

**Minutes of Regional Health Forum West meeting, held on Tuesday,
22nd November, 2011 at 1.00pm in Room 1, Education Centre,
HSE Offices, Merlin Park, Galway**

Miontuairiscí cruinnithe an Fhóiraim Réigiúnach Sláinte, ar an Mháirt, 22 Meitheamh 2011, ag 1.00 .i.n, sa an tIonad Oideachais, Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, Páirc Mheirlinne, Gaillimh.

Chairperson

Councillor Pádraig Conneely

Members Present

Cllr Liam Blaney	Cllr Ger Fahy	Cllr Tom McNamara
Cllr Declan Bree	Cllr Laurence Fallon	Cllr Brian Meaney
Cllr Rose Brennan	Cllr Michael Finnerty	Cllr Tony Mulqueen
Cllr Tim Broderick	Cllr Mary Hoade	Cllr Gerry Murray
Cllr Ciaran Brogan	Cllr Gordon Hughes	Cllr Tomas Mannion
Cllr Pat Burke	Cllr John Kennedy	Cllr Austin Francis O'Malley
Cllr Richard Butler	Cllr Michael McBride	Cllr Annie May Reape
Cllr John Carroll	Cllr Bernard McGuinness	Cllr Jerome Scanlan
Cllr Catherine Connolly	Cllr Aoiffe McLoughlin	Cllr Tony Ward
Cllr Tom Connolly	Cllr Gerry McLoughlin	Cllr Seamus Weir
Cllr Shaun Cunniffe	Cllr Paula McNamara	

Apologies

Cllr Frank McBrearty Jr

Cllr Sean McGowan

Cllr John 'Rocky' McGrath

Absent

Cllr Michael Hourigan

Cllr Gerry Reynolds

Cllr Michael Crowe

Cllr Kevin Sheahan

In Attendance

Mr Damien McCallion, for Regional Director of Operations (RDO)

Mr Tony Canavan for LHM, Galway PCCC

Ms Catherine Cunningham, GM, Roscommon PCCC

Ms Chris Kane, Regional Co-ordinator for Acute Services

Ms Caitriona Meehan, Senior Manager, Parliamentary Affairs West

Mr Liam Minihan, Asst National Director, Finance

Ms Shirley Murphy, Section Officer, Parliamentary Affairs West

Dr David O'Keeffe, Clinical Director for Acute and Continuing Care, Galway/Roscommon

Mr Paudie O'Riordan, Area Operations Manager West, National Ambulance Service

Mr Francis Rogers, Asst National Director, Human Resources

356/36/11 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 27th September 2011 were proposed, seconded and adopted by members.

357/36/11 Matters Arising

Mid West Reconfiguration

Members acknowledged receipt of a briefing/presentation, presented by Mid West Management on the Reconfiguration for Mid West Services, however, they requested further financial/budgetary details in writing.

Action: Liam Minihan will circulate further details to all Members.

HSE Estates Function

Cllr Declan Bree proposed a Motion as follows:

“Noting the ongoing failure of the HSE’s National Director of Estates to respond to questions table at meetings of the Regional Health Forum West in February 2011 and in June 2011, the Health Forum calls on the Minister for Health and the Chief Executive Officer of the HSE, to take all necessary action to ensure that the questions are answered without further delay”. (W36M238)

This Motion was seconded by Cllr Catherine Connolly and agreed.

Action: Damien McCallion confirmed that responses would issue to Cllr Bree within the next week in relation to his Forum Questions on HSE Properties.

W35Q780 – Cllr B Meaney – Targets for Orchidopexy Treatment

Cllr Meaney queried why he had not yet received clarification on his query, as agreed at the last Forum meeting.

Action: Kevin Kelleher will contact Cllr Meaney directly in relation to his query.

W35Q793 – Cllr Catherine Connolly – Airgeal Phoil

Action: Tony Canavan will provide further details regarding the number of beds closed at Unit 9A, Merlin Park Hospital, to Cllr Connolly.

W34Q778 – Cllr Catherine Connolly – Private Companies

Action: Damien McCallion committed to providing a further detailed breakdown to Cllr Connolly, as per her original question.

Bed Closures, Ballina District Hospital

Cllr Austin Francis O’Malley requested clarification on suggestions of bed closures at Ballina District Hospital.

Cllr O’Malley was advised that there were no final decisions made in relation to bed closures, however all hospitals across the region are making contingency plans as a result of budgetary constraints, the moratorium on the recruitment of staff and possible upcoming issues in relation to the number of people who may resign this year.

Action: Frank Murphy will contact Cllr O’Malley directly on the matter.

