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**Minutes of Meeting of the Regional Health Forum, West held on  
Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2007 at 2.00pm in  
Room 1, Education Centre, Health Service Executive West,  
Merlin Park, Galway**

Miontuairiscí cruinnithe an Fhóiraim Réigiúnach Sláinte, an tIarlthar a tionóladh ar an Mháirt 26  
Meitheamh i Seomra 1, an tIonad Oideachais, Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte,  
Páirc Mheirlinne, Gaillimh

**Chairperson/Cathaoirleach**

Councillor Joe Hennessy who presided

**Members Present/Comhaltaí i Láthair**

Councillor David Alcorn

Councillor Patsy Barry

Councillor Declan Bree

Councillor Ciaran Brogan

Councillor Bill Chambers

Councillor Josie Conneely

Councillor Pádraig Conneely

Councillor Catherine Connolly

Councillor Joe Cooney

Councillor Pat Daly

Councillor Aodh Flynn

Councillor John Hogan

Councillor Charlie Hopkins

Councillor Michael Hourigan

Councillor Colm Keaveney

Councillor John Kennedy

Councillor Sean McEniff

Councillor Sean McGowan

Councillor Bernard McGuinness

Councillor Tomás Mannion

Councillor Brian Meaney

Councillor Eugene Murphy

Councillor Austin Francis O'Malley

Councillor Tim Quinn

Councillor J.J. Reid

Councillor Gerry Reynolds

Councillor Eddie Staunton

Councillor Brigid Teefy

Councillor Lilly Wallace

Councillor Tony Ward

Councillor Bridie Willers

**Absent/As Láthair**

Councillor Aidan Colleary

Councillor Leonard Enright

Councillor Donal Lyons

Councillor Patsy O'Brien

Councillor Noreen Ryan

Councillor Kieran Walsh

**Apologies/Leithscéalta**

Councillor Richard Butler

**In Attendance/I láthair freisin**

Professor Brendan Drumm, Chief Executive Officer, HSE

Dr. Seán Conroy, Director, Regional Health Office, HSE West

Mr. Seamus McNulty, Assistant National Director, PCCC, HSE West

Mr. Alan Moran, Hospital Network Manager, HSE West

Mr. John Hennessy, Hospital Network Manager, HSE West

Ms. Jacky Jones, Functional Manager Health Promotion, HSE West

Ms. Caitríona Meehan, Area Communications Manager, HSE West

Mr. Pat Daly, Chief Ambulance Officer, HSE West

Mr. Paddy Duffy, Acting Chief Ambulance Officer, HSE West

Mr. Seamus Gallagher, Senior Administrative Officer, Regional Health Office, HSE West

Ms. Shirley Murphy, Acting Section Officer, Regional Health Office, HSE West

**119/11/07 Minutes/Miontuairiscí**

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2007 were proposed by Councillor John Hogan, seconded by Councillor Tony Ward and adopted.

**120/11/07 Chairman's Business/Gnóthai an Chathaoirligh**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor John Kennedy, North Tipperary County Council who is replacing Councillor Denis Ryan on the Regional Health Forum, West. He wished to convey his thanks and good wishes to Councillor Denis Ryan for his contribution to the workings of the Regional Health Forum.

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The Chairman congratulated Senator Fidelma Healy-Eames on her election to Seanad Eireann. Galway County Council have not yet nominated a replacement for the Forum. He wished to thank Senator Healy-Eames for her contribution to the workings of the Forum.

The Chairman welcomed Professor Drumm to the meeting of the Forum.

### **121/11/07 Minutes of Regional Health Forum Committee Meetings/Miontuairiscí cruinnithe na gCoistí Fhórait Réigiúnach Sláinte**

The approved Minutes from the Primary, Community & Continuing Care Committee Meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2007 were circulated with the Agenda for the meeting.

The approved minutes of the Hospital Committee Meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> February were attached to the Agenda of the meeting.

### **122/11/07 Questions/Ceisteanna**

#### **W11Q100 - Cllr. Gerry Reynolds**

"What is the up-to-date position regarding the provision of the new Community Hospitals at Ballinamore and Carrick-on-Shannon in Co. Leitrim?"

#### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

In relation to the Community Hospital/Primary Care Centre in Ballinamore, we are still awaiting approval from the HSE Estates Office to proceed to the next stage, which is the appointment of a design team. In relation to the Community Hospital in Carrick-on-Shannon, the documentation is being finalised with the Local Health Office for submission to the HSE Estates Office for approval to proceed to the next stage, which is the appointment of a design team.

#### **W11Q101 - Cllr. Gerry Reynolds**

"The HSE are in possession of a property at Athyrory, Carrick-on-Shannon which was offered for sale some years ago by the North Western Health Board. With the establishment of the HSE, no progress has been made to sell this property. The site and buildings have now become in a state of disrepair and is an embarrassing eyesore at the entrance to Carrick-on-Shannon. What plans, if any, have the HSE to develop or sell the site?"

#### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

We understand that this query refers to property located at Atteyfinely, Carrick-on-Shannon. The ex-North Western Health Board did give consideration to the sale of this property/site but decisions were deferred pending the set up of the HSE. Any decision to proceed with a disposal now requires the approval of the HSE Board at national level. Estates Management of the HSE is currently undertaking an option appraisal on the disposal of this property.

#### **W11Q102 - Cllr. Michael Hourigan**

"I am asking the HSE, in review of its Acute Hospital Review, what is the position of A & E in St. John's Hospital, Limerick?"

#### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

The Consulting group (Horwath Consulting Ireland in association with Teamwork Management Services) are currently finalising the report on the review of acute services in the Mid West, which is expected to be submitted to the HSE Board by year-end. The consultants have been asked to consider and make recommendations on the options for reconfiguring and redesigning services. They are to identify elements of healthcare that can be most effectively delivered at each site in the mid-west and set out what needs to be done to achieve this objective. The report will also include recommendations on best practice in relation to governance arrangements and contain a high-level implementation plan. Recommendations for the future configuration of clinical services, including A&E, critical care, acute medicine and surgery together with diagnostic services for each of the hospitals in the Mid-West area including St. John's Hospital will also be set out in the report.

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### **W11Q103 - Cllr. Charlie Hopkins**

"Has the review into sharing of services between Roscommon County Hospital and Portlincula Hospital been completed and if so, what are the results of the review?"

#### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

Staff in both hospitals are actively engaged with the review. A series of meetings and workshops is under way and it is expected that a recommendation on the creation of joint Departments of Surgery and Anaesthesia can be put forward before the end of this year.

### **W11Q104 - Cllr. Charlie Hopkins**

"Where will the Consultant be based under any new configuration of services?"

#### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

This depends on the outcome of the review – please see reply to W11Q103 and W11Q107.

#### **Combined response for W11Q103 and W11Q107**

Staff in both hospitals are actively engaged with the review. A series of meetings and workshops is under way and it is expected that a recommendation on the creation of joint Departments of Surgery and Anaesthesia can be put forward before the end of this year.

### **W11Q105 - Cllr. Charlie Hopkins**

"What is the delay in opening the new one bed hospice unit at the Plunkett Home in Boyle?"

#### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

The Hospice unit at the Plunkett Community Nursing Unit, Boyle, Co Roscommon has recently been updated to a very high standard. The capital investment provided for this service to date is EUR151,225.14. However, it remains closed due to an industrial relations dispute with the INO, which we are currently endeavouring to solve through the Labour Relations process.

### **W11Q106 - Cllr. Tony Ward**

"What impact will the latest ban on the recruitment of front line staff have on patient care at Roscommon County Hospital and Portlincula Hospital, Ballinasloe? At present, there are vacancies at both hospitals that urgently need to be filled. What is the current position with regards to those vacancies?"

#### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

The impact of the recruitment ban will depend on how long it lasts. It was introduced for the month of September initially, and is to be reviewed before a decision is made to extend it or not. Some vacancies are being filled where the Health Service Executive has a contractual commitment to new employees, in certain cases. Other front line vacancies are being managed as far as possible by redeployment of staff to cover positions critical to delivery of safe services to patients.

### **W11Q107 - Cllr. Tony Ward**

"When will the review of the surgical services at Roscommon County Hospital be complete and if the review is complete, what are the results of the review?"

#### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

#### **Combined response for W11Q107 and W11Q103**

Staff in both hospitals are actively engaged with the review. A series of meetings and workshops is under way and it is expected that a recommendation on the creation of joint Departments of Surgery and Anaesthesia can be put forward before the end of this year.

