

MINUTES MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH

Thursday, 28th March 2024 at 11am
Venue: Council Chambers, Cork County Council, County Hall, Cork

Present:

Cllr Ann Marie Ahern
Cllr Audrey Buckley*
Cllr Declan Burgess
Cllr Cathal Byrne*
Cllr Peter Cleere
Cllr Danny Collins
Cllr John Coonan
Cllr Michael Doran*
Cllr Pat Dunphy*
Cllr Pat Fitzgerald*
Cllr Damien Geoghegan
Cllr Niall Kelleher
Cllr Roger Kennedy
Cllr Mike Kennelly
Cllr Donal Kenny
Cllr Garry Laffan

Cllr Mary Lenihan Foley
Cllr Eileen Lynch
Cllr Michael McCarthy
Cllr Susan McCarthy
Cllr Arthur McDonald
Cllr John McDonald*
Cllr Conor McGuinness
Cllr Richie Molloy
Cllr Norma Moriarty
Cllr John O'Donoghue*
Cllr Sean O'Donovan*
Cllr Jody Power*
Cllr John Sheehan
Cllr Mikey Sheehy*
Cllr Ted Tynan

Apologies:

Cllr Caroline Cronin
Cllr Mark Fitzgerald
Cllr Norma Moriarty
Cllr Susan McCarthy

In Attendance:

Dr Andy Phillips, Regional Executive Officer, HSE South West
Dr Gerard O'Callaghan, Chief Operations Officer, South/South West Hospitals Group
Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare
Ms Stephanie Lynch, Acting Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare
Members of the HSE South Forum Office staff

The Chairperson, Cllr Arthur McDonald welcomed members to the meeting. He also welcomed Dr Andy Phillips in his new role as Regional Executive Officer, South West – Cork and Kerry. Dr Gerard O’Callaghan, Chief Operations Officer, Ms Tess O’Donovan. Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare, Ms Stephanie Lynch, Acting Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare and Mr Liam Woods, National Director of the Health Regions Programme.

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday, 5th October 2023

On the proposal of Cllr Roger Kennedy seconded by Cllr John Coonan, the minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 5th October 2023 were approved and adopted by the member.

2. Chairperson’s Correspondence

On the proposal of Declan Burgess, seconded by Cllr Mary Lenihan Foley the Annual Reports of 2022 and 2023 were approved and adopted by members.

3. Committees

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

- (a) South East Committee Meeting 9th of April in Kilkenny
- (b) South West Committee Meeting 11th of April in Tralee

4. Presentation on the new Regional Health Areas given by Mr. Liam Woods, National Director Health Regions Programme.

Mr Liam Woods delivered his presentation on the new Health Areas. The chairperson invited Dr Andy Phillips, Regional Executive Officer to say a few words before the question and answer session.

Dr Phillips introduced himself and told members a little of his background in Health services over many years in Wales, New Zealand and Australia before taking up his current role as Regional Executive Officer of HSE South West (Cork and Kerry). Stating that he feels privileged to be REO to the South West Area. Dr Phillips explained that his job requires him to carry out Sláintecare in the South West area and in doing so he will be using six guiding principles including: Service quality, value for money, population health, staff experience, equity and sustainability. He finished by telling members that he is looking forward to working with public representatives and asked for their support in relation to the planning process for health service capital developments.

Questions and Answer Session:

The following questions were asked by members and responded to by HSE management:

- Speakers complimented the comprehensive presentation
- Speakers thanked Dr Andy Phillips for his attendance and introduction talk
- In the REO’s new role will the decision making rest with him
- Planned surgical hubs – progress on these
- Local decision making will progress the services and local medical to alert the local councillors
- How does the REO intend to tackle the long waiting times in ED department CUH
- HSE structures changing and reverting back to the older health board model
- Resource allocation within the new areas
- Future planning for car parking at hospitals

- Waiting times at EDs are a sign of difficulties in the through put of the hospital, the new build on UHK of single bed units is welcome and could solve these wait times along with assistance from Community Health and the county councils to have homes and grants ready for patients return home
- Support from Kerry County Councillors for REOs plans for Kerry
- Home Help service, can the embargo be lifted to improve the quantum of service delivery. The embargo has been lifted in early 2024

5. Notices of Motion

a) Cllr Declan Burgess moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That the executive please provide a detailed report on the progress by the HSE to deliver the committed 60 bed Community Nursing Unit for Cashel."

and

(f) Cllr Roger Kennedy moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"Can I please have an update on the new Community Nursing Unit for Cashel Co Tipperary."

