Regional Health Forum

Chairperson,
Cllr. Jim Townsend

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Minutes - Meeting of Regional Health Forum South

Thursday 20th September, 2012 @ 2.00pm
Council Chambers, County Hall, Cork

Present:
Cllr. Liam Ahearn
Cllr. Pat Burton
Cllr. John Butttimer
Cllr. John Carey
Cllr. Catherine Clancy
Cllr. Pat Cody
Cllr. Timmy Collins
Cllr. John Coonan
Cllr. Brendan Cronin
Cllr. Dr. Patrick Crowley
Cllr. John Joe Culloty
Cllr. Declan Doocen
Cllr. Wayne Fennell
Cllr. Matt Griffin
Cllr. Mary Hanna Hourigan
Cllr. Denis Kennedy
Cllr. Michael Kinsella
Cllr. Sean Lonergan
Cllr. Tom Maher
Cllr. Breeda Moynihan-Cronin
Cllr. Martin Murphy
Cllr. Barbara Murray
Cllr. Dr. Sean McCarthy
Cllr. Arthur McDonald
Cllr. Michael O’Brien
Cllr. Bobby O’Connell
Cllr. Frank O’Flynn
Cllr. Laurence (Cha) O’Neill
Cllr. John O’Sullivan
Cllr. Hilary Quinlan
Cllr. Seamus Ryan
Cllr. Jerry Sullivan
Cllr. Jim Townsend - Chairperson

In Attendance:
- Mr. Pat Healy, Regional Director of Operations - South
- Mr. Richie Crowley, Area Manager, HSE Waterford/Wexford
- Mr. Ger Reaney, Area Manager, HSE Cork
- Mr. Michael Fitzgerald, Area Manager, HSE Kerry
- Ms. Anna-Marie Lanigan, Area Manager, HSE Carlow/Kilkenny and South Tipperary
- Ms. Deirdre Scully, Area Manager, Community Services, Cork
- Mr. PJ Hathaway A/Assistant National Director HR, HSE South
- Ms. Norma Deasy Information and Publications Manager, Communications, HSE South
- Ms. Sinéad Byrne, Manager, Regional Health Forum, South
- Regional Health Forum Office staff

1. Adoption of the Minutes of meeting held on 14th June 2012

At the proposal of Cllr. Pat Cody seconded by Cllr. Denis Kennedy, the Minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday 14th June 2012 were approved and adopted by members.

Cllr. John Coonan referred to the most recent copy of a response received from Mr. Ronnie Ryan, Private Secretary, Office of the Minister for Education and Skills with regard to placing Health as a
subject on the School Curriculum. He again outlined his dissatisfaction with the response and asked that a further letter be written to the Department in this regard.

2. **Chairperson’s Correspondence**

Cllr. Jim Townsend, Chairperson welcomed Members and Managers to the meeting after the summer recess. He welcomed Cllr. Brendan Cronin who was nominated to the Forum by Kerry County Council in place of Cllr. Gillian Wharton-Slattery.

Cllr. Townsend reminded members that there is no debate on Questions submitted with only the member who submitted the question being able to speak with the provision for one supplementary question to be asked following on from the response if he/she wishes.

The Chairperson referred members to a document circulated at the meeting entitled ‘The future Role of the Regional Health Forums’ and explained that Mr. Pat Healy, Regional Director of Operation would go through this documentation. As Cllr. John Coonan had also submitted a Question on the continued role and function of Public Representatives on the Regional Health Forum South, Cllr. Townsend explained that this would also be discussed at this point of the meeting.

Mr. Pat Healy, Regional Director of Operations outlined the Report of the meeting between the previous Chairperson of the Regional Health Forum South, the Chairpersons of the other 3 Regional Health Fora and Dr. James Reilly, Minister for Health which took place on 30th April 2012. He explained that a further meeting is planned with Minister Reilly with a submission from the 4 Regional Health Fora to be prepared in advance of this meeting. He outlined that a Questionnaire will be circulated to members the week commencing Monday 24th September, the purpose being to assist members in providing feedback on the current workings of the Forum and suggestions for its improvement.

