

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the
Regional Health Forum West, held on Tuesday, 21st June 2011
at 2.00pm in Room 1, Education Centre,
HSE Offices, Merlin Park, Galway**

Miontuairiscí Cruinnithe Chinn Bhliana an Fhórait Réigiúnach Sláinte, a tionóladh ar an
Mháirt, 21 Meitheamh 2011, ag 2.00 .i.n, i Seomra 1 an tIonad Oideachais, Feidhmeannacht na
Seirbhíse Sláinte, Páirc Mheirlinne, Gaillimh

Chairperson

Councillor Pádraig Conneely

Members Present

Cllr Liam Blaney	Cllr Laurence Fallon	Cllr Gerry McLoughlin
Cllr Declan Bree	Cllr Michael Finnerty	Cllr Tom McNamara
Cllr Rose Brennan	Cllr Mary Hoade	Cllr Brian Meaney
Cllr Tim Broderick	Cllr Gordon Hughes	Cllr Paul Murphy
Cllr Ciaran Brogan	Cllr John Kennedy	Cllr Gerry Murray
Cllr John Carroll	Cllr Frank McBrearty Jr	Cllr Austin Francis O'Malley
Cllr Catherine Connolly	Cllr Michael McBride	Cllr Gerry Reynolds
Cllr Tom Connolly	Cllr Sean McGowan	Cllr Jerome Scanlan
Cllr Joe Cooney	Cllr John 'Rocky' McGrath	Cllr Kevin Sheahan
Cllr Shaun Cuniffe	Cllr Bernard McGuinness	Cllr Tony Ward
Cllr Ger Fahy	Cllr Aoiffe McLoughlin	Cllr Seamus Weir

Absent

Cllr Richard Butler
Cllr Michael Crowe
Cllr Michael Hourigan
Cllr Malachy Noone
Cllr Annie May Reape

In Attendance

Mr John Hennessy, Regional Director of Operations (RDO)
Mr Tony Canavan for LHM, Galway PCCC
Ms Chris Kane, Regional Co-ordinator for Acute Services
Mr Liam Minihan, Asst National Director, Finance
Mr Joe Molloy, Estates Manager
Mr Paudie O'Riordan, Area Operations Manager West, National Ambulance Service
Ms Shirley Murphy, Parliamentary Affairs West
Mr Chris Rudland, Consumer Affairs Area Manager

339/34/11 Election of Chairperson

As this is the Annual General Meeting of the Forum, the current Chairperson, Cllr Pádraig Conneely sought nominations for the position of Chairperson. Councillor Pádraig Conneely was proposed by Councillor Tom Connolly and seconded by Councillor Frank McBrearty. As there were no other nominations, Councillor Conneely was deemed elected and retained his position as Chairperson of the Regional Health Forum West.

Cllr Conneely thanked his Proposer and Seconder, and all members present.

340/34/11 Election of Vice Chairperson

The Chairperson sought nominations for position of Vice Chairperson. Councillor Michael Hourigan was proposed by Councillor Ger Fahy and seconded by Councillor Rose Brennan. As there were no other nominations, Councillor Hourigan was deemed elected and retained his position as Vice Chairperson of the Regional Health Forum West.

The Chairperson thanked all members present on behalf of Councillor Hourigan, who was not present at the meeting.

341/34/11 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 24th May 2011 were proposed by Councillor John Carroll, seconded by Councillor Austin Francis O'Malley and adopted.

342/34/11 Matters Arising

Travel and Subsistence Claims

Cllr Declan Bree referred to previous discussions and queries raised by Cllr Brian Meaney and himself, regarding circulation and publication of HSE Senior Managers' Travel Expense Claims. He highlighted that Members were advised that Travel Expenses were available on the HSE Web and/or that these details would be circulated to Members.

John Hennessy, RDO West, advised that it was not the intention of the HSE to mislead Members in this respect, however, it appears that these details were issued in response to an FOI Request and are in the public domain. The details were not published on the HSE Web, as previously stated, as there are some Data Protection issues around the publication of this information on the HSE Web. It is envisaged that this matter will be resolved in the near future. Liam Minihan, Asst National Director of Finance also apologized to Members for the misunderstanding.

Agreed: Details of HSE Senior Managers' Travel Expense Claims will be circulated to all members.

Property rented by the HSE / rented to third parties by the HSE

Cllr Declan Bree referred to responses awaited in relation to his previous Questions in relation to HSE Properties.

Agreed: It was agreed that Mr Joe Molloy, Estates Manager would address Cllr Bree's queries later in the meeting.

Emergency Surgery, GUH: W33Q735

Cllr Declan Bree requested further details from GUH in relation to his Question W33Q735, as agreed at the previous Forum meeting.

