

NORTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Northern Health and Social Services Council held at 1.30pm in Willowbank Business Park, Larne on Wednesday 6 June 2007.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Mr Tom Creighton

Members:

Mrs Beth Adger	Mrs Noreen McClelland
Mrs Maureen Anderson	Mr Sam McClelland
Mr Jim Brown	Mr Tommy Nicholl
Prof George Kernohan	Mr Mark Nolan
Mr Danny Kinahan	Mr Tony Quinn
Mr John Millar	Mr Andrew Wilson
Mrs Janet Montgomery	

In Attendance: Mr Noel Graham
Mrs Jacqui Erwin

64/07 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Ms Armstrong, Mrs I Johnston, Mrs L Johnston, Mrs Morrison, Mrs McCambridge, Mrs McEldowney and Mr Stevenson.

65/07 **CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. On behalf of members he offered condolences to Mr McClelland on the recent death of his wife. He referred to his attendance at Board meetings of the Northern Health and Social Services Board and the Northern Health and Social Care Trust where he had raised the issue of treatment room services.

66/07 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 MAY 2007**

The minutes were agreed and signed subject to the addition of Mrs Adger and Mr Nicholl to the list of apologies.

55/07 Air Ambulance Service

Members had been interested to learn about proposals for an air ambulance service in Northern Ireland and had written to Mr Sellars, Chief Executive of Alpha 5, to wish him well with fundraising plans. Mr Millar referred to his attendance at the launch of the fundraising and tabled a short paper. Several members expressed reservations about meeting the revenue costs to maintain such a service. Consideration would be given to inviting Mr Sellars to provide an update at a future meeting.

55/07 Roadshow re: Development of the new Women's and Children's Hospital on the Royal Hospital site in Belfast

An indication of the timescales and costs associated with the project had been requested from the Chief Executive of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. A reminder letter had been issued.

58/07 Bugwatch Survey

Mr Graham reported that ten bugwatch surveys had taken place in Antrim and Causeway Hospitals and that a report would now be compiled.

61/07 Information leaflet from the Northern Health and Social Care Trust on its Smoke Free Policy

Members had raised their concerns with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust about the cost of printing and postage of its Smoke Free Policy leaflets.

62/07 Moyle Hospital Out-Patient Eye Clinic

The issue of the relocation of the Out-Patient Eye Clinic from Larne to Antrim had been raised with the Northern Health and Social Services Board.

Mr Wilson welcomed the NHSSB's response which advised the Council of the action that had been agreed. From the end of June 2007 a full day ophthalmology clinic would alternate on a weekly basis between Larne and Antrim.

62/07 Mixed Sex Wards

The current policy on mixed sex wards had been raised with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. The Trust fully recognised that ideally no-one should be in a mixed sex ward, however, with pressure on beds and the requirement to reduce waiting lists concessions had to be made. Mrs Montgomery drew attention to the placing of an extra bed in wards which added to the problem.

62/07 Bed Sores, Red Heels and Special Mattresses

Concerns, drawn to Mr Millar's attention, in relation to patients being discharged from hospital with bed sores and red heels and the limited availability of special mattresses had been raised with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

62/07 Feeding of Patients

The inability of many elderly patients to feed themselves had been drawn to the attention of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

68/07 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

Advocacy Project

Mr Graham indicated that approximately 150 people were expected to attend the event to be held on Wednesday 13 June 2007 when the findings of the joint Councils/RQIA Advocacy Project would be presented.

Meeting with the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust – 21 May 2007

Mr Graham reported that he, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman had met with Mr Stewart, Chairman and Ms Evans, Chief Executive of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

Relationship between the new Trust and the NHSSC had been explored and attendance at Trust Board meetings and the sharing of papers had been discussed. NHSSC representation on the Trust's Complaints Committee would be considered and access to Trust support services would continue as before. The Trust would continue to welcome visit reports and pointed out that Estate Strategies were now tied up with Developing Better Services and Private Finance Initiative.