Mr. Healy explained that a meeting of the Forum Chairs and Forum Managers is scheduled for Friday 19th October and all submissions from Members will be considered at this meeting and a paper will then be prepared for discussion with the Minister. Mr. Healy outlined further documents circulated as follows:-
- Statement on Health Service Executive (Governance) Bill 2012
- Explanatory and Financial Memorandum Health Service Executive (Governance) Bill 2012
- Senior appointments made during the summer
- Announcement from Minister Reilly on publication of the DOH’s Statement of Strategy 2011 (and Government commitments – Health Sector)
- Department of Health Press Release – Minister sets out new policy direction for public hospitals

With reference to the publication of the Health Service Executive (Governance) Bill 2012, Mr. Healy informed members that this will see abolition of the Board structure of the HSE, provide for a Directorate to be the new governing body in place of the HSE Board which will be headed by a Director General. It will also provide for further accountability arrangements for the HSE and related matters to take account of the replacement of the Board structure by the Directorate structure.

He outlined the appointment of Mr. Tony O’Brien as Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Director General Designate until the Governance Bill is passed by the Oireachtas at which time Mr O’Brien will assume the position of Director General under the new governance arrangements. He also referred to the Appointment of Professor John Higgins as Chair of a Strategic Board to assist the Department of Health in the establishment of the Hospital Groups with two Chairs already appointed for the Galway/Roscommon University Hospital Group and the Mid-Western Regional Hospital Group.

In conclusion, Mr. Healy referred members to the publication of the Department of Health’s Statement of Strategy 2011-2014 and explained that this Statement has been prepared within the
framework of the strategies and priorities outlined in the Programme for Government. During this
time period, the approach to the provision of health services for the country will be radically
reshaped in line with the Government Reform Programme.

Following circulation of the above documentation, members expressed concerns regarding the
extensive amount circulated and felt that it would have been more beneficial if received in their
Agenda packs and allow them make more informed decisions. Members requested that a further
meeting be organised to discuss this further in advance of the meeting to take place on the 19th
October. However, Mr. Healy, advised members that this would not be possible as the Forum is
governed by Legislation with a statutory number of meetings held yearly. It was agreed however,
that the document would be further discussed at the next Committee meetings to take place on
Thursday 18th October. Mr. Healy explained that it was important to circulate this documentation
today which would prove useful for members in advance of them receiving the Questionnaire and
would assist them in submitting proposals on how local democracy could be strengthened.

The following items were also referred to/disussed:-
• Update on new hospital Groups/trusts
• Diminution of local democracy
• Management of budgets
• Regular financial updates on hospitals and HSE South to be provided to Members
• Distribution/circulation of information on a meeting by meeting basis

With regard to the Hospital Groups, Mr. Healy reiterated that nothing has been finalised. He
explained that the appointment of Professor John Higgins as Chair of a Strategic Group was
announced by the Minister and Professor Higgins’s role is focussed on working to assist the
Department of Health in establishing the Hospital Groups. All hospitals have been met including
hospitals in the South. Cllr. Cody referred to leaking of information following these meetings with
regard to groupings of hospitals in the South East. Mr. Healy explained all the work will be
considered by the Minister and Department of Health with recommendations to Government. It is
intended to identify the most appropriate groupings by year end and these will progress to
hospital trusts over a period of years. Regarding the leaking/communication of information, Mr.
Healy informed Cllr. Cody that he has asked the Area Managers to engage with the Hospitals in
the South East to ensure compliance with the communications protocol for issuing of
statements/releasing of information etc.

With reference to the circulation of information to members, Mr. Healy outlined that substantial
comprehensive information is regularly circulated through the organisation and all performance
data is published on the HSE website on a monthly basis. This includes the performance data
from all hospitals and community services in respect of Finance, HR, Hospital and Primary and
Community Services with July being the most current report. He advised Members that this suite
of data was one of the most comprehensive published on a monthly basis by any Public Authority
in Ireland.

Regarding Question 5(g) submitted by Cllr. John Coonan, Cllr. Coonan thanked Mr. Healy for his
response and outlined his rationale for putting the question forward based on discussions with
constituents and frustrations from members on the overall function of the Forum. He expressed
corns that the role of Forum Members is purely representational with no role in policy
formation. He complimented the HSE on the organisation of the local forum briefings and
acknowledged that these were working well. Cllr. Coonan welcomed the proposed circulation of
the Questionnaire and co-ordination of members’ suggestions for final submission to the Minister.

