

REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM

Chairperson,
Cllr. Joe Sullivan

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MINUTES - MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH

Thursday 4th May 2017 at 2pm
Council Chamber, County Hall, Cork County Council

Present:

Cllr. John Buttimer
Cllr. John Carey
Cllr. Timmy Collins
Cllr. Henry Cremin
Cllr. Brendan Cronin
Cllr. John Joe Culloty
Cllr. Davy Daniels
Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald
Cllr. John Francis Flynn
Cllr. Denis Foley
Cllr. Breda Gardner
Cllr. Imelda Goldsboro
Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan
Cllr. Willie Kavanagh
Cllr. George Lawlor
Cllr. Mary Linehan Foley

Cllr. Joe Malone
Cllr. Michael McCarthy
Cllr. Rachel McCarthy
Cllr. Arthur McDonald
Cllr. Louise McLoughlin
Cllr. Jason Murphy
Cllr. Ray Murphy
Cllr. Bobby O'Connell
Cllr. Aaron O'Sullivan
Cllr. Seanie Power
Cllr. Damian Quigg
Cllr. Willie Quinn
Cllr. John Sheehan
Cllr. Mary Shields
Cllr. Joe Sullivan **Chairperson**
Cllr. Tom Wood

Apologies:

Mr Frank Staples

In Attendance:

Dr Ger O'Callaghan, Chief Operations Officer, South/South West Hospitals Group
Ms. Gabrielle O'Keeffe, Head of Social Care, Community Healthcare Organisation – Area 4
Ms. Anna Marie Lanigan, Head of Primary Care, Community Healthcare Organisation – Area 5
Members of the HSE South Forum Office staff

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday 23rd March 2017

On the proposal of Cllr. Bobby O'Connell, seconded by Cllr. Denis Foley, the Minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, March 23rd 2017 were approved and adopted by the members.

2. Chairperson's correspondence

The Chairperson welcomed all members and HSE managers and asked that mobile phones be turned off.

The Annual Report of the Regional Health Forum South 2016 was adopted by members on the proposal of Cllr. Mary Shields and seconded by Cllr. Mary Linehan-Foley.

The Chairperson advised the members that a letter had been sent asking the Minister for Health to meet with Members of the Forum to discuss waiting lists but no reply has been received to date. It was agreed that a reminder would be issued.

3. Committee Meetings:

(b) Report of the South West Committee Meeting on 13th April 2017 in Bantry General Hospital was taken as read.

And the following Motion was agreed arising from the South West Committee Meeting:

"That the South West Committee recommends that the Regional Health Forum South members would support the Management and staff of Bantry General Hospital in their request to seek funding of €4m for a proposed new build involving the upgrading of the Endoscopy Unit and the building of a new 10 bedded Unit that will allow a reorganisation of Rehabilitation facilities in the hospital. That the members would create awareness and advocate for the proposal."

Cllr. Rachel McCarthy formally proposed its acceptance and it was agreed unanimously.

(a) Report of the South East Committee held on 11th April 2017 in Kilkenny will be considered at the June 2017 meeting.

4. Notice of Motions

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

"How many people in county Kerry are waiting to be provided home help and can the HSE give a breakdown of what it costs to provide home help to a person for half an hour a day for a twelve months period."

A written response from Mr Ger Reaney, Chief Officer, CHO Area 4 was circulated to members and noted.

In response Cllr. Cronin welcomed the news that there is currently no waiting list for the Home Care Services in Kerry but noted that there are some delays in getting the service approved. He felt that the cost of providing the service is money exceptionally well spent when compared to the cost of private nursing home care.

Ms. O'Keeffe explained that the process of matching applicants to available personnel is a daily task but that generally it works well with approximately 6,500 people availing of Home Supports across Cork and Kerry.

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

"As the excessive consumption of alcohol in this country is responsible for negative health, economic and social consequences, I call on the HSE to carry out a vigorous education and awareness campaign, highlighting the many dangers associated with alcohol abuse."

A written response from Ms Sandra Coughlin, Interim Manager, Health and Wellbeing Division, was circulated to the members.

In reply Cllr. Culloty highlighted the damage caused by excessive alcohol consumption with the increasing levels a worrying trend. He highlighted the difficulties caused for hospitals and insisted that the problem needs to be tackled by more extensive advertising particularly on Radio and Television.

