

**MINUTES
MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH**

**Thursday 21st November 2019 at 2pm
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, COUNTY HALL, CORK**

Present:

Cllr Pat Barden
Cllr Audrey Buckley
Cllr Peter Cleere
Cllr Danny Collins
Cllr John Coonan
Cllr Davy Daniels
Cllr Pat Dunphy
Cllr Pat Fitzgerald
Cllr Michael Gleeson
Cllr Pat Hayes
Cllr Willie Kavanagh
Cllr Niall Kelleher
Cllr Roger Kennedy
Cllr Donal Kenny
Cllr Mike Kennelly

Cllr Michael McCarthy
Cllr Arthur McDonald
Cllr John McDonald
Cllr Conor McGuinness
Cllr Norma Moriarty
Cllr Gearóid Murphy
Cllr Sean O'Donovan
Cllr Jody Power
Cllr Mikey Sheehy
Cllr James Tobin

Apologies:

Cllr Mary Lenihan Foley
Cllr Susan McCarthy
Cllr Richie Molloy

In Attendance:

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

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday 27th June 2019

On the proposal of Cllr. Davy Daniels, seconded by Cllr Mike Kennelly, the Minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 19th September, 2019 were approved and adopted by the members following a clarification from Cllr. Buckley to amend the record to reflect her attendance.

2. Chairperson's correspondence

Members were reminded to switch off mobile phones.

3. Committees

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

(a) South East Committee Meeting held on 3.12.2019 in Kilkenny

(a) South West Committee Meeting held on 5.12.2019 in Tralee

4. Presentation on Winter Planning was deferred to December Committee Meetings.

5. Notices of Motion

(a) Cllr. Niall Kelleher moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"What is the update position with the primary healthcare centre in Rathmore?"

A written response from Mr. Ger Reaney, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Kelleher advised that he was aware of another developer who would be interested. Mr. Reaney advised Cllr. Kelleher that he would arrange to discuss this matter with him. Cllr. Kelleher thanked him for same.

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

"That H.S.E. South would state if, following the 2017 survey of services both actual and needed [As per response from H.S.E. South to Notice of Motion to Killarney Municipal District meeting], it accepts that there is need for a dedicated Alzheimer's Day Unit in the immediate Killarney area, thus augmenting the already wonderful Unit at Rockmount, Kilgarvan."

A written response from Mr. Ger Reaney, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Gleeson stated that National Alzheimer's Day raised awareness of this disease and that in his own immediate circle there were 5 people showing signs of Alzheimer's / dementia to varying degrees. Giving the increasing prevalence of Alzheimer's, the East Kerry area with a population of 37,000 has a need for another facility similar to Rockmount with a focus on day services to be located near Killarney.

Mr. Ger Reaney in response agreed with the sentiments expressed by Cllr. Gleeson in relation to the benefit and value of day services. He outlined that there were 581 day places in Kerry with 122 day places specifically for people with dementia - it should be

noted that this is better than average provision. The ongoing challenge is to source funding streams to address gaps across Cork and Kerry for day services.

Mr. Reaney also outlined to Forum Members that there are other services and ancillary supports available to people with dementia including home support services. Cllr. Gleeson thanked Mr. Reaney for his reply and concluded stating how we treat our elderly population is a reflection on our society as a whole.

(c) Cllr. Eileen Lynch moved the following motion, standing in her name:

"That the HSE would increase internship places in Irish hospitals to allow doctors educated in Ireland access to an internship place, in light of the ongoing difficulties in doctor recruitment."

The National Doctors Training and Planning was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Lynch queried further the number of internship places available in Irish hospitals (which are linked to number of training places available) vis a vis the higher number of applications for these internship places.

Dr. Gerard O'Callaghan clarified that there have been ongoing discussions at a national level with the National Bodies and Universities - the latter who make the case for additional places for specialties.

(d) Cllr. John Coonan moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"Can the members of HSE South be advised of the proposed changes Minister Harris is proposing to make to health services management structure in HSE South. Also can the members be provided with a documented copy of these proposed changes and timelines"

A written response from Dr Ger O'Callaghan, Mr Ger Reaney and Ms Kate Killeen White was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Coonan thanked the HSE management for their reply. He noted that it was important for Forum Members to be appraised and to understand the cross party Slaintecare Strategy and the planned healthcare changes at national, regional and local level.

