

MINUTES **MEETING OF REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM SOUTH**

Thursday, 30th March 2023 at 11am
Venue: Council Chambers, Cork County Council, County Hall, Co Cork

Present:

Cllr Audrey Buckley
Cllr Peter Cleere
Cllr Cathal Byrne
Cllr John Coonan
Cllr Caroline Cronin*
Cllr Michael Doran*
Cllr Pat Dunphy*
Cllr Michael Foley
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 Arthur McDonald
Cllr John McDonald
Cllr Norma Moriarty*
Cllr Sean O'Donovan
Cllr Jody Power
Cllr Mikey Sheehy
Cllr Ted Tynan

Apologies:

Cllr Mark Fitzgerald
Cllr Susan McCarthy
Cllr Conor McGuinness
Cllr Richie Molloy
Cllr John Sheehan*
Cllr Stephanie Keating
Cllr Pat Fitzgerald*

Virtually:

Gearoid Rennicks
Cllr Declan Burgess

In Attendance:

Dr Ger O'Callaghan, Interim Chief Executive Officer, South/South West Hospitals Group
Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare
Ms Kate Cassidy, A/ Head of Service - Health & Wellbeing, South East Community Healthcare
Members of the HSE South Forum Office staff

At the outset of the meeting, Mr Michael Fitzgerald Chief Officer, advised RHF Members that it was his last meeting given his upcoming retirement from the health service. Mr Fitzgerald thanked Members for their support over the last number of years and particularly during the Covid pandemic. He commended members for raising issues of concern and for listening. He also expressed his gratitude to Dr Gerard O'Callaghan and colleagues in South / South West Hospital Group. Mr Fitzgerald also thanked his community colleagues in South East Community Healthcare.

Cllr Sheehy acknowledged Mr Fitzgerald's service and dedication to the health service over the years in his many roles. From a personal point of view, he acknowledged Mr Fitzgerald's accessibility and vast experience and hoped that the latter could be used into retirement. The Regional Health Forum Members expressed their thanks to Mr Fitzgerald for his service and wished him the best of luck in his retirement.

A vote of sympathy was extended on the recent passing of Cllr Davy Daniels former RHF Member. The members expressed their condolences to Councillor Daniels' wife Mary, sons and extended family. Cllr Daniels was one of the longest serving Councillors in Ireland, having first been elected in 1974. The members paid tribute to Cllr Daniels and spoke of his contribution to the Regional Health Forum. Cllr Daniels was a hard working public representative in Waterford. He was a committed supporter of Ballygunner GAA club.

On his own behalf and on behalf of HSE staff, Dr Gerard O'Callaghan offered condolences to the Daniels family.

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Thursday, 24th November 2022.

On the proposal of Cllr Michael McCarthy seconded by Cllr Mary Lenihan Foley, the minutes of the Forum meeting held on Thursday, 24th November 2022 were approved and adopted by the members.

2. Chairperson's Correspondence

3. Committees

The next Committee meetings will be held on:

South East Committee Meeting to be held on 18th April 2023 and the South West Committee Meeting to be held on 27th April 2023 in Cork

4. Notices of Motion

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

"This motion requests that HSE Management outlines any progress to the planning application for the proposed residential unit at St Patrick's Hospital Cashel. I am aware that it remains on HSE Capital Plan and there is huge concern locally that this development has had no progress in a number of years"

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Burgess thanked HSE Management for the written reply. He stated that he has raised the issue of a replacement Community Nursing Unit in Cashel at RHF a number of occasions and unfortunately it seems as though there are no specific details in relation to this development. Cllr Burgess highlighted replies received and clarification sought - he was disappointed to note the slow progress on this. He noted the HSE reply advising the

Cashel CNU remains on the capital plan. Cllr Burgess asked whether the HSE is focussed only on delivering the capital development ongoing at St Anthony's Unit in Clonmel. Cllr Roger Kennedy supported Cllr Burgess in his Motion and fully concurred with him.