Agreed: It was agreed that the clarification sought by Cllr Bree would issue as soon as possible, to all Members of the Forum.

Contract Work: W33Q733

Cllr Declan Bree requested a response to his Question W33Q733 from the previous Forum meeting. Cllr Bree was advised that this information is being collated at present and will be available, for circulation to all members, by the 27th June, 2011.

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Agreed: Response to this question will issue to all members within the timeframe.

Mid West – Superbug

Cllr Kevin Sheahan queried why three weeks after requesting a meeting in the Mid West, at a Forum Hospital Committee, in relation to the Superbug in the Mid West, that he received a phonecall from a staff member in the Mid West to discuss same. He asked the HSE to take on board the delay in responding to his request. He stated that Forum Members need to have access to up to date information, so that they can allay public fears.

Agreed: John Hennessy agreed to take on board Cllr Sheahan's concerns.

Centralisation of Medical Card Application/Review Service - Motion No: W33M214

Cllr Connolly referred to a previous Motion passed by the Forum at the May 2011 meeting and that fact that the Medical Card Centralisation is going ahead on the 1st of July.

Agreed: It was agreed to amend the Forum's adopted Motion regarding the Centralisation of the Medical Card Application/Review Service, to take into account the approaching deadline of 1st July, 2011, and to bring it to the attention of the HSE and the Minister, as a matter of urgency.

Agreed: It was agreed to establish a clear protocol around Motions.

Agreed: It was agreed to invite Mr Patrick Burke from the Primary Care Reimbursement Scheme to come along to the next Forum meeting, to hear members' concerns and respond to any queries.

Queries/Representations in Writing

Cllr Ward proposed a Motion, to change Standing Orders so that Forum Members/Public Representatives did not have to put in writing any simple queries they had about constituents and their place on Waiting Lists. He highlighted that these members of the public had already submitted applications in writing and therefore a Public Representative action on their behalf shouldn't require submission of additional queries in writing. He advised that families give the Public Representatives their details and permission to raise their queries.

John Hennessy accepted Cllr Ward's comments on submitting queries in writing and agreed to examine the matter. He advised that the transfer of the Medical Card Application/Review Service is an example of ongoing change with the system and organization. The reality is that there are now less people employed and that is going to continue; this forces the HSE to adapt and change.

Agreed: It was agreed that the specific case raised by Cllr Ward, would be examined once details are made available.

343/34/11 Urgent Matters

The Chairperson agreed to allow two issues of immediate concern to Forum Members be raised and discussed before proceeding with the Agenda. They were:

Patient Transport of Dialysis and Cancer Patient

Members raised points in relation to recent media reports that the HSE West was discontinuing Patient Transport services to Dialysis and Cancer Patients, with immediate affect. Concerns included;

- Communications around this issue have been very poor; the general public and public representatives were not aware, yet media were,
- This issue is of serious concern for patients and their families; it will affect the most vulnerable,

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- Many questions are unanswered; why is the service being cut, what costs are involved; is this a short term measure; when will the cessation of the service commence and what alternatives are being put in place?,
- Is there a guarantee that there will be no cessation of the service while the 'Review of the Service' is being completed? Will this Review have an administration/external cost?,
- Considering the reconfiguration of some hospitals as Centres of Excellence, why has the budget not increased when there is now more demand on the services in these Centres?,
- HSE was in difficulty before, why is this different, why now?,
- This decision is based on Economics not Healthcare,
- Members propose that the HSE retract the decision.

John Hennessy advised that Patient transport is currently under review, huge amounts of money are spent on this service and eligibility criteria varies around the region.

Arrangements are currently indiscriminate, with no assessments around who is most in need and who has the ability to provide their own transport. The HSE will protect the most vulnerable in a flexible manner and Protocol / Process will be established around the management of Patient Transport services. Once a review has been completed by 30th June, the HSE West will make a further announcement. It is reasonable to accept that certain changes will take place in the West, as has occurred in other regions around the Country. Alternatives include working with Voluntary Services to provide transport and direct provision to those who most need the service. Patient Transport is separate to any Staff Transports, which are charged to the particular hospital/service. Most budgets have reduced; the fact that the Patient Transport budget remains the same is not a bad thing.

Mr Paudie O'Riordan advised that the Patient Transport budget currently sits with the Ambulance Service. The Patient Transport system has remained static over the past few years; there has been no increase in budget and any patient with a medical card is currently entitled to the service. Less has been spent to date compared with last year. There are plans to move Dialysis to the community in the future. From the perspective of Ambulance Service management, frontline services must be protected, i.e. Emergency Ambulance Services. €121m has been spent nationally on Patient Transport since 2006. Historically Patient Transport was open to all patients; it was offered to Dialysis and Cancer patients only for the past 2 – 3 years and it is now time to refocus it again.