Cllr. Coonan stated that it is important for the proposed structural and organisational change to be integrated and effective. He requested that further information be provided to the Regional Health Forum Members and the respective local committees. Ms. Neary whilst acknowledging the need for such briefings, outlined that this would be a little premature at this stage as this would pre-empt the planned consultation and co-design phase which is to take place. Mr. Ger Reaney was in agreement with Ms. Neary in relation to the unknown specifics at this stage. Mr. Reaney highlighted that there are two concurrent change processes (i) Department of Health and (ii) Laura Magahy as National Director of Slaintecare who is working on developing a plan for each Regional over the coming months. It was agreed that an update when available would be provided at the earliest opportunity to Forum Members.

(e) Cllr. Mikey Sheehy moved the following motion, standing in his name:

"To ask this forum to support expediting foreign General Practitioner VISA applications, especially those from South Africa. This is at a time when A&E departments

and acute hospital beds are under recording breaking pressure and out of hours GP services are at the behest of VISA application waiting times.”

A written response from Mr. Ger Reaney, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Sheehy thanked Mr. Reaney for this positive reply and stated it was critical that relevant agencies were working together to optimise the critical skills visa process to enable GP recruitment and ensure service continuity. Cllr. John McDonald raised the issue of GP Services in the Carlow area. Mr. Reaney also informed Members of the revised IMO GP Contract and increased number of GP Training Places nationally. In the future trends indicate a move away from small GP practices to larger practices.

(f) Cllr. Jody Power moved the following motion, standing in his name:

“That the Board and Management of HSE South/South West Hospitals Group immediately petition the Minister and HSE HQ for the necessary funds required to eliminate the hardships and deprivations caused to patients and their families at University Hospital Waterford (UHW) by:

- * Putting into service forthwith the new Dunmore Wing of UHW, now completed and lying idle, by providing the €10m per year funding required.
- * Actively engage in staff recruitment to fill the 200 staff vacancies at UHW.
- * For the C/Ex and deputy C/Ex of the South/South West Hospitals Group to consider their position for their failings to patients and their families in Waterford and the South East due to the prolonged neglect and gross underfunding of UHW and the significant distress and misery caused.”

A written response from Dr Ger O’Callaghan was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Power acknowledged the reply and stated that he remains dissatisfied with the level of service provision at University Hospital Waterford - there were too many issues arising in UHW as highlighted in the media. Dr. O’Callaghan sought to address the separate queries raised by Cllr. Power and also provided an update in terms of funding and capital developments in relation to the mortuary and Cat Lab. He also reiterated that there are staff vacancies across all hospitals and that University Hospital Waterford is not treated differently to other hospitals.

Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald supported the motion with a caveat and put forward a proposed a change to the wording of the motion as follows;

“That the HSE recognise impact on patients and their families in Waterford and the South East due to the prolonged neglect and gross underfunding of UHW and the significant distress and misery caused.”

Whilst acknowledging that there are concerns in relation to hospital services, this proposed amendment was seconded by Cllr. Davy Daniels. Cllr. Lenihan stated that resources were an issue particularly in relation to overall hospital staffing and issue of overcrowding in the Department of Psychiatry which has been prominent in the media. Cllr Lenihan supported the proposed wording amendment.

Ms. Neary advised that South East Community Healthcare Mental Health Services were working closely with the Mental Health Commission with regard to overcapacity and concerns raised. Efforts continue to recruit Consultants both nationally and overseas - this is a national issue. In addition there is ongoing work with staff and service users to seek to improve service provision across mental health services. Ms. Neary advised that there has been no over-occupancy reported in the DOP at University Hospital Waterford in recent weeks.

The proposed amendment in wording was accepted by Cllr. Jody Power.

(g) Cllr Pat Hayes moved the following motion, standing in his name:

"That the HSE provide a meeting room for the Families and carers of Alzheimer's/Dementia sufferers in Mallow which would serve the North Cork region. This facility would allow them meet once a week. At present they have nowhere to meet."