Ms Kate Cassidy A/Head of Service - Health & Well-being attending on behalf of Ms Kate Killeen White Chief Officer responded indicating that there is an absolute commitment to Cashel. With the onset of the Covid pandemic and given infection prevention control and distancing requirements there was a need to transfer vulnerable older residents to Our Lady's Hospital in Cashel. HIQA has given a further extension in relation to registration. Cllr Burgess stated that the HSE needs to provide clarification and a timeline for this development.

Cllr Burgess also requested clarification as to why it was planned to demolish the Gate Lodge at St Patrick's Cashel. Ms Kate Cassidy advised that she would revert to HSE Estates on this query.

(b) Cllr Michael Foley moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"To ask the HSE are Primary Care Centres being utilised to their full potential such as possibly being used as minor injury clinics"

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Foley thanked HSE Management for their reply.

Cllr Foley raised this Motion in regard to community services providing further supports such as Minor Injury Clinics in order to relieve acute hospital pressures. He noted the last paragraph in particular which stated that the provision of minor injury services will be considered as Primary Care Services develop and where they can effectively be deployed external to hospitals once funding is available to do so. Cllr Foley asked in relation to the development of a Minor Injury Unit at Listowel.

Mr Michael Fitzgerald in reply advised that up to now the development of Primary Care Centres have not included Minor Injury Units. There are no plans from a HSE perspective to have a Minor Injury Unit in Listowel. The governance of Minor Injury Units rightly remains under acute hospital services. The HSE has specific arrangements in situ on sites such as St Mary's Health Campus Cork and the Urgent Care Centre Mercy University Hospital which includes the provision of minor injury services.

(c) Cllr Michael Foley moved the following Motion, standing in his name:

"To ask the HSE when will a full out of hours GP service be returned to the SouthDoc centre in the Primary Care Centre, Listowel."

Cllr Michael Foley

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Foley acknowledged the written reply from Mr Fitzgerald. However, he stated that the current Southdoc Out of Hours GP service provision at the Listowel treatment centre is not meeting local need. He highlighted that many people are having to travel to Tralee for Out of Hours GP services.

Mr Fitzgerald noted the Councillor's concerns, however, he advised members that it is becoming increasingly more challenging to maintain the same level of GP Out of Hours Services and cover. Pre-existing challenges in recruiting and retaining GPs are being starkly highlighted as we come out of the Covid-19 pandemic. There is a well reported national / international shortage of medics including GPs. Many of our current GPs are coming up to 65 years and many as a result of the pandemic have accelerated their plan to retire. There are high levels of demand for day to day GP services. Young GPs have different expectations and understandably are not necessarily attracted to longer hours / out of hours working. GP shortages will undoubtedly impact on the model of Out of Hours provision. The HSE is working nationally in relation to further GP training places, retention and supports for GPs.

(d) Cllr Gary Laffan, Cllr Donal Kenny, Cllr Cathal Byrne moved the following Motion, standing in their names:

"While we welcome the commitment of the Government to rebuild the hospital as a matter of urgency, time is of the essence and therefore this motion, calls on the Government and Wexford County Council to utilise every power at their disposal to expedite and accelerate the rebuild and to fast track the upcoming 96 bed extension which is also badly required"

A written response from Mr Declan Lyons, Chief Executive Officer, Ireland East Hospital Group was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Laffan thanked HSE Management for the written response. It is critical for him and the other Wexford RHF members to keep this on the agenda. They were pleased to note the additional bed included in the written response i.e. 97 beds. Cllr Laffan, Cllr Kenny thanked all those involved in managing the major incident on the day including the staff at Wexford General Hospital, frontline emergency services, and the other acute hospitals in the region. Cllr Byrne in his support of this motion agreed with the previous speakers on the urgency for the progression of a replacement hospital. This misfortune can be used as an opportunity to develop a much needed new acute hospital unit for Wexford. Cllr Byrne also acknowledged the work of the emergency services and the fire service on the day.