### **W11Q108 - Cllr. Tony Ward**

"Does the HSE have any forthcoming plans to implement a transport service for elderly and disabled patients who need to attend a local or regional hospital?"

#### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

The answer to this Question is not available for this meeting but will be available for next meeting.

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### **W11Q109 - Cllr. Declan Bree**

"What is the current situation relating to the Dexa Bone Scanner which was lying idle in Sligo General Hospital for over two years? Where is it located? Is it being used to service public patients five days a week? Do private operators have the use of the Scanner and for what period?"

### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

Due to of lack of space in Sligo General Hospital, agreement was reached with St Joseph's Hospital to accommodate the Dexa Scanning Machine in St Josephs Hospital, Garden Hill. In order to support the Dexa Scanning Service, an Osteoporosis Clinical Nurse Specialist was recruited and has recently been appointed. The staff member, together with other associated staff, required training and this is nearing completion. It is anticipated that the service will be commissioned in October. The Dexa Scanner Service will be provided three days per week for Health Service Executive public patients. This will be a substantial enhancement of the Dexa Scanning Service in the region and will augment the existing services available at Our Lady's Hospital, Manorhamilton. It has been agreed that in return for providing accommodation and other facilities for the scanner and Health Service Executive public patients, St. Joseph's may avail of it for their patients at other times.

### **W11Q110 - Cllr. Declan Bree**

"Given that the Ombudsman Office has called on public bodies to strive for the highest standards of administration in their dealings with the public and noting that the Ombudsman has stated that dealing 'properly' with people means dealing with them promptly and without undue delay, I wish to know when I can expect an acknowledgement and/or reply to my correspondence of the 27<sup>th</sup> July to the Assistant National Director PCCC – HSE West and the reminders I sent to him on the 1<sup>st</sup> September and the 13<sup>th</sup> September and when I can expect an acknowledgement and/or reply to my correspondence of the 20<sup>th</sup> July to the Assistant National Director PCCC – HSE West and the reminders I sent to him on the 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1<sup>st</sup> September and the 13<sup>th</sup> September and I wish to know that is the policy of the HSE in regard to responding to correspondence?"

### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

The Office of the Assistant National Director of PCCC, HSE West, places great emphasis on prompt and accurate responses to requests for information from many varied sources, including the Regional Health Forum members.

Unfortunately, in this case there was a breakdown in communication, for which we sincerely apologise. Responses to both questions were issued directly to Cllr. Bree on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2007.

### **W11Q111 - Cllr. Declan Bree**

"That the Forum be provided with a breakdown of the number of catering staff servicing each acute and community hospital in the region, the number of meals served per day in each hospital, whether the service is operated by the HSE directly or by private operators, and the cost of providing the service in each hospital".

### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

The answer to this Question is not available for this meeting but will be available for the next meeting.

### **W11Q112 - Cllr. Declan Bree**

"Taking into consideration the fact that this Forum was told that the new Primary Care Centre in Coolaney, Co. Sligo, was expected to be handed over the Health Service Executive in February 2007 and that it was expected that the centre would be fully commissioned in April 2007, I wish to know what the current situation is regarding the Centre and why there has been such a lengthy delay in advancing this project".

### **HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

The expectation that the Primary Care Centre in Coolaney would open in April 2007 was based on facts earlier in the year. However, project management identified an extensive snag list and further delays occurred in relation to the equipping process. It is now planned that the GP will occupy the facility with effect from Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007.

**W11Q113 - Cllr. Sean McGowan**

“To ask the Executive of the HSE North & West to outline the list of services and times/days that are currently available at the Primary Care Centre in Dromod, also what plans are there to provide a full complement of services at this Centre”.

**HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

The following HSE services are currently provided in Dromod Primary Care Centre:

General Practitioner	-	Tuesday am
Community Welfare	-	Tuesday am
Public Health Nursing	-	Tuesday am
Regional Counselling Service	-	Friday (at time agreed with clients)
Child Development Clinic.	-	Thursday and Friday (by appointment)
Child Care Worker	-	Friday (all day)

In addition, the centre is used as a part-time base for Community Speech & Language Therapy and for the Home Support Service.

Services are provided on the basis of demand at the Dromod Centre. However, due to the population base, a full work schedule may not be required at Dromod for all service areas. In order to make best use of staff resources and increase effectiveness and efficiency, this is kept under review by each service area and appointments are provided at the centre as appropriate.