Absenteeism

There is a Task Force working on this issue across all areas in the West, in conjunction with Employee Relations, Performance and Development and local management. There are already improvements in relation to staff absenteeism in the HSE West.

Action: Francis Rogers will circulate to all members the Report being finalised by the HSE Task Force looking at Absenteeism.

Special Delivery Unit

Members were advised that the Special Delivery Unit has effectively replaced the National Treatment Purchase Fund. Once-off funding has been allocated by the Department of Health to Mid West Regional Hospital and Galway University Hospital to support the hospitals to deal with their Emergency Departments. The details on how to administer and utilise this funding are being worked out between the Department of Health and HSE.

Action: Members will receive details on the Special Delivery Unit, including contact details, workings of Unit, etc.

358/36/11 Chairman's Business

The Chairman acknowledged **apologies** from Cllrs Frank McBrearty Jr, Sean McGowan and John Rocky McGrath.

The Chairman **welcomed** Ms Betty Holmes and representatives from the Donegal Action for Cancer Care group and representatives from the Psychiatric Nurses Association, who requested to attend the meeting as observers.

The **4 Forum Chairpersons** will meet on Friday 2nd December.

Action: Members are asked to forward any items for discussion, to the Parliamentary Affairs Office by Wednesday 30th November.

The **Draft Schedule of Meetings for 2012** was circulated and agreed.

359/36/11 Forum Committees

It was agreed that the first meeting of the new Regional Health Forum West Committee will take place on Tuesday 6th December 2011, at 1.00pm in HSE Office, Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim.

There will be four meetings per year of the new committee, with full membership of the Forum and they will take place in the venues already designated, on rotation as follows: Manorhamilton, Limerick and Galway.

The two current Committee Chairpersons, Cllrs Austin Francis O'Malley and Tom McNamara, will chair each Committee on a rotational basis.

The Agenda will deal with Local Area Health issues, with each of the 5 areas within HSE West having half an hour each to discuss local issues with the respective local managers of the area.

Action: The committee structure will be reviewed in one year.

Action: The 'operational process' or Terms of Reference for the new Committee will be circulated to all members.

360/36/11 Questions

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

The following matters were raised by members:

W36Q813 – Cllr S Weir – Annual Energy Costs

Action: A written response will issue to Cllr Weir and all members as soon as possible.

W36Q814 – Cllr S Weir – Castlebar Hospital – Good Performance Rewards

D McCallion advised Cllr Weir that there is current no formal process for incentivizing and recognizing those hospitals who do perform well, however, the HSE West are looking at putting a system in place.

Cllr Weir wished to place on record his compliments to the staff of Castlebar General Hospital and its management team for their performance to date in saving costs while maintaining patient care. Cllr Annie May Reape supported Cllr Weir's comments.

W36Q815 – Cllr T Connolly – Primary Health Care Unit, Claremorris

Cllr Connolly was advised that the development of a Primary Care Unit at Claremorris is not in the current HSE Capital Plan and that the only source of funding available is the PPP. The HSE are working to identify priorities in every area in the organization.

Action: F Murphy will provide a list of all current Primary Care (Unit) projects to Cllr Connolly.

W36Q819 – Cllr B Meaney – Costs for Advertising

Action: A written response will issue to Cllr Meaney as soon as possible.

W36Q820 – Cllr B Meaney – Costs, erectile dysfunction drugs

Action: HSE West will follow up with PCRS in seeking a response to this question.

W36Q828 – Cllr Declan Bree – Breast Cancer Service, Sligo General Hospital

W36Q832 – Cllr Ciaran Brogan – Diagnostic Prostate Cancer Clinic, Letterkenny General Hospital

Action: Members requested the attendance of a representative from the National Cancer Control Programme, at the next Forum.

Action: Cllr Brogan requested that Forum Members from the Donegal area receive a briefing at the Forum Committee meeting on the 6th December.

W36Q829 – Cllr Declan Bree – Numbers of Hospital Beds

Action: A response to this question will be issued to Cllr Bree as soon as possible.

W36Q840 – Cllr Catherine Connolly – Dental Services, Carraroe Region

Action: T Canavan will provide further details in relation to waiting list figures to Cllr Connolly as soon as possible.

W36Q842 – Cllr Catherine Connolly – Tearmann Eanna / Aireagal Phoil

Action: T Canavan will examine how many, if any, residents of Tearmann Eanna came from Unit 9A Merlin Park and respond to Cllr Connolly further.

W36Q844 – Cllr Annie May Reape – Rheumatology Services, Mayo General Hospital

Action: Cllr Reape will be updated on the recruitment process (for the GUH consultant rheumatologist, who will provide a service in Mayo General Hospital) once completed.