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

Cllr. Hayes thanked Mr. Reaney for the reply. Cllr. Geróid Murphy also expressed his support for this motion and requested that the number of Alzheimer's/dementia day places in North Cork are provided by HSE Management.

(h) Cllr Norma Moriarty moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"In light of the endemic nature of drug misuse amongst our young people and indeed many of the older age groups can we establish detailed awareness and education campaigns to change a perceived acceptance of drug use that seems to have permeated our society."

A written response from Dr. Ger O'Callaghan, Mr. Ger Reaney and Ms. Kate Killeen White was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Moriarty acknowledged the reply and stated that it was essential to engage and work with young people on this issue. She also noted the increased trend in the use of recreational drugs from a fitness and sporting performance perspective. A number of Forum Members spoke out in support of this motion. Cllr. Michael Gleeson spoke of the need for education and prevention among children and young people. Cllr. Buckley supported the motion and outlined concerns in relation to increasing occurrences of young teenagers drinking. It is understood that there are waiting lists for people to access supports. There also needs to be changes to local by-laws. Cllr. McGuinness stated that drug misuse awareness and education needs to include alcohol and the importance of age appropriate information programmes. Cllr. Coonan also endorsed the motion and that there was no such thing as 'innocent' illegal drugs. He also stated that health should be included as a full curriculum subject in the education system.

Mr. Ger Reaney acknowledged the interest and contributions of members and Cllr. Moriarty's Motion and stated that this is an overall societal issue of which the health agency is one component. There is a need for cultural and attitudinal change in Irish society towards alcohol.

6. Questions

(a) Cllr. Niall Kelleher put forward the following question:

"Can the HSE look at financially supporting the Kerry/cork cancer bus."

A written response from Dr. Ger O'Callaghan was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Kelleher asked HSE Management whether they consider funding the cancer bus. Dr O'Callaghan acknowledged the value of this service, however funding remains an ongoing issue. In line with guidance the priority is transport for patients attending for dialysis. Cllr Collins supported the question and Cllr. McDonald asked whether transport

can be provided for resident in nursing homes to attend hospital appointments. It was agreed to provide information at future meeting.

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

"What is the updated position with the Primary Healthcare Centre in Tullow, Co Carlow?"

A written response from Ms. Kate Killeen White was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. McDonald asked whether there were any further specific details at this stage and Ms. Neary advised that this is the current update as provided by HSE Estates.

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

"Can we please have a detailed explanation of the process with timelines involved in deciding on vacancies and the recruiting and hiring of staff for all health care positions. Essentially what I am seeking to ascertain is how are vacancies identified, who signs off on same, how advertising and recruiting is done and precisely what the process involved in having a person begin actually working in said position is."

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

(d) Cllr. Roger Kennedy put forward the following question:

"To ask for update on the proposed new Residential Unit at St Patrick's Hospital Cashel and to ascertain if it is on target to comply with legislation requiring compliance by 2021?"

A written response from Ms. Kate Killeen White was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Kennedy thanked HSE Management for the reply and asked whether there were any staffing issues at St. Patrick's Hospital. Ms. Neary stated she would follow-up and revert to Cllr. Kennedy on this.

(e) Cllr. Pat Dunphy put forward the following question:

"How is Home Help hours determined? What is the Criteria used? Who is involved in making the decision? How many Home Help Hours have been granted this year to date and in each of the last 5 years? How many requests have been refused this year to date and an each of the last 5 years".

A written response from Ms. Kate Killeen White was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Dunphy stated that he had specifically requested information on number of people who are refused home help hours. Ms. Catherine Neary stated that she would follow up with the South East Community Healthcare General Manager Services for Older People and will arrange for a reply to issue directly to Cllr. Dunphy.

(f) Cllr. Eileen Lynch put forward the following question:

"To ask the HSE to provide the break down by hospital of all consultants, or doctors acting up in a consultant role, who are not on the Medical Council Specialist register in the South/South West Hospital Group and to outline the actions being taken to address this."