3. Reports by Chairpersons of
   (a) Acute Hospitals Services and Population Health Committee
   (b) PCCC Committee

both held Thursday 5th July, 2012 in Cork
Synopses of the Reports of the previous committee meetings held in Cork on Thursday 5th July 2012 were taken as read by Cllr. Hilary Quinlan, Vice-Chairperson of the Acute Hospital Services and Population Health Committee and Cllr. Tom Maher, A/Chairperson of the Primary, Community and Continuing Care Committee.

Cllr. John O’Sullivan having been absent from the July committee meetings referred to Fluoridation and its effect on health and requested again that consideration be given to having a presentation at a future committee meeting.

3.1 Reports from Committees
- Update Report on National Ambulance Service HSE South (presentation given at 12.15pm between both meetings)
- Report on Housing Supports for Mental Health Patients (or Service Users) – Ms. Ber Cahill, Specialist, Mental Health Services

Cllr. Jim Townsend, Chairperson referred to the very informative presentation given by Mr. Nicky Glynn, Chief Ambulance Officer, HSE South at the committee meetings in July and pointed out that members had already received this presentation in hard copy on the day of the meetings. The Report on the Housing Supports for Mental Health Patients was re-circulated and was the report noted.

Cllr. Townsend informed members that the next Committee Meetings will be held on Thursday 18th October 2012 in Kilkenny. Members were advised that election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson would take place at these meetings and reminded them to discuss nominations with the party whips in advance.

4. Notice of Motions

4(a) Cllr. John Joe Culloty moved the following Notice of Motion standing in his name:

“That the HSE South call on the Minister for Health & Children to, as a matter of urgency, set up a Community Support Scheme, whereby people in need of home help, could use their assets, such as their home or farm, to pay for this much needed service.”

A written response was circulated to members by Mr. Michael Fitzgerald, Area Manager, HSE Kerry. The response outlined that having considered legal advices in relation to current legislation for HSE policy on charges/contributions for the provision of publically funded home help services the position is such that no charges can be collected or levied by either the HSE or any entity providing HSE funded home help whether personal, domestic care or both is being provided. There is also no provision to accept, request or levy any voluntary contributions. Cllr. Culloty while accepting the response feels that the setting up of such a Scheme/Service whereby people could use their assets of land or home etc will be called on more and more into the future and could provide great assistance to people in need of home help. Mr. Fitzgerald agreed with comments from Cllr. Culloty outlining that this idea deserves consideration would be taken forward through our Services for the Elderly and discussed with the Department.

4(b) Cllr. Frank O’Flynn moved the following the following Notice of Motion standing in his name:

“That the HSE would give a timeframe for the refurbishment and upgrading of the grounds of St. Patrick’s Community Hospital”

A written response was circulated to members from Ms. Deirdre Scully, Area Manager, Community Services – Cork. In the absence of Cllr. O’Flynn the response was noted.
4(c) Cllr. Breeda Moynihan-Cronin moved the following Notice of Motion standing in her name:

“That the HSE South outline in detail the proposed impact on services for the people of Kerry following the recent announcement in Budget Targets.”

A comprehensive written response was circulated to members from Mr. Michael Fitzgerald, Area Manager, Kerry which outlined examples of significant achievements in the year to date within Acute and Community Services in Kerry. With regard to the remainder of the year and in particular having regard for the need to increase cost-containment measures Mr. Fitzgerald outlined specific measures being pursued in the Kerry area to include ongoing review of all non pay costs, adherence to in-patient and day procedure activity, restriction on the use of agency cover and a continued focus on overtime. He explained the use of agency for non-consultant hospital doctors will also continue to be closely monitored on an on-going basis.

In relation to the recent announcements Mr. Fitzgerald explained that the focus in the HSE South across hospital and community services is to prioritise the reduction of discretionary and non-essential items such as travel, office costs, furniture, medical equipment etc which are areas that will not have a direct impact on front line services.