Ms Chris Kane outlined current and any future plans for Renal Services in the HSE West, for Members.

Mr Liam Minihan advised that the Patient Transport budget for the HSE West is €2.5m for the last number of years. It is currently overspent by €920,000 more than it should be at this stage of the year.

Proposed closure of ED Services at night in Mid Western Regional Hospital, Limerick

Members raised points in relation to recent media reports that the HSE West was proposing to close ED Services during night time hours in Mid Western Regional Hospital, Limerick. Concerns included;

- Members of the public require clarity and reassurance about hospital services in the Mid West; the HSE must release a Press Statement clarifying the situation. Before today's meeting local media announced that the closure of MWRH ED was now not going ahead?
- Communication with the public and public representatives is an issue; they are getting information on a second hand basis. Forum Members are not being respected; representatives are trying to defend the HSE and can't.
- This is a national issue; if it's happening locally it will happen elsewhere around the country,

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- Staff in Roscommon County Hospital were called to a meeting today and advised that RCH would have no A&E or Surgery in the future. The age profile in Roscommon and Portlincula are the oldest in the Country.
- The ‘Golden Hour’ is not being taken into account, there will be transport issues, e.g. delays from Roscommon to Galway at Claregalway.
- How can those in Roscommon agree to Reconfiguration when they see what is happening in the Mid West.
- Galway University Hospital is already overcrowded; consideration needs to be given to the cost of transporting these patients from Limerick to Galway,
- The shortage of NCHDs is being used as an excuse to reduce services in smaller hospitals. When there seems to be unnecessary rules preventing the sourcing of NCHDs, i.e. asking a Doctor to do an examination/test.
- Ennis and Nenagh Hospitals were downgraded and it was expected that MWRH would be upgraded, that now seems to be downgrading also.
- Why are Graduate Doctors not taking up posts in HSE West hospitals? How many are trained, what is the outflow to the US and Canada?

Members were advised that NCHD recruitment issues are accelerating service changes countrywide. There are currently 81 NCHD vacancies out of 763; that is approximately a 10% deficit. Recruitment is ongoing, however, the Mid West, Roscommon and Castlebar are the areas most affected. These vacancies relate primarily to ED and the situation changes on a daily basis. In view of the urgent nature of this situation, hospitals are preparing contingency plans.

Mid West Hospitals’ Contingency Plans include options such as moving doctors between hospitals and/or temporary closure of EDs at night. Closure of an ED would be considered as a last resort and is not currently envisaged. There is a formal process to making any service change; this includes Executive sign off. Caution is urged in relation to what is being reported in the media and what is actually happening.

Recruitment of NCHDs is always difficult. A new Central Application and Recruitment System has been established to assist with the recruitment of NCHDs and this has helped to reduce the difficulties experienced in the past.

The Roscommon County Hospital situation is different to the Mid West. The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) has made clear recommendations in relation to the level of health service that should be provided in a smaller hospital like Roscommon County Hospital. These recommendations and other reports such as ‘*HIQA investigation into the quality and safety of services and supporting arrangements provided by the Health Service Executive at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital Ennis*’ highlight the fact that service profiles have to change in hospitals like Roscommon.

Agreed: John Hennessy confirmed that he is happy to participate in a briefing regarding RCH and Portlincula as before.

Agreed: Details/findings in relation to Graduate Doctors, as queried, will issue to Cllr J Carroll and all Members.

Agreed: John Hennessy will release a written statement regarding the current situation and future plans for MWRH ED, as soon as possible.

Brothers of Charity Deputation

Cllr Kevin Sheahan advised that prior to today’s Forum meeting, Forum members met with a deputation from the Brothers of Charity. They agreed to meet the deputation again to discuss their issues further, and request the

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attendance of the RDO or a representative. Cllr Sheahan requested clarification to this request after the meeting, as he had leave the Forum meeting.

Action: John Hennessy agreed that he or a representative would attend the deputation meeting between Brothers of Charity and Forum Members.

344/34/11 Chairman's Business

New Members

The Chairman welcomed the following four new Forum members; Cllrs Aoiffe McLoughlin, Michael McBride, Michael Finnerty and Shaun Cunniffe.

Forum Committees

The Forum Members who recently convened to consider options in relation to the composition of Forum Committees, recommended the following:

- There will be **One Committee of the full Forum**, i.e. 4 Committees per annum.
- Each meeting will be divided for debate purposes and alternate as follows:
North 1st, then West
West 1st, the North
(First half of the meeting will deal with one location, and the second will deal with the other)
- Chairmanship will rotate every second meeting.
- The Committee will run for 12 Months as per Standing Orders.