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

Cllr. Lynch thanked stated that she had requested a breakdown of this information by hospital and she also asked in relation to numbers hired since 2008. Dr. Ger O'Callaghan in reply stated that before 2008 people did not automatically go on the specialist registrar and had to go through a formal application process to be included on it. He acknowledged that the situation is not ideal, however since 2008 there is a process in place to enable people get on the specialist registrar and that they aim not to take on people not on the registrar.

(g) Cllr. John Coonan put forward the following question:

"The HSE South take immediate steps to deal with the critical overcrowding present in the acute psychiatric admission and service units in Kilkenny and Waterford.

The continued failure to fill the many vacancies existing in nursing throughout psychiatric services"

A written response from Ms. Kate Killeen White was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Coonan acknowledged that much of this had been already discussed in the previous Motion - he accepted the reply at the same time noting that as a retired CNM in Mental Health Services that more needs to be done in relation to recruitment and retention of staff. Ms. Neary stated that there are ongoing national challenges in relation to recruitment and particularly of medical and nursing staff. She explained to Members that the HSE is bound by national grade and wage agreements. Ms. Neary agreed that there needs to be more effort on staff retention as evidenced through the Mental Health Commission and staffing.

(h) Cllr. Mikey Sheehy put forward the following question:

"How many Radiographer posts are vacant at University Hospital Kerry and have these vacant posts been advertised."

A written response from Mr. Fearghal Grimes, General Manager, UHK was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Sheehy noted that University Hospital Kerry was looking outside the box in terms of staffing. He queried the number of vacancies. Dr. Ger O'Callaghan advised that it is 1.5 WTE vacancies and also stated that once that a review is ongoing in the Radiography Dept. in Kerry and the outcome of same is awaited.

(i) Cllr. Jody Power put forward the following question:

"What provision has HSE South/South West Hospital Group made to fund and acquire the replacement machinery and items necessary to support Hospital activities at University Hospital Waterford now that Steam Boilers, Steam Laundry, Steam Cookers, Steam autoclaves and sterilizes, cold storage units, MRI and other medical equipment are at End-of-life and that the hospital is 30 years old, co-incident with the expected serviceable life of the machinery listed above. How many support staff vacancies are there currently for the servicing and maintenance of this equipment?"

A written response from Mr. Ger Flynn, National Clinical Head of Medical Devices was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr. Power asked about understaffing in the maintenance department in University Hospital Waterford. It was explained that this service comes under HSE Regional Estates and not UHW per se and that detail would be sourced for next meeting.

(j) Cllr. Susan McCarthy put forward the following question:

"Requesting an update on the long-awaited re-development of Midleton Community Hospital. Expected timelines for tendering, construction and completion date would be most welcome"

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

(k) Cllr. Pat Hayes put forward the following question:

"Has the HSE any plans to reopen the accident and emergency department at Mallow General Hospital?"

A written response from Dr. Ger O'Callaghan was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Hayes thanked Dr. O'Callaghan for the reply – he stated that given the 50,000 population in Mallow and across the rural hinterland, it would be welcome if the A&E was re-opened. At present people need to travel to Cork to attend A&E. Mallow is a good location for an A&E and is easily accessible. Dr Ger O'Callaghan stated that no one would dispute that in an emergency situation it is preferable to come to centre of excellence. Dr. O'Callaghan also advised members that there is an Injury Unit at Mallow.

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

"Can we have a detailed update on Brexit preparedness in relation to drugs and medicines that would normally be imported via and from the UK. What contingencies are in place for a no deal or agreed Brexit?"

A written response from Ms Suzanne Doyle, Customer Relations Management, PCRS, was circulated to members and noted. Cllr. Moriarty acknowledged the detailed reply provided and cited particular case of a constituent experiencing delay in getting medicines. Mr. Ger Reaney stated that although planning is ongoing, there is still much unknown with Brexit and no guarantees can be given. Mr. Reaney asked the Councillor to give further details so that the individual case could be examined as appropriate.

7. Date and Time of next meeting – 27th February 2020, at 2pm in Council Chambers, County Hall, Cork.