



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

**Minutes of HSE Board Meeting
Wednesday 21st October 2020**

A meeting of the Board of the Health Service Executive was held on Wednesday 21st October 2020 at 10am by video conference.

Present: Ciarán Devane (Chairperson), Deirdre Madden (Deputy Chairperson), Aogán Ó Fearghaíl, Brendan Lenihan, Fergus O’Kelly, Fergus Finlay, Fiona Ross, Sarah McLoughlin, Yvonne Traynor, Tim Hynes.

In Attendance for Board Meeting:

Paul Reid (CEO), Colm Henry (CCO), Stephen Mulvany (CFO), Dean Sullivan (CSO), David Leech (ND Communications), Fran Thompson (ND ICT) Niamh O’ Beirne (National Lead Testing and Tracing), Anne-Marie Hoey (ND HR), Anne O’Connor (COO), Dara Purcell (Secretary), Niamh Drew, Amy Phillips.

Joined the meeting: Jim Curran (ND, Head of Estates), Geraldine Smith (Internal Audit), John Kelly (Corporate Affairs).

1. Governance and Administration

The Chairperson, Ciarán Devane welcomed members to the meeting.

At the start of the meeting the Board met in the absence of management. No conflicts of interest were declared.

The Chairperson updated the Board on his recent engagement with the Minister since the last Board meeting noting the ongoing work in relation to the allocation of funding for NSP 2021, testing and tracing, and the Winter Plan. The Chairperson also informed the Board that he had received correspondence from the Minister in relation to Vaccine Controls – Planning and Implementation of COVID-19 Immunisation Programme and also a PPE Audit on system & controls on sourcing, management and usage of PPE and confirmed that both of these letters would be circulated to Board members.

The recent advertising of the two Board vacancies was discussed. The Chairperson noted these were ministerial appointments and would keep the Board abreast of any updates.

The minutes from the Board meeting held on the 25th September 2020 were approved.

The CEO and Executive Management joined the meeting at 10.20 am

2. Chief Executive Officers Update

2.1 CEO Monthly Report

The CEO presented his monthly report to the Board which had been circulated prior to the meeting, setting out a number of key strategic areas.

Budget 2021

The CEO provided feedback to the Board on the dialogue and collaboration between colleagues in the HSE and the Department of Health (DoH) in the lead up to the finalisation of the Budget 2021. He advised the engagement had been very constructive and positioned the health sector very positively with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) and strengthened the Government's trust and confidence in the HSE. He confirmed Budget 2021 provides approximately €4 billion additional funding to the health sector. The Board strongly welcomed the budget allocation for the health sector considering the context of the challenge to the economy in 2020 and 2021.

The CFO briefed the Board on the ongoing work with the DoH to finalise the Letter of Determination (LoD) which is expected to be received early next week. In response to questions raised by Board members on potential gaps in funding for 2021, the CFO confirmed that this is being assessed and will be addressed as part of the National Service Plan process.

COVID-19

The CEO provided an update on the response to COVID-19. The Board discussed the capacity of the health service to respond to the virus now and in the coming weeks coinciding with the mobilisation of the Winter Plan initiatives, managing service continuity and meeting the demand for testing and tracing. In response to concerns raised by the Board regarding the demand for critical care beds the CCO informed the Board we have surge capacity to grow critical care bed capacity to 350. Critical care clinical leaders have indicated if the demand for critical care beds grows above 350, it may negatively impact the provision of other services. He advised public behaviours and public health measures will be the

most effective actions to prevent this scenario from occurring.

Finance Update

The CFO provided a briefing to the Board on the headline HSE financial results for August 2020 noting the end of August total variance against budget is €1,576.4million but taking account of any costs associated with COVID-19, the HSE monthly reports are showing a surplus of €214.6million against the original NSP 2020 budget.

