

## REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM

**Chairperson,  
Councillor Tim Lombard**

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

**Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 @ 2.00pm**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBERS, COUNTY HALL, CORK**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Liam Ahearn  
Councillor Pat Burton  
Councillor John Buttimer  
Councillor John Carey  
Councillor Timmy Collins  
Councillor Catherine Connery  
Councillor John Coonan  
Councillor Brendan Cronin  
Councillor Tom Cronin  
Councillor John Joe Culloty  
Councillor Tony Dempsey  
Councillor Declan Doocey  
Councillor Wayne Fennell  
Councillor Mary Hanna Hourigan  
Councillor Denis Kennedy  
Councillor Michael Kinsella  
Councillor Tim Lombard -  
**Chairperson**

Councillor Sean Lonergan  
Councillor Tom Maher  
Councillor Barbara Murray  
Councillor Dr. Sean McCarthy  
Councillor Arthur McDonald  
Councillor Michael O'Brien  
Councillor Bobby O'Connell  
Councillor Frank O'Flynn  
Councillor Laurence (Cha) O'Neill  
Councillor John O'Sullivan  
Councillor Hilary Quinlan  
Councillor Seamus Ryan  
Councillor Mary Shields  
Councillor Martin Storey  
Councillor Jerry Sullivan  
Councillor Jim Townsend  
Councillor Ted Tynan  
Councillor Gillian Wharton-Slattery

#### **Apologies:**

#### **In Attendance:**

- Mr. Gerry O'Dwyer, Director for Performance and Integration
- Mr. Richie Dooley, General Manager, HSE Waterford/Wexford
- Mr. Ger Reaney, Area Manager, HSE Cork
- Ms. Eithne McAuliffe, Acting Area Manager, HSE Kerry
- Ms. Anna-Marie Lanigan, Area Manager, HSE Carlow/Kilkenny and South Tipperary
- Ms. Deirdre Scully, Area Manager, Community Services, Cork
- Ms. Angie O'Brien, Area Communications Manager, HSE South
- Ms. Rebecca Loughry, Executive Lead Performance and Integration
- Ms. Sinéad Byrne, Manager, Regional Health Forum, South
- Regional Health Forum staff

## **1. Adoption of the Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

At the proposal of Councillor Tom Maher seconded by Councillor Gillian Wharton-Slattery, the Minutes of the Forum Meeting held on Thursday the 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2013 were approved and adopted by Members.

Councillor Sullivan referred to the Forum Meeting held on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September where it was suggested that Senior Ambulance Personnel would attend the current Meeting. He stated that he was disappointed that it was not on the Agenda. Mr. Gerry O'Dwyer advised that he had made contact with Dr. Cathal O'Donnell, the National Director of the Ambulance Service, and requested that he attend this Forum Meeting but unfortunately Dr. O'Donnell had a prior engagement. He said he would like Dr. O'Donnell and the Chief Medical Advisor to attend the forthcoming Committee Meeting to be held in Cork to speak to Councillors and listen to their concerns.

Councillor Sullivan referred to the Middleton Ambulance Report which he said was to be circulated to Members on completion. He advised that they were not in receipt of same. Mr. Gerry O'Dwyer informed those present that the Report was near completion. He advised that the case was to come before the Coroners Court in two weeks time and once that process was complete the Report would be circulated.

Councillor John Coonan referred to previous Motions submitted by him with regard to placing Health on the School Curriculum and the subsequent responses received. He requested that Mr. Gerry O'Dwyer would discuss his Motion with the Minister for Education when he meets with him in the New Year.

Councillor Tony Dempsey suggested that students should be allocated points in their exams for participating in Sports.

On a Point of Order Councillor Timmy Collins requested that it should be noted that at the previous Meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, 2013, it was suggested that it took an Ambulance one hour to arrive to a call out to Newtownshandrum when, in fact, it was confirmed that the correct time was thirty two minutes.

## **2. Chairperson's Correspondence**

Councillor Tim Lombard, Chairperson, welcomed the Members and Managers to the Meeting. He informed the Members that the next Committee Meetings would be held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, 2013 in Cork.

The Chairperson advised that the provisional date set aside for the next Forum Meeting was 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 2014. He said this would be confirmed early in the New Year. He asked Ms. Deirdre Scully to update Members on the current position with the Community Nursing Unit in Farranlea Road. He also asked Ms. Scully to relay the present position with St. Patrick's Hospital.

