaney was circulated to members and noted.

(d) Cllr. Tom Wood moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"With Saint Patrick's Hospital, Cashel and its Rehabilitation Unit having to "temporarily suspend admissions" as and from the 24th April due to the failure of the HSE to fill the Medical Officer Post vacated last June and to secure a continuation of services provided by the Consultant Geriatrician, this Forum calls on the HSE to explain, 1. Why no applicant qualified for the post? 2. Why communications with General Practitioners in South Tipperary, Retired GPs, and liaison with Recruitment Agencies to fill that Post, all failed?"

AND No 6 (b)

"Why should concerned staff, patients and the general public not contend that the crisis at Saint Patrick's Hospital, Cashel due to insufficient clinical cover will not result in the closure of the acclaimed Rehabilitation Unit and the downgrading of other services?"

A written response from Mr Aileen Colley, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Wood highlighted the prevailing uncertainty for the future of the service, since the retirement of the Medical Officer. He acknowledged that the HSE had advertised the post on three occasions but failed to secure an appointment. Ms. Liz Kinsella, Head of Mental Health advised that filling similar posts is difficult nationally, but that the only short term solution is to fill it on an agency basis, with effect from June 5th next. Ms. Kinsella confirmed that there are no plans to remove the Rehabilitation Unit from Cashel and that the eventual replacement for St. Patrick's Hospital will also be based in the town.

(e) Cllr. John Joe Culloty moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"As it has become increasingly difficult to replace retiring GPs in many parts of the country, and particularly in rural areas, I ask the HSE when it plans to reverse the FEMPI cuts, which would make it more attractive for GPs to take up these posts."

A written response from Mr Ger Reaney was circulated to members and noted. Mr Reaney clarified the Government multi annual policy, which allows longer term planning and practice development. He also advised on diagnostic support services being provided to some GP practices, by established Primary Care Centres.

(f) Cllr. Breda Gardner moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"That the Regional Health Forum South via the Chair writes to Minister Jim Daly to request that the HSE South under the Mental Health Act ask Drs to check patients for drug intoxication on admission and throughout their hospitalization. If found positive! Are

there policies in place to ensure that these policies are enacted to safe guard the hospital staff?"

A written response from Mr Ger Reaney and Ms Aileen Colley was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Gardner clarified why she had raised the issue at the SE Committee meeting in April and explained why it had subsequently been withdrawn. Ms. Kinsella had asked for details then to follow up and having advised that there are unit protocols in place, she confirmed her availability to meet anyone who still has concerns.

6. Questions

(a) Cllr. Brendan Cronin put forward the following question:

"To clarify when a person with a medical card visits a GP what is the normal rate paid by the HSE to the GP to cover that particular visit."

A written response from Mr Ger Reaney was circulated to members and noted.

(c) Cllr. John Joe Culloty put forward the following question:

"Has any progress been made regarding the disposal of land, in and around the St. Finan's Campus, in Killarney?"

A written response from Mr Ger Reaney and from Mr. Pat McCarthy, Assistant National Director, Estates, HSE South was circulated to members and noted.

(d) Cllr. Breda Gardner put forward the following questions regarding the Cervical Cancer Screening Service:

- "1. Several patients complained, while they eventually got through on the helpline, they got no answers. When can they expect answers? What is the point of a helpline which does not give answers?
2. How many tests were sent to US Company over what period?
3. Are we still sending tests to the company?
4. Have all tests been sent been reread and if not why not?
5. How many women in the South East (Kilkenny, Carlow, Tipperary Wexford and Waterford) are effected?
6. How does the HSE propose to correct this scandal?"

This item was taken first in the day's order of business, on the suggestion of the Chairperson, Cllr. Bobby O' Connell, and by agreement with the members.

A written response from National Cancer Screening Service was circulated to members and noted. A Cervical Check Audit Daily report, dated May 5th was also circulated. Prior to the discussion, Dr. Ger O Callaghan reiterated what the Interim HSE Director General, Mr. John Connaghan, has said recently and apologised for the failings in the Cervical Cancer Screening Service. He noted that many people would have been affected by the issue. Mr. Ger Reaney concurred and offered his apologies, noting that confidence in the service had been undermined. He listed the support arrangements which have been approved and implemented for the original 209 patients, whose smears had been mis-read and/or their spouses, partners and families.

Mr. Reaney and Ms. Liz Kinsella advised on the secondment of respective health professionals to liaison posts in the South West and South East, who will be working with the affected patients or their partners and early appointments are being arranged. At the request of Cllr. Gardner, a minute's silence was observed in memory of the eighteen women, who have already died.

Cllr. Breda Gardner insisted that the patient's GP should be the bearer of such news in all cases. She pointed out that 95% of detected cases are curable and that the HSE should be highlighting the three symptoms to watch for and advising a return to the GP. She was dismayed that the HSE had not reported to the Dept of Health, when the critical situation arose.

Cllr. Damian Quigg felt that all tests done across the country should be reviewed as soon as possible. He was critical of the outsourcing practice and wondered how quickly a person can access their medical records, when required. He felt that this experience confirmed that the HSE should be abolished.

Cllr. John Buttmer acknowledged the courage and bravery of the affected women and he noted that the national investigation will identify how the systems' failure occurred. He felt it would now be timely for HSE systems to be reviewed, including communications, procedures, decision making, sharing of information and disclosure and to learn what allowed this situation to occur. He felt that patient involvement in reviews/investigations/tribunals should be considered.

Cllr. John Joe Culloty gave credit to the many good people working in the HSE, but insisted that incompetence allowed this disaster to happen. He called for a thorough review of how the HSE transacts its patient centred business.

In response, Dr. Ger O' Callaghan confirmed that the initial telephone help line problems had been resolved. He made it clear that his awareness of the problem was no earlier than that of the members and general public and that the South/South West Hospital Group has a long established policy of open disclosure.

Concluding the discussion, Mr. Reaney confirmed that that every effort will be made to contact all patients in the catchment area by Friday afternoon, May 18th, and advised of the availability of support services.

7. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 21st June 2018, at 2pm in Council Chambers, County Hall, Cork.

The Chairman asked members to note the foregoing arrangements.