Support for the Motion came from Cllr. Gardner who said advertising of alcohol should be banned and that the HSE should be working to raise awareness of the problems excessive drinking causes.

Cllr. Cremin felt that the increasing number of Off Licences now trading along with low cost selling by major stores meant that more people are drinking at home. His opinion is that the HSE should work with the Department of the Environment to ensure that Town Development Plans control the establishment of off licence sales outlets.

Cllr. Collins highlighted the problem of underage drinking especially in night clubs which are open late and see large quantities of alcohol consumed by a younger cohort of the population.

Cllr. Shields suggested that education is the key to addressing the problem with a more vigorous programme to be introduced at primary and post primary schools.

Cllr. Malone explained that alcohol is easily attainable. Addiction Treatment Centres are very busy as a result but the drinks industry is a very powerful lobby group.

(c) Cllr John Buttimer moved the following motion standing in his name:

"That the HSE would outline the current provision of Child and Adolescent mental health services in Cork City and County, including the;

- size, composition and location of teams,
- number of children and families accessing these services on an annual basis for 2014, 2015 and 2016,

- reasons for referral,
- waiting lists for these teams (number, and length of time),
- number and location of acute and emergency residential or respite beds available and their use,
- provision of emergency cover in Emergency Departments,
- number and designation of staff required to provide a safe 24 hour service in Cork City and County,
- plan to address any identified deficits or lack of provision.”

A written response from Mr Ger Reaney, Chief Officer, CHO Area 4 was circulated to members and noted.

In response Cllr. Buttimer expressed thanks for Mr. Reaney’s comprehensive answer and acknowledged the details provided.

He noted the various media reports about service shortfalls with many full time vacancies unfilled along with some shorter absences. He insisted that the out of hours service is a priority and that families should be made aware of how to access services.

Cllr. Buttimer also asked for confirmation that no child would be put in an adult ward.

In reply Ms. O’Keeffe acknowledged that the biggest staffing deficit is in the medical area despite HSE efforts to recruit abroad. The real problem is the shortage of suitably qualified applicants for Consultant posts but efforts to recruit will continue. It is hoped that the July 2017 intake of NCHDs will help to restore the ED rota.

Cllr. Buttimer asked if a further report could be provided detailing HSE recruitment strategies particularly in respect of Consultant and NCHD posts along with all supports at Emergency Departments.

Clear information has been given to EDs about contacting CAMHS services when patients present there. Ms. O’Keeffe confirmed that HSE policy is not to admit children to adult wards.

Cllr. Lawlor noted that there have been exceptions to the policy in the Wexford area and Ms. Lanigan asked for details, so the issue may be referred to the Mental Health service in CHO 5 for attention.

Support for Cllr. Buttimer came from Cllr. McDonald who raised the Carlow/Kilkenny respite service interim arrangements. Ms. Anna Marie Lanigan asked for details of a specific Mental Health case, for referral to the Head of Service in CHO 5 for attention and response to Cllr. McDonald.

Cllr. Sheehan also supported Cllr. Buttimer’s motion and suggested that if there is a shortage of medical personnel crisis nurses might be employed to provide an assessment service.

Concluding the discussion Ms. O’Keeffe undertook to bring the idea back to CHO 4 and she noted that CAMHS is provided by a multidisciplinary team and although the team will try to cover absences, this is not always feasible.

(d) Cllr. John Sheehan moved the following motion standing in his name:

"That the HSE would consult at an early stage in the process with all stakeholders (patients, staff existing services and wider community etc.) with regard to a proposed New Hospital in Cork City."

Also Q5(d)

Cllr. John Sheehan put forward the following question:

"Can the HSE outline what plans or discussions if any have taken place with regard to a proposed new hospital in Cork City (Glanmire, Docklands, Curraheen etc.) In particular have any discussions taken place with UCC with regard to possible locations in Curraheen? Can the HSE confirm whether they consider St. Marys Health Campus a suitable site for a new Acute General Hospital?"

A written response from Dr. Ger O'Callaghan, Chief Operations Officer, South/South West Hospital Group, was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Sheehan thanked Dr. O'Callaghan for his response but observed that the discussion about a location for the new hospital has been ongoing across the board and it needs to be resolved at an early stage. He urged the HSE to engage early with all interested parties on inter alia the issues of location, services to be provided and ownership. There are many issues to consider and it will be a challenge to bring all representative groups together.