The COO provided an update on the performance and delivery of the August 2020 performance data highlighting key performance challenges in scheduled care, unscheduled care, cancer services, cervical check, and non-acute services. The Board discussion focused on the challenges in relation to cancer services and cervical check noting the achievement of targets in the Rapid Access Clinics continues to be a challenge. The Board were advised centres performing below expected levels are being reviewed by the new Clinical Lead at the National Cancer Control Programme. The low uptake of screening invitations (less than 10%) that have now been issued to women who are overdue their screening test was discussed as a significant concern. The Board emphasised the need for strong communications to encourage a greater uptake of attendance for cervical screening. The COO informed the Board that the Revised Estimates of Activity/Targets 2020 will be considered by the Board's Performance and Delivery Sub Committee on 23 October 2020.

Winter Plan

The CEO advised a Programme Management Office (PMO) is being established within the Office of the COO and will provide management and coordination across six programme domains. The PMO will issue regular reports to EMT and Board members on the progress of the Winter Plan.

Citywest

The CEO briefed the Board on the new licence agreement for the use of Citywest Hotel and Conference Centre as a National Self-Isolation Facility until June 2021.

COVID-19 Vaccinations

The CEO briefed the Board on the arrangements for the HSE COVID-19 Immunisation Strategy Group, chaired by the DoH and informed by the National Immunisation Advisory Group. He also confirmed HSE procurement representatives are involved in the EU Joint Procurement Group. To ensure that the HSE, is fully prepared to commence a COVID-19 Immunisation Programme as soon as a vaccine is available, the CEO convened a COVID-19 Immunisation Implementation Senior Oversight Team, which he chairs and a COVID-19 Immunisation Programme implementation team which will be chaired by Dr Lorraine

Doherty, Clinical Director for Health Protection, supported by a number of local implementation subgroups. Progress from this team will be reported directly to the CEO who has also convened a small oversight group comprising of several EMT members and the National Director of Procurement. The Board highlighted the necessary arrangements to ensure that the complex programme of work involved in the planning and implementation of a COVID-19 immunisation programme receives the necessary senior management attention as a key priority for 2021 and that the necessary resources are assigned to the work. The Board will maintain close oversight of progress being made over the coming weeks and months.

Board members emphasised the learnings associated with the flu vaccine should be applied to the COVID-19 vaccine. Following concerns around alternatives to the Advance Purchase Agreement (APA), the CEO advised clarification is being sought from the DoH regarding the approach to vaccine procurement, and a number of complex procurement and logistical challenges will need to be worked through over the coming months, informed by the significant learnings from COVID-19 procurement to date.

Disability services:

The CEO and COO met with the Minister for Disability, Anne Rabbitte TD, to discuss the transfer of Department, including wider discussions on disability services and policy, noting its intent is to appoint a clinical lead on disability services which will be brought to the Board.

In response to questions on the HSE's initial consideration of the Government's decision to transfer Disability policy and funding oversight from the DoH to a new Department, the COO confirmed the HSE has conveyed initial legal considerations regarding the potential impact of this decision for the HSE.

Testing and Tracing

The CEO and N. O'Beirne addressed the current situation regarding Testing and Tracing.

The Board were informed that last week saw a c.18% increase from the previous week in demand for testing, and demand for testing in the community has increased by a factor of 1.3 in the last six weeks. N. O'Beirne advised the National Contact Tracing centre is receiving an increasing number of calls each week and as the detected rate is also rising each week, this is putting significant pressure on resources to meet the demand.

In response to the high numbers of people testing positive for COVID-19 over the past weekend, and in a continuing effort to maintain effective turnaround times for contact tracing, the HSE did

ask a limited number of people to alert their own close contacts of their positive result. This step was taken to ensure that each person receives information as quickly as possible, allowing them to be aware of their status and to take action to care for themselves, and protect others from infection. The Board were advised these people also received a second text message which could be forwarded to their close contacts.