W36Q846 – Cllr Tony Ward – Waiting Lists for Occupational Therapy

Action: Catherine Cunningham will provide further details to Cllr Ward on 1) How long children are waiting for OT services and 2) How many Occupational Therapists are working in the county.

361/36/11 Motions

W15M124 That a copy of the contract between the HSE and Mount Carmel Medical Group for the proposed development of a private co-located hospital on the grounds of Sligo General Hospital, be made available to the members of the Regional Health Forum.

Councillor Declan Bree requested this Motion be withdrawn

W35M227 That the Regional Health Forum West expresses its concern at the outsourcing of health services to private limited companies and calls on the Government to ensure that all sections of our national health service is maintained under public ownership and control.

Proposed by Cllr Declan Bree, seconded by Cllr Catherine Connolly and adopted.

- W36M229** I am requesting the executive of the West Regional Health Forum to call on the Government to lift the moratorium on front line nursing staff to replace the depletion of nursing staff as a result of retirements etc.
Proposed by Cllr Seamus Weir, seconded by Cllr Annie May Reape and adopted.
- W36M230** That the 3 Medical Consultant's in Roscommon hospital extend the hours in Medical Assessment to cover the hours 8 to 8 seven days per week in the interest of the patients and the people of Co Roscommon.
Proposed by Cllr Paula McNamara, seconded by Cllr Tony Ward and adopted.
- W36M231** Call on the HSE West to accommodate staff in the HSE West area who request to relocate to a similar service within the HSE West area; and allocate the WTE that they are replacing to their original service.
Proposed by Cllr Tom McNamara, seconded by Cllr Tony Ward and adopted.
- W36M232** That the Regional Health Forum West notes:
 - the 'FairCare' health reform plan of the Minister for Health is in chaos as a result of health cuts and that as a result there is a spiraling crisis in health service delivery and accident and emergency (A&E) services across the country;
 - the loss of almost 5,000 beds since 1980 and the more recent closure of more than 1,700 beds due to budget cuts and the recruitment embargo means there is a crisis of capacity in our public hospitals that is the immediate cause of the problems in A&Es. There are fewer than 3 acute hospital beds per 1,000 population in Ireland compared to an EU average of 4 beds per 1,000; and
 - since 2008 there are 6,000 fewer health-workers in the health service because of the recruitment embargo. These are overwhelmingly frontline staff including 1,000 nurses. The Chief Executive Officer of the Health Service Executive, Mr. Cathal Magee, admits there will be 7,000 more staff lost by 2014, a total loss of 13,000 or 11.7% (2008:111,000; 2011:105,000; 2014:98,000);
and further this Health Forum calls on the Government and HSE to:
 - lift the embargo on recruitment to the health service and to reverse the policy of closing hospital beds – reopening, as a matter of urgency, the 1,700 recently cut beds;
 - re-open the Breast Cancer Service in Sligo General Hospital;
 - abandon the policy of closing or downgrading local and regional hospitals;
 - impose no further cuts in the health budget in 2012."**Proposed by Cllr Declan Bree, seconded by Cllr Tony Ward and adopted.**
- W36M234** That the HSE would revise its method of assessment for medical cards for those aged 18-25 who are not in full time education.
Proposed by Cllr Laurence Fallon, seconded by Cllr Paula McNamara and adopted.
- W36M235** Given that over **21,000** people in Galway City have signed a petition calling on the Minister for Health and the HSE West not to close St Francis Nursing Home and given that the five local TDs have publicly endorsed the campaign and given the many motions passed unanimously by this Regional Health Forum West and also Galway City Council calling on the HSE West and the Minister for Health to keep St Francis Home open as Community Nursing Home and given the very positive assessment by HIQA in relation to the high standard of care and treatment in evidence there and given the backlog in the Fair Deal Program and further given that over 45 acute beds in the Regional Hospital are currently occupied by elderly patients who should but cannot be transferred and given the scandalous waste of taxpayer's money in renting private buildings in Galway and in particular almost 900,000 Euro per year on one HSE West Building alone on the Seamus Quirke Road, that this Regional Health Forum show solidarity with the 21,000 plus people who have signed the petition and also with the Residents of St Francis and **urgently requests the Minister for Health to intervene immediately and prevent the closure** and further to take all necessary steps to ensure the continuity of the facility as a Public Nursing Home and also **calls on the three Government TDs to act on their promise to organize an**

urgent meeting the Minister for Health.

Proposed by Cllr Catherine Connolly, seconded by Cllr Mary Hoade and adopted.