Cllr. Moynihan-Cronin noted the response but stated that there was no mention of the impact of cuts in Home Help in Kerry and sought clarification with regard to this. Mr. Fitzgerald replied to Cllr. Moynihan-Cronin that at this time there is no approval for additional reduction in service provision but that the review and focus on the prioritisation of service towards personal care and essential household duties would continue. He also outlined that at this time there is no waiting list for Home Helps in Kerry.

4(d), 4(e) and 5(c) Cllr. Ted Tynan, Cllr. Dr. Patrick Crowley moved the following Notice of Motions standing in their name with the subsequent Question submitted by Cllr. Ted Tynan:-

4(d) – Cllr. Ted Tynan

“That the Regional Health Forum South strongly condemn the cuts by the Fine Gael/Labour Government and in particular Minister for Health Dr. James Reilly, that the cuts to Home Help services for disabled and older people will lead to a serious diminution in quality of life and ultimately fatalities and who will be held accountable?”

4(e) – Cllr. Dr. Patrick Crowley

“That Home Care frontline services be maintained and developed to lessen the financial burden on hospitals”

5(c) – Cllr. Ted Tynan

“What are the number of applicants for Home Help in Cork City awaiting a decision on their application and what are the number of applicants whose hours have been reduced since January 2012?”

A written response was circulated to members from Mr. Michael Fitzgerald, Area Manager, HSE Kerry which outlined the delivery of the Home Help Service which primarily supports older people and remains a significant and key component of community based service provision.

Mr. Fitzgerald informed members that the HSE South has provided in excess of 2.1m home help hours as at the end of July to almost 16,000 clients which exceeds the number in receipt of the service indicated in the national and regional service plan which is just over 15,000 clients. He re-iterated that at this time there is no approval for additional reductions in service provision. Mr.
Fitzgerald explained that the Home Help Service is under continuous review, has been significantly transformed and reassured members that the HSE continues to ensure that essential personal care and essential household duties are prioritised over the lesser priority areas of non-essential household duties. He explained that good practice maintains that each individual case is reviewed twice yearly.

With regard to Cllr. Tynan’s question specific to Home Help applications in Cork, Mr. Fitzgerald explained that a significant review of services is ongoing as the budget had been exceeded and there has been some reduction of hours in the case of up to 1,000 recipients. However, he outlined that in excess of 460 new clients have received a home help service during that period. Currently 263 people are currently being assessed in the Cork North and South Lee areas and being considered for the provision of home help.

Cllr. Tynan criticised the reduction in home help hours stating that is has left the elderly and disabled frightened of the future and outlined details of a number of individual cases that he has been made aware of who have been affected by reduction in hours. Cllr. Tynan acknowledged the work being undertaken by the HSE but expressed his frustrations with the current political system. He also sought clarification on how long before the 263 people currently being assessed in Cork will be given a decision regarding their application for home help.

Cllr. Dr. Patrick Crowley stated that reducing home help hours made no economic sense with home care being the cheapest form of care available and best value for the Health Service and much less expensive than caring for people in a hospital.

With regard to Home Helps/Home Care services, Mr. Healy assured Cllr. Crowley that since the announcement of the €130m health cuts, there had been no additional reduction in home help hours across the HSE South. He explained that regarding the level of Home Help Service being provided across the region we are just 0.1% below our Service Plan Target. He explained that the Cork area was coming under more pressure than nearby counties because budgets had been exceeded and outlined that there were always “ups and downs” in the delivery of home help hours because of the flexible nature of the service.

Cllr. Catherine Clancy sought clarification on applications for home care packages for people in Cork City/County and queried would these be sanctioned between now and year end. She also requested an update on progress with regard to the Primary Care Centre on the St. Mary’s, Campus. Cllr. Declan Doocey referred to varying figures in relation to carers allowance/home help contracts and Mr. Fitzgerald stated that if he had an individual case he could discuss it with him at the end of the meeting.

Cllr. Brendan Cronin referred to a number of individual cases where hours had been cut and also outlined an individual case with a 6 month waiting list for an urgent referral to a rapid access seizure clinic.