The Board considered the measures to continue to build agility in the system to meet the increasing community demand. Examples of this include a nationwide recruitment campaign for swabbers and contact tracers, setting up temporary swabbing sites and making process improvements to the end to end test and trace system. The Board welcomed the fact that the HSE has increased contact tracing staffing with over 400 now working in the national contact tracing centres and the HSE is also currently recruiting additional contact tracers; the first 600 people are through the interview process, 65 new staff started on 6 October 2020 and 70 started week commencing 19 October 2020. N. O'Beirne advised they expect to continue to bring in 60-70 new staff to the service every week over the coming period. The HSE plans to recruit up to an initial 800 tracers, and then review the requirement for further recruitment.

In response to questions from the Board N. O'Beirne outlined the process currently in operation to support ongoing schools testing including childcare facilities. She also confirmed as of 12 October 2020, patients who receive a COVID-19 detected result, are receiving a text message to inform them of their result. Some concerns were expressed with the approach due to a lack of direct patient contact, but it was noted this is an improvement to the current process and will result in a reduced turnaround time ensuring individuals are notified as soon as possible.

Oversight Agreement

The CSO and the CFO are currently reviewing the draft document prepared by the DoH, with a view to presenting analysis and comments for consideration by the Performance and Delivery Committee.

2.2. Recruitment- Winter Plan

The ND HR presented this item to the Board and highlighted in order to deliver on the initiatives set out in the Winter Plan 2020-2021, it is acknowledged that a co-ordinated and joined approach to workforce planning and resourcing is required. To ensure the HSE can support services in delivering on this, a Joint Strategic Workforce Planning and Resourcing Taskforce has been established. The purpose of the task force is to assist the prioritisation of recruitments of the wider health system and the development of robust recruitment strategies by profession, in line with HSE's recruitment standards by bringing

together workforce planning, resourcing, recruitment, marketing and communications to provide additional support to the services.

Board members commended the ND HR on the significant amount of work put into this, however noted there should be additional metrics provided.

The ND HR outlined the recruitment activities by staff category to maximise the efforts on staff recruitment. In response to questions on obtaining additional capacity to support recruitment, the ND HR confirmed there is a tender for a management service provider that could take on large competitions for the organisation. In response to concerns regarding potential challenges arising, the ND HR confirmed there are ongoing engagements with the DoH to gain exemptions from aspects of the CPSA code to run larger campaigns.

Board members raised concerns regarding the risk of recruiting nurses from private nursing homes, the ND HR assured there is no intention to deplete the wider healthcare sector, however noted those working within private nursing homes are within their rights to apply for a job within the HSE. The ND HR advised survey results show a very small percentage of employees came from private nursing homes and the INMO are committed to working closely with the HSE on a shared campaign.

2.3. National Service Plan and Estimates Process

The CSO advised the turnaround times to update and issue draft plans will be extremely tight once the LoD is received. The early approval of the NSP2021 is critical to facilitate the production of operational plans for the delivery system. The Board agreed the work around the Pandemic and Winter Plan provide strong foundations for the National Service Plan and Estimates Process.

2.4. Corporate Risk Register

The ND QAV advised the Quarter 3 Review of the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) is concluding. The revised CRR will be considered by the EMT at its meeting on 27 October 2020 in advance of consideration by the ARC and will be brought to the Board for approval at the November meeting.

The ND QAV advised the process to procure external support for the joint Board/ EMT risk process has concluded and the tender has been awarded to Mr John Moody, Moody's Risk Management. Mr Moody has considerable experience of working with of major international firms and organisations. The timing

of workshops and meetings with the Board and EMT will be dependent on the prevailing priorities in relation to managing the COVID-19 response.

3. Reserved Functions of the Board

3.1 Contract Approvals

HSE Board approval was requested for two contract approvals and five transaction approvals under its reserved functions based on the comprehensive briefing papers provided in the pack circulated prior to the meeting with members being given the opportunity to ask questions and seek further clarification in relation to the particular contract approvals.