W36M236 At the November meeting of Regional Health Forum West, I will call on the executive to continue to operate fully the NOWDOC service from its base in Carrick-on-Shannon, there is a genuine concern and anger within the Carrick-on Shannon catchment area that the service will be withdrawn in February of 2012. This would lead to a situation where patients would have to travel to the Accident & emergency Dept. of Sligo General where they could be waiting for a full day or night to be looked after.

This motion was Lost as the proposer, Cllr Sean McGowan, was not present at the meeting.

W36M237 That the Director of the HSE West Mr John Hennessy inform the meeting the reason that GPs in the Roscommon Hospital Catchment area have to inform the Consultant by telephone and also send a letter to the Consultant every time they refer a patient to Roscommon County Hospital.

Proposed by Cllr Tony Ward, seconded by Cllr Paula McNamara and adopted.

It was agreed at this stage of the meeting, and in accordance with Standing Order 12.5 (c) to extend the meeting beyond the normal 5.00pm finishing time, to deal with all items on the Agenda.

362/36/11 HSE West Financial Update

Mr Liam Minihan briefed Members on the HSE West Financial Position as at September 2011 - available on: http://www.hse.ie/eng/About/Who/Regional_Health_Forum_West

Members raised the following queries/points:

- Will HSE West breakeven? Figures show up to September 2011, now November 2011.
- How much is currently being spent on Agency Staff? Why are we using Agency medical staff and not our own doctors who are immigrating?
- How many times has the National Cash Management Committee met, what are their contingency plans, what happens if HSE run out of money.
- What was the budget last year and what deficit was carried over?
- What are the implications of further budget cuts for St John's Hospital, Limerick?
- Costs relating to the pay budget have reduced by €22.2m in 9 months, yet Agency recruitment has increased, costing €24m, therefore the moratorium is costing money.
- Request the Chair of the Forum to raise these issues with the Minister
- If PCCC services are €2m in excess, why are we closing Public Nursing Homes.
- How much are we spending on frontline agency staff?
- Decisions re hospitals are being made in a rush, no thinking ahead.
- What is the management of the retirement process, can HSE refuse retirements of specific staff? Is there any succession/departure planning?
- Are well performing hospitals going to suffer, will they have to absorb other services overruns?
- Can the HSE impose a levy/penalty on Consultants pay for those not completing Private Health Insurance Claims.

HSE Management advised as follows:

The majority of agency costs relate to medical staffing, e.g. NCHDs. We are competing with other countries to employ medical staff, it is a very competitive market. No additional budget was provided for agency staffing.

The HSE has a national contract with agencies and rates have come down, however, this is not value for money but we are caught with the Moratorium.

It is expected that there will be further reduction in the HSE budget and any deficits at year end will be carried over to next year.

October figures are available however they must first go to the HSE Board before they can be released.

Improvements are evident.

It can take up to 150 days from some areas to collect income, however, great work has been achieved in some areas. Any monies owed over one year old are not written off, we make a bad debt provision on these.

Proposals from the National Cash Management Committee have gone to the HSE Management Team.

A deficit of €22m was carried over from 2010. Community Services were in credit last year and Hospitals were overspent.

Staff have a contractual right to retire, the HSE have no control over retention of staff wishing to retire. The HSE will have a clearer view of proposed retirements, within the next 4 – 6 weeks.

We are facing further budget cuts next year and community services will continue to support hospitals where necessary, there could be further reconfiguration of services. Whatever budgetary adjustments are made nationally, all hospitals will have to take them on.

363/36/11 Any Other Business

MWRH Name Change

Cllr J Scanlan queried if there have been any discussions or proposals to change the name of the Mid Western Regional Hospital.

Action: This matter will be examined and clarified with Cllr Scanlan as soon as possible.

Retirements

Cllr Catherine Connolly wished to place on record her gratitude, and that of all Forum members, to former HSE Staff who managed and provided administrative support to the Regional Health Forum, in particular Dr Seán Conroy, Seamus Gallagher and Pauline Flanagan. She stated that it was unfortunate that an opportunity was not given to the Forum members to personally thank these staff members and wish them well.

Action: Members comments will be passed on to the relevant individuals.

364/36/11 Next Meeting of the Regional Health Forum West

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 28th February 2012, commencing at 1.00pm in Room 1, Education Centre, Merlin Park, Galway.

The next Committee Meeting will take place in Manorhamilton on **Tuesday 6th December, 2011, commencing at 1.00pm.**

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

Cathaoirleach/Chairman

Adopted at Regional Health Forum Meeting on Tuesday 28th February, 2012