With regard to Clr. Clancy’s queries in relation to Home Care Packages Mr. Fitzgerald explained that these include an extensive level of service such as Public Health Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Home Help, aids and appliances etc. He acknowledged that it is a hugely successful scheme being able to support the elderly at home and confirmed that service provision is on target and the level of funding remains.

Mr. Pat Healy outlined that commissioning of the dedicated Stroke Unit in CUH is underway and is due to open by the year end. Regarding the progress of a primary care centre on the St. Mary’s campus, he informed Cllr. Clancy that the HSE South are currently engaging with a number of GPs and a report will be brought to a future meeting once further progress has been made. Mr. Healy also referred to the Mercy Urgent Care Centre at the St. Mary’s Health Campus which opened in March of this year and informed members that to date 1063 people have attended the centre which includes 933 new patients and 130 review cases which is very positive with patients in many cases being treated quicker than at the Emergency Departments.
4(f) Cllr. Matt Griffin moved the following Notice of Motion standing in his name:

“That the HSE South put a plan in place to alleviate the current Waiting List for appointments with an Audiologist in Kerry.”

A written response was circulated to members from Ms. Deirdre Scully, Area Manager, Community Services, Cork which outlined the remit of the Cork/Kerry community Audiology Department and the work administered by this Service. With regard to appointments for the Community Audiology Department in Kerry, Ms. Scully outlined that these appointments are sent in strict chronological order in accordance with clinical priority and the date the referral was received. A prioritisation protocol was also attached for members’ information. She explained that as part of the integration of acute and community audiology sectors across the HSE South, resource allocation will be reviewed with any change in the current staffing arrangements achieved by redeployment. From November 2012 Ms. Scully informed members that the Department plan to increase services to Kerry adult caseload by a half day per week and that hopefully by year end with the integration of Kerry Community and Acute Audiology Services that an additional resource will be provided to Paediatric Audiology Services which will involve a half to one day from the existing Cork/Kerry Community complement.

Cllr. Griffin welcomed the 50% increase in the Audiology service even though this is dependant on redeployment and integration. He felt the increase in the current three day service beginning in November 2012 is a step in the right direction which will help alleviate the very long waiting list for Kerry patients. Cllr. Griffin also said it was time to put the patient needs as the principle goal of the HSE.

4(g) Cllr. John Coonan moved the following Notice of Motion standing in his name:

“That the HSE South outline the effects the €130m package of health cuts will have for maintaining and continued delivery of services both hospital and community in this region county by county.”

A written response was circulated to members from Mr. Pat Healy, Regional Director of Operations. Mr. Healy referred to publication of the regional service plan on 9th February which set out the position of measures required to maintain services and manage the HSE South finances for the year while maximising the utilisation of the Public Service Agreement. He explained the focus is on managing and maintaining hospital and community services while working with reduced budgets and staff numbers.

Mr. Healy explained that the overall position in the HSE South is only 5% off the €49m target as at the end of July and is confident that the position will have further improved when August figures are published. He acknowledged the co-operation and flexibility of staff across the services in line with the requirements of the Public Service Agreement which has yielded significant success such as implementation of the Acute Medicine Programme across all hospitals in the HSE South and development of AMUs in line with service plan targets. He explained the significant improvement in ED performance on numbers waiting admission in CUH which have now reduced from an average of 18 in 2011 to an average of 7 in 2012. Mr. Healy explained the focus is also on reducing agency cover, overtime and maximising the use of consultant staff. He outlined significant changes taking place in Mental Health Services and the significant reorganisation in Community Hospitals through the change in skill mix, rostering and redeployment of staff. In the Disability sector Mr. Healy referred to the addition of 321 day places to school leavers and clients progressing from rehabilitation training with 294 places already secured.

Details of significant capital developments that have taken place across the HSE South were outlined to include Emergency Department and related developments, developments in Mental
Health, new Community Nursing Units, Medical Assessment Units and development of Stroke Services.

Mr. Healy informed members that since January 2012 a significant range of cost containment measures have been put in place which are being monitored regularly and additional measures are being implemented to account for any slippage on original plans. Mr. Healy explained that there is an over-run on patient activity due to increasing demand on services and in the community, home care services are running in excess of Service Plan projections but all services continue to review progress and corrective actions are taken where necessary. He outlined that the focus now across hospital and community services in the HSE South is to prioritise the curtailment of discretionary and non-essential expenditure such as travel, office costs, administration and advertising etc. These are areas which do not have a direct impact on frontline services.