Ms Scully advised that the Community Nursing Unit in Farranlea Road is a hundred bedded unit and that the HSE were currently in the process of opening up a further thirty two beds – twenty eight long term beds and four beds for the young chronic sick. She confirmed that this would bring the total number of beds open to ninety. She informed the Members that there is a recruitment process underway and that Interviews for Nursing Staff were to take place in the week ahead. Ms. Scully said that once these staff were in place the extra beds would be opened.

In terms of St. Patrick's Hospital, Ms. Scully confirmed that the HSE had pledged to open twenty beds. She informed the Members that the recruitment process to progress this is well underway

and that the interviews have taken place. She advised that the beds will open in two phases of ten and it was hoped that this process would be complete by year end or the start of 2014.

Mr. Gerry O'Dwyer informed the Members that St. Finbarr's Hospital Assessment and Treatment Centre for Older People was announced as the overall winner in the Outpatients Initiative of the Year in the 2013 Irish Medical Times - Irish Healthcare Awards. He also shared details of other HSE South projects which received special commendation which were as follows.

- Alzheimers Café, St. Finbarr's Hospital in the Hospital Patient Education category
- Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Initiative in the Public Health Category
- Linda Ennis (Clinical Nurse Manager 3), Waterford Regional Hospital received a commendation in the category of Excellence in Healthcare Management.
- In the category of Nursing Project of the Year a commendation was awarded to Louise Brent (Arthroplasty Nurse Co-Ordinator, Waterford Regional Hospital)
- The KCoRD Genio Funded Dementia Project based in Kinsale also received a commendation in the Best Education Project Category.

Mr. O'Dwyer congratulated the well deserved winners and acknowledged the hard and innovative work that is done on a daily basis to improve services to patients. The Chairperson echoed the congratulations to all involved.

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

both held Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October in Kilkenny

Synopses of the Committee Meetings Reports of the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, 2013 were taken as read.

Councillor Mary Shields referred to the Minutes of the Committee Meeting which was held on the 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2013. She queried whether a decision had been made in relation to the location of the landing pad and if a timeframe had been set down for the commencement and completion of the work.

Mr. Ger Reaney assured Councillor Shields that work was ongoing to progress this. He confirmed that the design team has completed a draft report and that the HSE Estates Department and the relevant Managers had seen this report. He also confirmed that two potential sites remain in contention and that it is a matter for the Project Group to decide which one to proceed with. He informed the Members that the decision should be made before year end and at that point the HSE will proceed to seek planning permission. The Project should be in place by late 2014, early 2015.

Councillor Shields thanked Mr. Reaney for the update and requested that an update be provided at every Committee Meeting.

#### **4. Notice of Motions**

- 4(a) Councillor Brendan Cronin moved the following Notice of Motion standing in his name

**"To ask why the four geographically based Intervention & Disability Service teams which were to deliver important services to children with a range of disabilities in Kerry are not operating in the County considering that these vital services were to be available locally to families from September 30<sup>th</sup> 2013."**

A written response by Ms. Eithne McAuliffe, Acting Area Manager, HSE South, was circulated and referred to.

Councillor Cronin thanked Ms. McAuliffe for her Response. He advised that he initially moved this Motion as he had been approached by a family with a significant issue relating to this matter. He confirmed that he had made contact with the HSE and was thankful that this issue had been rectified to everyone satisfaction and he was grateful for the intervention of Ms. McAuliffe and other HSE staff. He requested clarification on the following issues -

- (a) The location of the four bases
- (b) Were they opened?
- (c) Are they fully staffed?

Ms. Eithne McAuliffe, Acting Area Manager, confirmed that the bases are currently open and operating and that their locations were as follows:

**North Kerry** – Listowel – In the Brothers of Charity building. Ms. McAuliffe informed the Members that the Brothers of Charity are actively looking for larger premises.

**South Kerry** – Killarney – In the Brothers of Charity Building.

**Tralee** – Oak Park, in the Enable Ireland Building

**Mid Kerry** – Tralee - currently in Moyderwell.

Ms. McAuliffe confirmed that the Intervention and Disability Service teams would be moving into the new Integrated Service Building in Tralee on its completion. She advised that there would be Outreach Programmes in Cahirciveen and Dingle and that in time there would be a Pre-school Service in Killorglin. She pointed out to the Members that it is difficult to divide Kerry into four distinct areas due to its geography.