**W11Q114 - Cllr. Sean McGowan**

“To ask the Executive when it is expected that work will commence on the provision of the new Community Hospital/Day Centre at Carrick-on-Shannon and the Community Nursing Unit in Ballinamore, what type of care and treatment will be provided at each location and the anticipated time frame for the opening of both units”.

**HSE Reply/Freagra an FSS**

HSE Sligo/Leitrim is awaiting approval from the HSE National Estates Office to proceed to the next stage, which is the appointment of a design team for the Community Hospital in Carrick-on-Shannon and one for the Community Nursing Unit in Ballinamore. In Ballinamore, the Community Hospital will provide Long Stay Care and Palliative Care Services. Day Care Services will include a social model of care with interaction activities and personal care needs. There will also be a Primary Care Centre which will encompass the core multi-disciplinary team of General Practitioners, Public Health Nurses, Mental Health team, Occupational Therapy, Social Work, Chiropody Services, Community Welfare Services, Physiotherapy Services, Dietetic Service and Home Help Service. In Carrick-on-Shannon the Community Hospital will include Day Care, Long Stay Care Services, Respite Services and Palliative Care Services. There will also be a consultant led rehabilitation/convalescent and assessment/intermediary care service. The anticipated time frame for the opening of both units will depend on approval to proceed at national level.

**122/11/07 HSE Update/An scéal is déanai ón bhFSS**

The HSE Update was circulated to members of the Forum at the meeting.

**123/11/07 Any Other Business/Aon Ghnó eile**

Councillor Austin Francis O'Malley requested the up-to-date position regarding Minor Capital Allocation which was received by the former Western Health Board towards the upgrading and refurbishment of a Convent at Louisburgh, Co. Mayo for Services for the Elderly.

It was agreed that Mr. Seamus McNulty, Assistant National Director, would contact the Councillor directly on the matter.

**124/11/07 Visit by Professor Drumm/Cuairt an tOll. Drumm**

Professor Drumm addressed members of the Forum. Following his address, members raised a number of issues which were responded to by Professor Drumm and other Managers of the HSE. The issues raised included the need for better communication between the HSE nationally and locally, particularly with elected representatives and with members of the Forum. The Forum members should be informed of any major

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announcements, new initiatives and any local HSE openings in their own area. The need for members of the Forum to meet with local Service Managers, both PCCC and Hospitals on a regular basis in order that they are briefed. HSE Managers should be available to take calls and also deal with issues in the media as they arise. The Health Boards structure was more accountable locally. The HSE is unwieldy, faceless, insulated and protected. Organisations such as Breast Check and National Treatment Purchase Fund are separate organisations from the HSE, which is an act by the Department of Health & Minister for Health, to keep organisations separate, however they all affect patients' lives.

Members expressed concern regarding the recent impact on the services in a number of services, both Hospital and Community.

- The urgent need to provide transport services for vulnerable patients but particularly for the elderly to attend outpatient clinics.
- The need to control MRSA in the Hospitals.
- 24 Hour Ambulance Service in East Clare.
- Difficulties with anti-social behaviour by residents whose accommodation is supplemented by HSE under the Rent Supplement Scheme, particularly in Limerick City.
- The need for expansion of Maternity Services in Limerick City.
- The need for Air Ambulance Services, particularly for island communities and the need to have specific review of services to island communities.
- HSE is incapable of managing its budgets and WTE's and it is time that the Minister and Government tackle the HSE.
- The HSE has no accountability, no openness, no transparency.
- HSE continues to spend large amounts on rent of premises, while vacant buildings owned by the HSE lie idle.
- The need for elective surgery, cancelled on a regular basis in major acute hospitals due to overcrowding in A & E, etc.
- The delay in restoration of elderly beds in St. Francis Home and the provision of longstay public beds in Co. Galway.
- The need to improve and expand the Home Help Services in the community and also provide support to families, so as to maintain their elderly relatives in their own homes which is much more preferable.
- The impact of the recent embargo on local hospitals such as Ennis.
- Use of embargo as a blunt instrument and unfair.
- Considerable waiting lists in a number of areas such as Speech & Language and Endocrinology.
- The public system will be subsidising the private system by way of location.
- Why there are delays in the completion of review of surgical services in Portiuncula and County Hospital, Roscommon and why members are not being kept up-to-date.
- Delays in the provision of Hospice Unit in Plunkett Home.
- The serious concern regarding considerable delays in the roll-out of Breast Check in the West and North West areas.
- The major difficulties posed to patients from County Donegal who have to travel long distances for cancer services in Dublin.
- Lack of acknowledgement and follow-up by the HSE Management in relation to Motions passed by the Forum.
- Importance of the role of community hospitals in supporting patients in the community.
- The present Home Care package system must replace the major responsibilities on families of relatives in relation to employment of personnel, payment of wages, PRSI, etc.
- Need to upgrade Ambulance Bases in Nenagh and Roscrea.
- The importance of Ambulance staff being highly qualified to administer drugs at the scene of accidents, etc.
- Present position on review of Hospital Services in the Mid-West area.
- Provision of Alzheimers' Units in Roscrea, Co. Tipperary.
- Why corrective action was not taken in relation to HSE budget earlier in the year.