Cllr. John Coonan thanked Mr. Healy for the response and acknowledged the progress that has been made despite the challenges facing the health service and paid tribute to the staff working in the hospitals and the community. He outlined concerns regarding the large deficits due to reduction in budget. He referred to the Orthopaedic waiting lists and the fact that urgent appointments were taking up to 8 months with routine as long as 3 years. With regard to Mental Health Services, Cllr. Coonan sought clarification on the ring-fencing of funding.

Cllr. Dr. Patrick Crowley stated the announcement of €130m further cuts by the Minister has raised widespread alarm which will result in huge difficulties for frontline services. Cllr. Crowley also referred to funding for the L’Arche Foundation.

With regard to the funding for Mental Health Services, Mr. Pat Healy clarified that the resource Minister Lynch had secured ring-fenced funding of €35m nationally for investment in Mental Health Services and that this resource had been provided to each region including HSE South and it would be fully utilised. In this regard the HSE South is in the process of recruiting new staff currently under Garda Vetting. He explained that this is an important part of the transformation of Mental Health Services and referred to the significant change programme that is underway in Carlow/Kilkenny and South Tipperary in line with ‘A Vision for Change’.

5. Questions

5(a) Cllr. Frank O’Flynn put forward the following Question:

“That the HSE would advise on where the Glanworth & Kildorrery Health Centres are on the National Maintenance Project list and the timeframe for when are they designated to be painted externally and internally.”

A written response was circulated to members from Ms. Deirdre Scully, Area Manager, Community Services – Cork. In the absence of Cllr. O’Flynn the response was noted.

5(b) Cllr. Breeda Moynihan-Cronin put forward the following Question:

“In light of the recent ruling by An Bord Pleanala, what are the implications for a Primary Care Centre in Killarney?”

A written response was circulated to members from Mr. Michael Fitzgerald, Area Manager, Kerry. As Cllr. Moynihan-Cronin had left the meeting the response was noted.

5(c) Cllr. Ted Tynan put forward the following Question:

“What are the number of applicants for Home Help in Cork City awaiting a decision on their application and what are the number of applicants whose hours have been reduced since January 2012?”
This Question was answered in conjunction with Notice of Motion 4(d) and Notice of Motion 4(e).

5(d) Cllr. Dr. Patrick Crowley put forward the following Question:

“What are the details regarding the Orthopaedic out-patient waiting lists in Waterford Regional Hospital and the Musculoskeletal Triage (MSK) Clinic initiative with Cappagh Hospital, Dublin?”

A written response was circulated to members from Mr. Richie Dooley, Area Manager, Waterford/Wexford which outlined that the Orthopaedic waiting lists in Waterford Regional Hospital, as of the end of June 2012 were in excess of 11,000 patients. This list has now been validated and currently stands at 6,000. 1,000 of these patients are longest waiters and are being validated, seen, and treated at Cappagh Orthopaedic Hospital. This process which started in June is ongoing with 850 patients already reviewed and will finish when all 1,000 have been seen.

With regard to the Musculoskeletal Programme, Mr. Dooley outlined that this is a National Clinical Programme being rolled out in a number of hospital sites. The aim of the programme is to reduce out-patient waiting lists for Orthopaedics and Rheumatology through the use of physio-led MSK clinics; both are regional services in the South East. A total of 1,700 patients on the Orthopaedic waiting list have been contacted to date as they meet the criteria for inclusion in this initiative with 720 patients having confirmed acceptance of appointments. With regard to the Rheumatology waiting list, 115 of those selected as suitable have confirmed acceptance of appointments. Mr. Dooley informed members that Waterford Regional Hospital still receives approximately 400 new referrals per month to the Orthopaedic Service and 120 Rheumatology. He also referred to the Arthroplasty Nurse Led Initiative which is a new initiative relating to the care of patients post joint surgery. Mr. Dooley explained that following surgery patients return to the out-patient department and are seen in a nurse-led clinic run by a senior member of nursing staff. This post was developed through redeployment/reassignment of duties based on that fact that nursing expertise was available internally.