In terms of staffing it was confirmed that the existing staff within these services were reconfigured. She said that there was a recruitment process underway to fill vacant posts.

Councillor Cronin requested that the number of posts to be filled in the Disability Teams be provided to him

4(b) Councillor Frank O'Flynn moved the following Notice of Motion standing in his name

**"That the HSE would outline the changes that have been implemented in the interpretation of the Guidelines for GMS Eligibility in the past year which have impacted negatively on so many individuals and families, outlining in the response the processing time and how many people (adults and children) who had GMS card eligibility have been declared ineligible on renewal or review and the reasons given for the decisions, the number of new applicants who have been refused GMS cards and the reasons given for the decisions, how many patients with a cancer diagnosis have been refused medical cards and the reasons given for the decisions, and the change in the interpretation of the discretion which were previously afforded to seriously ill patients who applied for GMS cards."**

A written response by Ms. Anna Marie Lanigan, Area Manager, South East Primary Community & Continuing Care Services & St. Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny, was circulated and referred to.

Councillor Frank O' Flynn stated that numerous families who are currently in receipt of a Medical Card are very worried and scared that their cards are going to be withdrawn. Councillor Flynn and other Councillors asked a number of questions and made comments/suggestions in relation to the provision of Medical Cards which included:-

- Has there been a change in criteria in assessing medical card applications and how is it being implemented?
- How are people being informed that their medical card has been withdrawn? Who informs them?
- People who had their Medical Card withdrawn and require one do not know how to re-apply. A new Application Form should be included with the letter notifying them that their card had been withdrawn
- The application process should be simpler.
- Medical Cards should be given to those who have a medical need for them and not to healthy people.
- Prescription charges should be abolished.
- Highlight protest that took place on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> in Cork.
- Elderly people in their 80 should not be told to go online – they should be able to speak to someone.
- GP's should be involved in decision making when it comes to Medical Card.
- Opposition politicians are drumming up fear in people in relation to this issue and should be more responsible.
- Media are scaremongering on this issue also.
- Presentation at Committee Meeting was very informative.

Ms. Anna-Marie Lanigan advised the Members that she took detailed notes of the comments/suggestions and confirmed that she is committed to meeting with the PCRS to convey what was raised at the Forum today. Mr. Gerry O' Dwyer informed the Members that there was a callsave telephone service in place to assist people in making their application. He assured Members that staff do care and are willing to help. Councillor F. O' Flynn thanked Ms. Anna Marie Lanigan & Mr. Gerry O' Dwyer for their Response and he also thanked the Councillors who supported his Motion.

4(c) Councillor John Buttimer moved the following Notice of Motion standing in his name

**"That the HSE develop contracts with Service Providers and medical professionals to ensure that all involved in the delivery of care, including the Department of Health and the HSE, are open, honest, and forthcoming with information for patients, to include information in relation to adverse events and that consideration is given to the introduction of 'no fault' systems to ensure a willingness to engage in dialogue when things go wrong."**

A written Response by Mr. Gerry O' Dwyer, Regional Director for Performance and Integration, was circulated and referred to.

Councillor Buttimer informed the Members that he set down this Motion as he was contacted by a family who had to battle with the HSE to establish how their sister had died in HSE care. He said that they had to go to the High Court to get an answer and that it was his view that the HSE should learn from this case and be more patient centred.

Mr. Gerry O' Dwyer advised the Members that the HSE has launched its National Policy and Guidelines on Open Disclosure of Adverse Events on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November. He referred to the Information Leaflet on this subject that was attached to his Response. He confirmed that the HSE was committed to getting this right.

Councillor Buttimer accepted the willingness of HSE staff to engage with the families but said that some cases do fall through the net. He thanked Mr. Gerry O' Dwyer for his answer.

4(d) Councillor John Joe Culloty moved the following Notice of Motion standing in his name

**"To call on the HSE, and the National Ambulance Service, to have the second Emergency Ambulance reinstated in Killarney. Several Killarney GPs have expressed concerns that the loss of the 2nd Emergency Ambulance could be detrimental to patient safety in Killarney and the surrounding areas."**

A written response by Mr. Nicky Glynn, National HR Manager, National Ambulance Service, was circulated and referred to. Ms. Eithne McAuliffe spoke to the Motion on behalf of the HSE.