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- Onus should be not made to Managers when the HSE is overspent and not working.
- Need for consensus and unity of all the various groups to improve the services.
- Lack of co-ordination and co-operation, resulting in considerable delays.
- Discharges and increased costs within the HSE.
- Services are sometimes run to suit the staff and not the patient.
- Major room for improvement in the provision of services.
- HSE must live within the budget regardless of which party is in government.
- The need for Air Ambulance Service in the Western area.
- Why the HSE is in the process of purchasing land in a central location in Ennis while a number of years ago, sold off prime property at Ennis Psychiatric Services.
- An explanation of how decisions are made. No engagement by HSE when decisions are made. A breakdown of trust in the HSE.
- Are funds being shared equitably between all hospitals?
- The HSE should be run like a business and provide value for money.
- Is there scope for cuts in administrative staff rather than in frontline services?

During such discussions, it was agreed that Mr. Tony O'Brien, CEO of Breast Check should be invited to a future meeting of the Forum.

It was also agreed that Ms. Mary Harney, TD and Minister for Health would be invited to a future meeting of the Forum.

It was also agreed that the following documents would be circulated, i.e.:

- A recent report in respect of Orthodontic Services
- The contract principles in relation to the co-location
- A map setting out the Primary Care Units in the HSE West Area
- Details of waiting lists in Endocrinology Services & Speech & Language Therapy

Professor Drumm thanked the Chairman and members of the Forum for inviting him to meet them once again.

He then gave a general overview in relation to the HSE during which he referred to the following:

From a recent survey carried out by the School of Public Health & Population Science in University College, Dublin (UCD) in partnership with Lansdowne Market Research, showed that there is a high level of satisfaction with the public in the care received in Hospital and Community settings. 85% of outpatients, 95% of GP patients and 89% of other Community services rated their experience as excellent, very good or good. This study was carried out throughout the country and involved face-to-face interviews with over 3,500 people.

This was similar to a Quality Society Survey completed last year, which recorded high satisfaction rates with the services in A & E Units.

He also referred to the high activity levels in each of the services which resulted in the HSE producing more than planned in its Service Plan. He referred to a number of recent reports including Bed Occupancy Levels which showed that over 40% of patients were inappropriately admitted in Acute Hospitals. The length of stay can vary between Hospitals. Developments on the Winter Initiative between Hospitals and PCCC Services resulting in considerable reduction in delays and overcrowding in A & E Department.

The importance in developing Services for the Elderly. The changes in the way things are done in the Health Services such as discharge of patients at weekends similar to during the week, etc.

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The Transformation Programme which is dealing with changes in the way services are organised in order to provide better services for patients was working very well.

In response, Professor Drumm acknowledged difficulties with communications between members of the Forum, the HSE and it is an area he will review in consultation with the Directors and HSE Managers in general.

### **125/11/07 Notices of Motion/Fógraí Rúin**

Due to time constraints, all the Notices of Motion have been deferred to the November meeting.

### **126/11/07 Date and Time of Next Meeting/Dáta agus Am an Chéad Chruinnithe Eile**

The next meeting of the Regional Health Forum, West, will be held on **Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2007 at 2.00pm in the HSE Offices, Room 1, Education Centre, Merlin Park, Galway.**

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**Signed:**

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**Cathaoirleach/Chairman**

Adopted at Regional Health Forum Meeting on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2007

**Date:**

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