Cllr. Buttimer noted that Forum members had not yet been asked for an input and the SSWHG needs to engage with the members at an early stage.

In response Dr. O'Callaghan advised that his response represented the current position. No decisions had been made regarding the location of any proposed new hospital. He assured the members that no decisions would be made without involving the Forum in the discussions.

5. Questions

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

"Are many people awaiting audiology assessment in Kerry, and what is the waiting time?"

A written response from Mr Ger Reaney, Chief Officer, CHO Area 4 was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Cronin noted that the 732 people awaiting assessment is a substantial figure but he welcomed the recent appointment of an additional Audiologist in Kerry to address Adult and Childrens waiting lists.

In response, Ms. O'Keefe advised that some adults have been offered appointments in Cork if it suited them to attend there and she will request that Cllr.

Cronin be advised of the breakdown between urgent and routine cases, on the current waiting list.

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

“As Deer Lodge was completed almost six months ago, at a cost of €13million, I again ask, when will this state of the art facility be open to the many people who would benefit greatly from the services which will be provided in a modern, tranquil environment? And also, please explain the reason for the delay?”

A written response from Mr Ger Reaney, Chief Officer, CHO Area 4 was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Culloty expressed his disappointment that the wonderful faculty that is Deer Lodge remains unopened. It is regrettable that the PNA would not agree to proposed staffing levels. He expressed the hope that the Labour Court hearing on May 19th next will lead to progress.

Ms. O’Keeffe confirmed that opening Deer Lodge is a CHO 4 priority and efforts will continue to have it operational at the earliest possible date.

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

“To ask the HSE for an update on the provision of a helicopter landing pad at CUH?”

A written response from Dr Ger O’Callaghan was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Buttimer noted Dr. O’Callaghan’s report and emphasised the value of the helicopter landing Pad at CUH. He requested that a date would be provided indicating when the helicopter pad would be in place.

Dr. O’Callaghan replied that at this time he was not in a position to give a definitive date but that a Design Team has been appointed and that discussions were ongoing with the Irish Aviation Authority.

6. Urgent issues

At the Chairperson’s discretion two items were raised for discussion.

(A) Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald raised the closure of the Sacred Heath Unit in Dungarvan Community Hospital which had been announced last weekend due to a shortage of staff. He asked for clarification of the HSE’s intentions.

Cllr. Davy Daniels expressed disappointment that local Forum members had not been advised of the closure or the circumstances relating to it.

In response Ms. Anna Marie Lanigan advised that the closure is a temporary measure related to staff shortages. Efforts are ongoing to recruit the necessary staff. Ms. Lanigan assured Cllr. Fitzgerald that she would get a

Senior CHO 5 official to provide a detailed reply to his query about the process of staff recruitment and the intended reopening date for the unit.

(B) Cllr. Tom Wood asked about the closure of St. Michael's Ward in St. Patrick's Hospital, Cashel and why it was necessary, he sought a guarantee that jobs will be retained and a commitment that the new development announced last year to meet HIQA standards by 2017 will be built in Cashel within the timeframe.

Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan supported Cllr. Wood in his request for information.

A written reply from Ms. Aileen Colley, Chief Officer CHO 5 was provided in response to the queries.

Ms. Anna Marie Lanigan (Deputising for Ms. Colley) confirmed that it is a temporary measure for safety reasons and that St. Patrick's Hospital is not closing. The main problems which have necessitated this decision are that the recruitment of nursing staff is an issue and there are structural deficiencies at St. Michael's ward which have raised HIQA concerns.

This action will amalgamate wards and reduce the number of staff required to provide a safe service, pending an increase in the nursing numbers.

In conclusion Ms. Lanigan will have details of where the funded 100 beds will be based, made available to Cllr. Wood, and she will also arrange for a CHO 5 official to meet the Tipperary HSE South Forum members to discuss the issue in more detail. The HSE Management will meet patients, families, staff and public representations on an ongoing basis where service issues may require discussion and clarification.

7. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 15th June 2017 at 2pm in Council Chambers, County Hall, Cork.

The Chairman asked members to note the foregoing arrangements.