Councillor John Joe Culloty referred to the Response he received. He said that it was his view that the purpose of the meeting which was held in Killarney was to inform Councillors what was happening and not to consult with the stakeholders. He advised that there was too much information given on the night and that it was not possible to assimilate it in such a short period of time. He requested that the rollout be delayed. He said that an ambulance could only deal with one issue and that if it was called out there was nothing there to fill the breach. He highlighted the fact that Killarney's population experiences a huge spike in the tourist season and there could be international implications if there was not an ambulance available for a tourist who required one. He pointed out that an ICV is not the same as an ambulance. He agreed that it was the view of all that "on call" should be eliminated.

Councillor Brendan Cronin supported Councillor Culloty in his Motion. He suggested that the meeting in September should have been scheduled earlier than it was. Councillor Cronin said it was his view that if a death occurs because of lack of a second ambulance there would be an public outcry.

Ms. Eithne McAuliffe confirmed that she attended the meeting in September and advised that it was agreed at the meeting that the HSE would conduct a review after a six months period. She told Members that the introduction of the ICV has been very successful and that it is an excellent addition to the current service. Ms. McAuliffe advised the Members that prior to this Forum Meeting she checked with Kerry General Hospital this morning and was told there was no issue presently. She confirmed that a Co-Ordinator has been put in place whose role it was to link with Public Health Nurses, Community Hospitals and Community Nursing Units in relation to the transfer of stretcher patients to their hospital appointments.

Ms. McAuliffe said she took the Councillors concerns on board and that she would raise them with Mr. Nicky Glynn of the Ambulance Services.

Mr. Gerry O' Dwyer reiterated that Ambulance personnel would come to the next Committee Meeting. He informed the Councillors that ICVs are being rolled out across the country to compliment the existing Ambulance Service and that the Ambulance Service was also supported by the Air Corps. Mr. O'Dwyer pointed out to Councillors that response times for ambulances were down.

## **5. Questions**

**5(a)** Councillor Brendan Cronin put forward the following Question

**“Is it the intention of the HSE to sell St Finans Hospital, Killarney, now that it is closed and to clarify how many acres of land are in HSE ownership associated with this hospital in Killarney.”**

A written response by Mr. Pat McCarthy, Assistant National Director Estates, was circulated and referred to.

Councillor Brendan Cronin suggested that the HSE liaise with Killarney Town Council and Kerry County Council with a view of discussing the potential of the St. Finan’s site. He said it would be of a significant benefit to Killarney and the surrounding area if they could purchase the site when it goes to sale. Councillor Cronin advised that he is concerned with the lack of land for Social Housing and that issue of road access is a significant one for Killarney. The availability of this land to the Town Council and County Council would be hugely significant.

Councillor Cronin queried the use of the old Isolation Hospital site. Mrs. Eithne McAuliffe confirmed that Cherryfield Services will be located there. She confirmed that four ten bedded household type dwellings will be built on this site. She told Councillors that the HSE was not ready yet to go to sale with the St. Finan’s site but confirmed that she would relay Councillor Cronin’s request to the HSE Estates Department.

Mr. Gerry O’ Dwyer informed the Members that the HSE did its utmost to facilitate local communities and sporting clubs and would continue to do so.

**5(b)** Councillor Mary Shields put forward the following Question

**“With regard to Abbeyfield House, Curraheen Road, which was recently purchased, suitably refurbished and opened as a centre for girls who needed HSE care, to help them to get their lives back on track -**

**Why is the official sign removed and the centre closed?  
What are HSE plans for the future use of this building?”**

A written response by Mr. Dermot Halpin, Service Director – South, Regional Children & Family Services, was circulated and referred to.

Councillor Shields informed the Members that Abbeyfield was purchased by the HSE and refurbished with a view to catering to the needs of seven young girls and that the Centre was now closed. She queried whether there were sufficient places in Cork to cater for the needs of the young girls that this centre was originally proposed for.

She also asked what the HSE was planning to do with this Centre. She said that people in the environs of the centre were concerned about this issue.

Mr. Gerry O’ Dwyer assured Councillor Shields that the HSE would liaise closely with people living in the neighbourhood as they have done previously and confirmed that this centre was not surplus to HSE requirements.