The Board considered and approved the following for reasons outlined in the briefing papers.

Contract Award – Construction of Laboratory at The Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital (Decision no: **211020/41**).

Contract Award for the development of a National Estates Information System (**Decision no. 211020/42**). The Board sought further clarification with regards to qualifications criteria for awarding contracts and it was agreed that this would be discussed at the next ARC meeting which is due to be held on 13 November 2020.

Disposal of (address supplied), Co. Kilkenny to Focus Ireland for the continued provision of accommodation for mental health service users (**Decision no. 211020/43**).

Purchase of a former hotel (Blarney Hotel and associated land) for conversion to a 60-bed Older Person long stay residential unit S/A/1020/2447 (**Decision No. 211020/44**).

Purchase of a former private nursing home (address supplied) to provide older person dementia beds. S/A/0920/2436 (**Decision No. 211020/45**).

Purchase of former Beaumont Convent by tender process (**Decision Number: 211020/46**).

4. Committees Update

The Board discussed the correspondence from the Minister requesting an audit of the systems and controls in relation to the sourcing, management and usage of PPE. The CEO and CFO explained the background to the letter. The Chairperson had commissioned a draft response from the CEO and this draft response had been sent to the Vice-Chair of the ARC for feedback.

The Vice-Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee had written to the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee expressing concern at the delay in bringing this letter to the attention of the Committee and requested it be made aware of all such correspondence received in a timely manner. The Board considered how best to handle correspondence to ensure timely distribution and the Secretariat will develop the process to do so.

The Committee has also requested information and explanations relating to the scope, timing and progress of the process to appoint the auditor.

4.1 Audit and Risk

Minutes from the Committee meeting held on 11 September 2020 as circulated were noted. The Vice Committee Chairperson provided a verbal update on issues considered at the meeting on 9 October 2020 including the COVID-19 budgetary sanction process, the annual tax submission 2019, the implementation of a stock control system within the PPE warehouse, Brexit, an analysis of all non SCA litigation in which the HSE is involved, and audit recommendations following the audit of secure payment services and risk management. The Vice Committee Chairperson also reported on the special meeting held on 19 October 2020 to consider issues arising with St John of Gods Community Services (SJOGCS) clg. & notice of termination of its Section 38 agreements with the HSE. The Committee had reviewed with management the steps the HSE are pursuing in terms of near future service provision options; the necessary assurances that are required in terms of maintaining service continuity, and measures required to safeguard capital investments.

4.2 Safety and Quality

Minutes from the Committee meeting held on 15 September 2020 as circulated were noted. The Committee Chairperson provided a verbal update on the issues considered at the meeting on 13 October 2020, the Brandon report which was raised at the last meeting was discussed, which still poses a great deal of concern. Clarification was sought regarding the Chairperson of the National Independent Review

Panel (NIRP) and the COO agreed to look into this further. The Committee Chairperson updated the Board on medication safety, noting some progress is being made in relation to the implementation of initiatives to reduce harm in this area but it is slow.

4.3 Performance and Delivery

The Committee Chairperson provided a verbal update from the meeting on 18 September 2020 which covered the Corporate Plan, National Service Plan, performance oversight, the National Scorecard Dashboard, and advised cyber approach and strategy will be brought to the Board in December. The Committee Chairperson advised the next meeting on 23 October 2020 will cover COVID-19 reporting such as understanding hospital admissions and capacity.

4.4 People and Culture

The Committee Chairperson provided a verbal update from the meeting on 2 October 2020 including the people strategy, recruitment, risks assigned to the committee (risks 10 and 19), bullying and harassment, and highlighted the presentation given from finalists of the Health Excellence Awards. The Committee Chairperson also updated the Board on the Committee Dashboard.

5. AOB

The Chairperson thanked all in attendance for their contributions and robust discussions.

The meeting concluded at 13.10.

Signed: 

Ciarán Devane
Chairperson

Date: 18th Dec 2020