North: Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim, Galway, Donegal, Roscommon

West: Midwest, Galway, Roscommon

A Motion was submitted to today's Forum meeting for adoption by the Forum Members.

As highlighted by Cllr Bree, a Motion to change Standing Orders must be submitted to Members 10 days before a Forum meeting, as this Motion was not submitted 10 days prior to the meeting, it cannot be adopted until the following meeting.

Agreed: PCCC and Hospital Committees will take place as per usual in September 2011. The Motion in relation to Committees will then be considered at the next Forum meeting of the 27th September, 2011.

Next Meetings

The next meeting of the **Regional Health Forum** will be held on Tuesday, 27th September 2011 at 2.00pm in Room 1, Education Centre, Merlin Park, Galway.

The next meeting of the **Committees** will take place in Room 1, Education Centre, Merlin Park, Galway, as follows:

- PCCC Committee, Tuesday 6th September, 2011 at 2.00pm
- Hospital Committee, Tuesday 13th September at 2.00pm

345/34/11 Questions

Questions and Responses Document is available on: http://www.hse.ie/eng/About/Who/Regional_Health_Forum_West.html

The following matters were raised by members:

W34Q757 – Cllr Gordon Hughes – Ballinamore Community Hospital / Day Care Centre

Cllr Hughes queried when will the new community hospital/day care centre in Ballinamore commence construction?

Joe Molloy advised that this project is included in the Capital Plan which is due for sign off mid-year.

Agreed: J Molloy will establish when exactly the Capital Plan will be signed off.

W34Q761 – Cllr Brian Meaney – HSE West Electronic Data Management Policy

This question is linked to Cllr Meaney's other question, W34Q759.

Cllr Meaney was advised that all protocols and procedures in relation to data security and management, etc., are on the HSE Intranet; they are however, not available on the HSE External Website at present.

Agreed: The NHO Code of Practice and any other related policies will be circulated to all members.

W34Q760 – Cllr Brian Meaney – Potassium Iodate Tablets

Agreed: Taking into consideration the recent Nuclear disaster in Japan and the fact that there are strong traces of radioactive iodine as near as Oxfordshire in the UK, and in County Down, NI, further clarification will be sought from Emergency Planning and Public Health re the safeguards for members of the public.

W34Q764 – Cllr Padraig Conneely – Private Security Firms

Agreed: This information will be circulated as soon as possible, to all members.

W34Q772 – Cllr Declan Bree – Patient Query

Agreed: A response will issue to Cllr Bree as soon as possible.

W33Q773 – Cllr Declan Bree – Mater Private Hospital

Agreed: Response received by Cllr Bree at the meeting, will be circulated to all Members.

Agreed: Further clarification will be circulated re what type of services, and details for same, the Mater provides for Dooradoyle, Letterkenny General Hospital and Sligo General Hospital.

W34Q776 – Cllr Catherine Connolly – HSE Lands for Allotments

Cllr Connolly was unhappy with response received as it did not respond to her request for HSE lands for allotments. Mr Joe Molloy responded to Cllr Connolly and advised that it is not HSE National Policy to rent lands for allotments, etc., mainly for insurance reasons.

Agreed: Cllr Connolly will receive a written response in this regard.

W34Q778 – Cllr Catherine Connolly – Private Companies

Agreed: Further details will issue to Cllr Connolly re monies paid to the Private Companies, listed in the response, etc.

346/34/11 Motions

As there was no quorum to allow for adoption of any Motions, it was agreed to defer Motions until the next meeting.

Agreed: Motions will be brought to the top of the Agenda for the next meeting and all members present will have their Motions dealt with first. Members present were: *Cllrs Catherine Connolly, Declan Bree, Frank McBrearty, Michael McBride, Bernard McGuinness, Brian Meaney, Tom McNamara and Padraig Conneely.*

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The following Motion was adopted by Members, when raised by Cllr Declan Bree earlier in the meeting.

W34M218 That the Regional Health Forum West calls on the Government to honour the commitments
Cllr Declan made regarding the reopening of the Breast Cancer service in Sligo General Hospital.
Bree **Proposed by Councillor Bree, seconded by Councillors McGuinness, McBrearty and**
 McLoughlin.

347/34/11 Any Other Business

Representation by Cllr Catherine Connolly

Cllr Connolly advised that she has a representation with the HSE since mid May in relation to a Special Needs patient awaiting an appointment with a Special Needs Dentist and has been on a waiting list for two years.

The HSE advised Cllr Connolly in the last couple of weeks that a Principal Dental Surgeon would contact Councillor Connolly; she has yet to receive any communications.

Agreed: Tony Canavan will follow up on this matter immediately.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

Cathaoirleach/Chairman

Adopted at Regional Health Forum Meeting on Tuesday 27th September, 2011