A written response from Ms Stephanie Lynch, Acting Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Declan Burgess outlined that he has submitted 10 motions on the Cashel Community Nursing Unit since joining the Regional Health Forum South. The new CNU is a very important project to the local area. Cllr Burgess thanked the HSE Estates Manager who had met with him and his South Tipperary colleagues (RHF and Oireachtas Members) in July 2023 to update them on developments. Communication is the key to success so he urged that information continues to be distributed to elected members in the area.

Cllr Burgess also expressed his hope that that Tipperary County Council will work in tandem with the HSE to progress this development and that both himself and Councillor Kennedy will continue to support as required.

Cllr Roger Kennedy stated that the Cashel Community Nursing Unit is a long awaited project and hopefully with the local area plan under review this year that it will progress. If the new development is located within HSE land it may help speed up the process.

Ms Stephanie Lynch, Acting Chief Officer said that she hoped there would be developments on this project within the year both on design and planning process. Ms Lynch explained whilst the project may appear somewhat far away, it is certainly progressing.

Cllr Richie Molloy supported his South Tipperary colleagues with the development of a new Community Nursing Unit in Cashel.

(b) Cllr Mikey Sheehy moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"What is the most recent update on the development of a standalone Oncology Unit at UHK and what are the project timelines?"

A written response from Mr Mark Kane, Assistant National Director, Capital & Estates Office HSE South was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Sheehy thanked Mr Kane for the

response and said that the stand alone Oncology Unit will be beneficial to not only those in Tralee, in South Kerry but all of the South West area. Its current design stage is a key stage for cancer patients, their families and staff.

Cllr Niall Kelleher echoed his colleague's sentiments on the new Oncology Unit at UHK.

Dr Ger O'Callaghan, Chief Operations Officer, welcomed the progress on this project.

(c) Cllr Eileen Lynch moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"Can the HSE please advise as to how many CAMHS teams in Cork City and County are without a permanent child psychologist; how many have a permanent child psychologist and what alternative measures are in place where there is not a permanent child psychologist available, particularly regarding extending the NTPF to child psychology assessments and use of the recently established regional psychological hubs."

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Lynch thanked management for the response and for the explanation provided by Ms O'Donovan on the grading structure for staff within psychology services.

(d) Cllr Audrey Buckley moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"Cork & Kerry HSE orthodontic surgeries, there is now a 6year waiting list for children to obtain orthodontics . Currently the median age of a child's first time visit to the orthodontist is 14yrs/15yrs . The HSE are telling patients that they will be 20 to 21years of age before they can access their orthodontic treatment. What are the HSE doing to bring the waiting lists down?"

and

(e) Cllr Michael Foley moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"To ask the HSE do they think it is acceptable that teenagers have to wait 5 to 6 years for orthodontic treatment. Resulting in being an adult before receiving the treatment."

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Michael Foley stated that teenagers are very self conscious about their appearance especially at a time when social media plays such a big part in teenagers lives. Teenagers are being asked to wait up to 5 years for treatment and may well be adults before the treatment is completed. He asked if services could be outsourced to the private orthodontists in the region.

Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, agreed that the waiting lists are unacceptable. She explained that Covid added to the waiting lists as patients could not receive treatment at that time. The HSE are using private providers where possible but are finding it difficult to source orthodontists with availability to participate in waiting list initiatives. Ms O'Donovan said that she continues to use every avenue available to her to secure as much funding as possible from the National Programmes to address the waiting lists.

(f) This Motion was taken with motion (a) on Agenda.

(g) Cllr John O'Donoghue moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"To help alleviate pressures on Tralee A&E, that the HSE would commit to providing a Minor Injury Clinic including an X-Ray facility in Killarney Town."

A written response from Mr Mark Kane, Assistant National Director, Capital & Estates Office HSE South was circulated to members and noted. Cllr O'Donoghue thanked Management for the reply and said he is well aware of the problems in the ED in UHK and thought a minor injury unit would not only be a great facility for Killarney but also help address the issues in the ED in UHK. He questioned the timelines for completion of a project like this.