Cllr. Dr. Crowley thanked Mr. Dooley for his response. With regard to the initiative with Cappagh Orthopaedic Hospital, Cllr. Crowley queried whether or not transport would be provided for patients travelling as he explained that a number of people had difficulty taking up the appointment offer due to transport costs etc. He also outlined that as this was a triage clinic that it would be more appropriately based in Waterford Regional Hospital. Mr. Dooley explained that there is a good public transport system in place and he had not been made aware of any issues arising from the offer of appointments nor had any individual cases been brought to his attention. With regard to triage he explained that the Consultants involved in this initiative are based in Cappagh Orthopaedic Hospital. In conclusion, Mr. Dooley agreed to keep members updated on progress with these initiatives.

5(e) Cllr. Matt Griffin put forward the following Question:

“Is there a Major Incident Plan in place for counties Cork and Kerry?”

A response was circulated to members from Mr. Peter Daly, Chief Emergency Management Officer, HSE South. Cllr. Griffin was happy with the response and had no further questions.

5(f) Cllr. Pat Cody put forward the following Question:

“To ask the HSE to identify the projected cost reduction measures planned through the reduction of Agency Staff and overtime payments in Acute, Mental Health and Intellectual Disability Services in Co. Wexford for the remainder of 2012/13 and to clarify the process involved to ‘achieve greater efficiency’ in the provision of Home Care Packages in Co. Wexford currently under consideration.”
A written response was circulated to members from Mr. Richie Dooley, Area Manager, Waterford/Wexford. As Cllr. Cody had to leave the meeting early, the response was noted.

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

“What is the up to date position (information or communication from the Department of Health/Minister for Health) regarding the continued role and function of Public Representatives on the HSE South Regional Health Forum?”

The above Question was discussed at the beginning of the meeting in conjunction with documentation circulated regarding the future role of the Regional Health Forums.

5(h) Cllr. Catherine Clancy put forward the following Question:

“With regard to Orthotic Services:-
- How many patients have HSE South for orthotic services?
- What services are provided for patients who require orthotics?
- What are the waiting times for orthotics?
- Have all orthotic patients a choice of service provider?”

A comprehensive written response was circulated to members from Ms. Deirdre Scully, Ms. Anna-Marie Lanigan, and Mr. Richie Dooley Area Managers on behalf of HSE South which outlined in detail the number of patients waiting for orthotic services, current provision of services, waiting times for orthotics and choice of service provider. Details of a national clinical programme including a national procurement process which is currently underway were also provided.

Cllr. Clancy welcomed the national review currently underway but raised concerns with regard to the difference in waiting times for patients in Cork/Kerry in comparison to the rest of HSE South. She stated that 1,416 patients on the Priority 1 waiting list who are waiting approximately 20 months is unacceptable. Cllr. Clancy queried the reason for these delays and sought clarification on the actions being taking to reduce these lists and waiting times. With regard to choice of service provider Cllr. Clancy expressed the view that patients should be given a choice with a system by way of reimbursement to the HSE if the fitting received by the client is not fit for purpose.

Ms. Deirdre Scully, Area Manager explained that the Cork/Kerry service currently has a yearly budget of over €400,000 with approximately €38,000 sanctioning of fittings per month; cost of fittings can range in price. She outlined that the HSE South is looking at ways to improve the services with the development of a list of providers nationally and locally looking at development of in-house expertise. It is hoped over the next 12 months that quality and service will be improved, overall cost will be reduced and better value for money secured for patients.

Mr. Pat Healy, Regional Director of Operations emphasised that the focus is now on the roll-out of the National Clinical Programme looking specifically at prosthetics, orthotics and specialist rehabilitation services. In particular the area of procurement is being looked at with the intention of improving quality and service while reducing overall cost and securing better value for money. Mr. Healy is confident that additional resources will be secured which can be utilised to reduce the waiting lists.

7. Date and Time of next Meeting

The next meeting of the Regional Health Forum, South will be held on Thursday 15th November 2012 at 2pm, Council Chambers, County Hall, Cork.