The Wexford Members stated that they looked forward to positive progress reports on this development in upcoming meetings.

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

"That this forum supports my call that Dingle Community Hospital be staffed and resourced to full capacity thus alleviating pressures on other acute healthcare settings in Kerry."

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Sheehy thanked Mr Fitzgerald for this response. He stated that there would be more demand for 46 beds in Dingle Community Hospital if there were more staff in situ there that would facilitate the opening of additional beds. Mr Fitzgerald in reply advised that it is proving very challenging to recruit and retain staff in rural hospitals. In addition, given changing expectations, older people are increasingly opting to remain living in their own

homes with supports for as long as is possible. In line with Sláintecare there is a focus on enhancing community services to support older people and enable them live at home for longer. Mr Fitzgerald also advised members of the updated infection control guidance for buildings (acute and residential services) which includes changing room sizes / physical space requirements, with a resulting impact on capacity. The previously approved 72 beds in Dingle Community Hospital incorporated multi-occupancy rooms which would now not necessarily be appropriate nor acceptable to HIQA. Mr Fitzgerald also stated that over the last 18 months due to staffing challenges there were difficulties keeping the 46 beds open with 6 beds closed at various stages. There is an ongoing campaign for nurse recruitment. Mr Fitzgerald stated that Services for Older People have been successful in fully opening these 46 beds. The key issue is to try and maintain staffing levels to keep the 46 beds open. The private nursing home in the area is also of positive benefit for the local population. He also advised based on feedback from staff, housing remains a key issue.

5. Questions

(a) Cllr. Cllr Michael Foley put forward the following question:

"To ask the HSE will they or through Services Providers provide a Special Residential Care House in Kerry to service users diagnosed with Prader Willi syndrome living in the county."

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Foley thanked HSE Management for the reply. There is no cure for Prader Willi syndrome, treatment aims to manage the symptoms and associated difficulties. Cllr Foley highlighted the case of an elderly parent seeking a residential placement for his adult daughter who has Prader Willi syndrome. Cllr Foley stated that it is important that the HSE would develop and resource a residential house to support people living with this condition in the Kerry area. Mr Fitzgerald in reply advised that there are currently no plans to develop a specific residential service in Kerry at this time. There are designated residential units (limited) around the country developed by HSE /Private Providers designated for service users with Prader Willi syndrome. Places are limited and are offered as they become available having regard for resources available and service user needs / risk presenting.

Mr Fitzgerald advised that Kerry Disability Services provide a range of supports including day services, home supports and respite to services users including those with this syndrome. Cllr Laffan supported Cllr Foley, advising members of that his sister has Prader Willi syndrome and has been fortunate to secure a specialised residential placement.

(b) Cllr. Damien Geoghegan put forward the following question:

"What services are currently available at the primary care centre in Dungarvan, and are there plans to expand the services available there?"

A written response from Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. This question was deferred.

(c) Question

“What is the up to date position regarding the number of step down beds available to the health services in Carlow / Kilkenny”?

Cllr John Coonan

(d) Question

“What are the plans for the development of step down beds and facilities for health services in Carlow / Kilkenny in the 2023 HSE capital plan”?

Cllr John Coonan

A written composite response to questions (c) and (d) from Ms Kate Killeen White, Chief Officer, South East Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted.

Cllr Coonan thanked HSE Management for the reply. Whilst acknowledging this reply, Cllr Coonan clarified that his query related to a stepdown unit to assist patients who require pre-acute or post-acute services care. As we are all aware acute hospitals specialise in treating patients who have urgent, short-term medical needs. With some patients, they reach a point of being medically stable but are not quite ready to go home or to go to a nursing home. Cllr Coonan asked that for these patients in particular, should the HSE not provide a specialised service i.e. post-acute care unit similar to the inpatient service previously provided at the Regional Orthopaedic Unit, Kilcreene, Kilkenny some years ago. This 21 bed post-acute care stepdown unit was under the governance of acute hospital services. Cllr Coonan felt that this type of unit would alleviate pressures on the acute hospital service.