5(c) Councillor John Buttimer put forward the following Question

**"To ask the HSE, for Cork City and County, to list the capital projects completed since 2009, their location, the number of staff associated with the development and the purpose of the development. In the reply would the HSE also include projects for which funding has been agreed but not yet completed"**

A written response by Mr. Pat McCarthy, Assistant National Director Estates, HSE South, was circulated and referred to.

Councillor Buttimer thanked the HSE for the Response received. He advised that he was waiting on staffing information and would also like to receive the funding information requested.

Mr. Gerry O' Dwyer confirmed that the HSE was working on this and would revert to Councillor Buttimer as soon as possible.

5(d) Councillor Wayne Fennell put forward the following Question

**What plans have the HSE South put in place and what is the cost of implementing the HIQA Recommendations made due to the Savita Halappanavar case for the maternity unit at St. Luke's in Kilkenny?**

A written response by Ms. Anna-Marie Lanigan, Area Manager, South East Primary Community & Continuing Care & St. Luke's Hospital Kilkenny, was circulated and referred to.

Councillor Wayne Fennell thanked Ms. Anna Marie Lanigan for her Response. He stated that HIQA have made strong recommendation in this matter and that the Response he received prompted a number of queries for him which were as follows:-

- Who sits on the Implementation Group
- Will the Implementation Group visit each Maternity Unit to ensure the Recommendations are implemented
- Has St. Lukes identified what needs to be done in their Hospital to fulfil their obligations in terms of the Recommendations
- €500,000 was the figure identified for the implementation of the Recommendations for 2013 – How much is being allocated for 2014.

Mr. Gerry O' Dwyer responded to the queries raised by Councillor Fennell. He confirmed that the HSE is committed to undertaking an Audit to ensure the Recommendations will be implemented across all the Maternity Units in the HSE. He said that this would be done on a phased basis. He advised that Prof. M. Turner is charged with heading up this Programme. He agreed that it was in all our interests to ensure that we get this right. Mr. O' Dwyer proposed that a Member of the HSE's Quality & Patient Safety Department attend a Committee Meeting early in the New Year to discuss progress.

Councillor Fennell requested that Mr. Gerry O'Dwyer write to him outlining the additional information presented by him in response to his Question.

5(e) Councillor John Joe Culloty put forward the following Question

**What is the current situation in relation to the Blood Transfusion Service, taking blood from Haemochromatosis Sufferers?**

A written response by Mr. Ger Reaney, Area Manager, HSE Cork, was circulated and referred to.



Councillor J.J. Culloty thanked Mr. Reaney for his Response but pointed out that he was frustrated with some of its contents. He informed the Members that the IBTS was crying out for blood and that people who wanted to give blood were told that, because of their medical condition, it was not possible for them to donate. He informed the Members that many people are unaware that they have Haemochromatosis and that they donate blood on a regular basis and therefore it does not make sense to refuse blood from people with this condition. Councillor Culloty informed Members that there was a cost implication in the disposing of blood taken from haemochromatosis sufferers.

Mr. Ger Reaney acknowledged Councillor Culloty's interest and knowledge on this subject and also acknowledged that this was the third time Councillor Culloty has set down this Motion. He accepted that he was frustrated and understood his frustration. Mr. Reaney said that the IBTS had to work within tight protocols and procedures.

Mr. Reaney pointed out that the IBTS had commenced a pilot service in Dublin whereby patients with haemochromatosis could donate blood at the IBTS Clinic once they have a prescription. He confirmed that this programme will be launched in Cork in early 2014.

Councillor Ted Tynan asked to raise an issue about the Radiotherapy machines in CUH. He said that he was approached by a member of the public whose wife requires radiotherapy and her experience was that malfunctioning machines were causing delays for patients. Councillor Tynan hoped that money would be allocated to upgrade these machines. Councillor Tynan advised that his issue was with the Radiotherapy Machines and not with individual staff members. He hoped that money would be allocated to upgrade the machines.

Mr. Ger Reaney pointed out that this was an individual case. He informed those remaining that he made contact with the CEO of CUH in relation to this and was informed that there was no significant issue with the radiotherapy machines. Only routine repairs were undertaken as normal.

Councillor John Buttimer concurred with Councillor Tynan's views on the excellent work carried out by the staff in the Radiotherapy Unit. On another note he said that he would like to thank the Regional Health Forum staff for distributing the Health Matters.

## **6. Date and Time of next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Regional Health Forum, South will be held in **February 2014 (date and time to be confirmed)** at **2pm, Council Chambers, County Hall, Cork**.