Cllr Niall Kelleher agreed with Cllr O'Donoghue and stated it would be a welcome service in Killarney.

Cllr Michael Foley said he would welcome a minor injury unit to alleviate pressures on the ED in UHK.

Dr Ger O'Callaghan acknowledged the need for a Local Injury Unit in Kerry and explained that following a Countrywide Review of the need for LIUs in 2023, it was recommended that a unit was needed in Kerry. The location of the unit has yet to be finalised.

Dr Phillips stated that there was requirement for further discussions before a decision is made on the location of the Minor Injury Unit for Kerry.

(h) Cllr Caroline Cronin moved the following Motion, standing in her name:

"Requesting an Update on the Care and Rehabilitation Mental Health Service Unit at St. Stephen's Health Campus in Glanmire."

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

(i) Cllr John Coonan moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"That the Regional Health Forum South endorses a view that a letter be written to the minister that procedures be put in place to make Health a curriculum and be prepared, developed and introduced as a matter of priority into our educational system."

A discussion was held in Chambers.

6. Questions

(a) Cllr. Declan Burgess put forward the following question:

"Can the HSE outline what steps are being taken to improve capacity in our GP services in South Tipperary. In the report can the HSE outline how many GP positions are currently vacant in the area and for how long they have been vacant."

A written response from Ms Stephanie Lynch, Acting Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Burgess stated that he was happy with the response.

(b) Cllr. Mary Lenihan Foley put forward the following question:

"Can the HSE provided an update on Primary Care unit in Youghal."

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Mary Lenihan Foley stated that she has been submitting motions on this matter for the past 9 years and she welcomed the positive new outline in this response. She noted that the location of the primary care centre has changed from St Raphael's Campus to a green field site in recent times and requested further details on the new location as well as whether the centre would be developed by the HSE or privately. Finally, Cllr Lenihan Foley asked for information on the future plans for the existing buildings on the St Raphael's Campus.

Ms Tess O'Donovan agreed to revert to Cllr Mary Lenihan foley with the additional information requested.

(c) Cllr. Eileen Lynch put forward the following question:

"Can the HSE outline the reasoning for withdrawing funding for the ADHD Ireland's Understanding and Managing Adult ADHD Programme (UMAAP) in 2024 and when and if they plan on reinstating funding for such a vital services."

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

(d) Cllr Michael Foley put forward the following question:

"That the HSE provides an update on the South Doc service in Listowel."

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Michael Foley stated that from the response it looked as if SouthDoc would do house calls, and that service users could attend the centre in Listowel by appointment only otherwise service users have to travel to the Tralee SouthDoc Centre to be seen. This was disappointing for such a large rural area as Listowel.

Ms O'Donovan said that recruitment of GPs and the shortage of GPs was an ongoing issue which is of concern to the HSE and to public representatives as well as to GPs themselves. Ms O'Donovan said that members of the Board of SouthDoc would attend the next South West Committee meeting to give a presentation to the members and address any queries they may have. Cllr Foley Welcomed this news.

(e) Cllr John O'Donoghue put forward the following question:

"In light of the fact that both The District Hospital and St. Colomanus' in Killarney will soon be vacated due to the wonderful new facility currently being developed, that the HSE would outline the plans they have for the buildings"

A written response from Ms Tess O'Donovan, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr O'Donoghue linked this response to his earlier motion 4(g) on the Minor Injury Unit for Killarney and said that the campus

would be a good location for such a unit in Killarney. Cllr O'Donoghue enquired about the timeline for completion of the review of the future use of the existing two buildings on the campus once the new Community /nursing Unit is completed and operational.

Ms O'Donovan stated the new Community Nursing Unit will be a very welcome addition to our services in the Killarney area and that she expects the review on the future campus to be completed before the end of the year.

Dr Andy Phillips stated that he has convened a HSE South West Capital Planning Workshop to discuss the short, medium and long term Capital needs for the region. The St. Columbanus campus will be discussed at the workshop and the outcomes of this will influence future plans.

Cllr Niall Kelleher stated that the St. Finan's campus in Killarney should also form part of the workshop and he called for the campus to be either retained for health service provision or made available to Kerry County Council who have an interest in acquiring the site.

7. Date and Time of next meeting – 22nd June 2024 at 11am. Venue: Council Chambers, Cork County Council. Co Cork.