Cllr Coonan noted the HSE response outlining SECH short stay beds that are provided across Carlow/Kilkenny which include rehabilitation, convalescence, respite, palliative care and transitional care beds. He asked whether any of these beds were used for the purpose of post-acute care. Cllr Coonan asked whether there was any plan to provide a stepdown post-acute care unit/service similar to what had previously been provided by acute services in Kilcreene. Ms Kate Cassidy responding on behalf of community services advised that the short-stay beds in the community are all fully utilised to support people to remain at home or provide supports following discharge from acute services. She stated that community services work closely with our colleagues in acute hospital services to support hospital avoidance and discharge from hospital. Cllr Coonan acknowledged the importance of short stay beds in the community. He asked what plans were there to develop beds for Older Persons in Carlow/Kilkenny. Ms Cassidy advised on the development of a replacement Community Nursing Unit (via Public Private Partnership) for St Columba’s Hospital Thomastown Co. Kilkenny projected to be completed in quarter 4, 2024. Cllr Arthur MacDonald outlined his support for this question. It was agreed that an update on the Service Plan 2023 would be presented to RHF Members at forthcoming meetings.

(e) Question:

“Can the HSE please provide an update in relation to the status of the Nursing Home/Respite facilities to be provided in Tower Hill, Tower, Co Cork, on the premises formerly known as the Blarney Hotel and Golf Resort including how many people can be facilitated there and what services are to be available”

Cllr Eileen Lynch

A written response from Mr Michael Fitzgerald, Chief Officer, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare was circulated to members and noted. Cllr Lynch thanked HSE Management for this positive reply in relation the provision of a 50-bed Community Nursing Unit for older people. Cllr Lynch asked whether access to this Unit would be restricted by geographic location and would it be only for Older People or other residents. Mr

Fitzgerald in reply confirmed that this would be a HSE Unit and subject to staffing and HIQA registration would be expected to be operational by Quarter 4, 2023. With regard to the query regarding geographic catchment, Mr Fitzgerald advised that with the Nursing Home Support Scheme, there is choice regarding public or private residential care. What usually happens is that people tend to stay close to their own family and community (subject to availability). Mr Fitzgerald confirmed that within the Unit, some bedrooms are designed to facilitate specialist bariatric capacity. Depending on demand there will be an ability to provide services for those requiring that service and not just older people. Cllr Lynch thanked Mr Fitzgerald for his response and clarifications and wished him the very best in his retirement.

(f) Question;

“What progress has been made in advancing the Chemotherapy Day Unit at University Hospital Kerry and what is the current timeline for the project to be completed”?

Cllr Mikey Sheehy

A written response from Ms Mary Fitzgerald, University Hospital Kerry, South / South West Hospital Group was circulated to members and noted. Dr Gerard O’Callaghan advised that the reply was brief due to unforeseen circumstances, however, he confirmed that a further written update would be provided on this question.

Cllr Sheehy noted the reply and acknowledged that additional information would be supplied from HSE Estates and UHK Management. He stated that the Chemotherapy Day Unit has had a number of different locations throughout UHK since it was established. The Chemotherapy Day Unit is currently sharing space with UHK Palliative Care Day Unit. Cllr Sheehy whilst acknowledging the outstanding work of the Palliative Care Unit, stated that it is not appropriate for the Chemotherapy Day Unit to be co-located and for cancer patients undergoing treatment to walk through the same door as the Palliative Care Unit. The Chemotherapy Day Service is a hugely important service for the local population and the preference would be for a stand-alone unit. Dr Gerard O’Callaghan stated that the UHK Management are working with HSE Estates and clinical staff to progress plans to optimise patient care into the future.

8. Date and Time of next meeting – 18th May 2023 at 11am.

Signed: _____

Date: _____