Mr Wilson referred to the recent appointments to the new Trust and wondered how many staff had not been successful in obtaining posts and if there would be redundancies since the aim of the Review of Public Administration was to reduce bureaucracy. Mr McClelland queried what savings had been achieved to date and Mrs McClelland suggested that a progress report be sought in due course.

Budget for 2007/2008

Mr Graham reported that the NHSSC's budget for 2007/2008 was £214,000 which included an inflationary uplift.

69/07

VISITS

Visit Report

Ballee Adolescent Unit, Ballymena

Mrs Adger and Mr Nicholl had visited Ballee Adolescent Unit, Ballymena. The Unit which was formally a Children's Home was badly in need of painting and the grounds needed to be tidied. It was explained, however, that money had not been spent on the building as a new, smaller, less institutionalised building had been promised. The Visiting Team members met with some of the young people who invited them to see their rooms.

Members asked that the urgency of the new build be conveyed to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

Wilson House Resource Centre, Broughshane

Wilson House Resource Centre, Broughshane provides day care for up to sixty people each day. Mr Millar and Mr Nicholl found it a pleasure to visit this facility and commended its cleanliness and condition. They recommended, however, that the carpet be replaced in two of the rooms as it was showing signs of wear and tear and detracted from the decor.

Inver 1 and 4, Holywell Hospital, Antrim

Inver 1 accommodates 12 long stay patients most of whom have spent many years as inpatients with mental health problems and who have unsuccessfully been rehabilitated in community facilities mainly due to being institutionalised with severe challenging behaviours.

Mrs Montgomery and Mr Millar reported that the Inver 1 environment presents particular challenges for patients and staff as it is long overdue a refurbishment. The Visiting Team was, however, pleased to learn that patients and staff would transfer to an adjacent ward once it had undergone a complete refurbishment.

Inver 4 is a long stay facility for patients with dementia. The unit facilitates 12 patients and has undergone a recent refurbishment resulting in staff being able to provide care to patients in more spacious accommodation.

The Visiting Team welcomed the opportunity to interact with many patients who appeared happy and well cared for. A particular concern for staff is the impact on the many smoking dependent patients of the removal of one of the exemptions to smoke-free legislation. Currently patients in a mental health unit who smoke can use a designated room, however, this provision ceases to have effect from 30 April 2008. It was pointed out by staff that the legislation did not take account of this particular vulnerable group of people, who through no fault of their own, lived in a hospital.

June Visits

Arrangements were made for visits to Robinson Hospital, Ballymoney and Magherafelt Day Centre.

70/07 JOINT COUNCIL EVENT – 23 MAY 2007

During the morning session of the joint Council event members considered the provision of NHS dentistry with input from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Northern Health and Social Services Board and a dentist.

From the open discussion a paper was produced which highlighted some of the issues raised together with suggested action. Action included the need to re-open the debate on water fluoridation, to consider the financial reimbursement for NHS dentistry and to carefully consider the location of NHS dental practices. There was

a need to inform the public of the requirement to register with a dentist and attend regularly, to provide clarity of what can and cannot be provided on the NHS, to inform people that private treatment is not regulated or monitored and to ensure that NHS dentistry is not promoted in any way as inferior to private dentistry.

The paper would be considered by each Council and agreement reached on what should be raised with the Health Minister.

During further discussion reference was made to the current market for private dentistry and to those people just above the benefit level who can't afford private dental treatment. The role of the Planning Service in helping to improve access to NHS dentistry was pointed out and a particular case was highlighted in the Ballymena area where a planning application for a dental surgery had been refused. The adequacy of the number of training places at Queens University was questioned and the value of dental hygienists and dental therapists highlighted.

In the afternoon members were given an update on progress with the establishment of the Patient and Client Council and the opportunity for discussion. Dr Stuart had indicated that there may be a delay in the establishment of the PCC as a result of the return of devolution. A copy of the Project Initiation Document had since been shared with members and a letter had gone to the Health Minister, Mr McGimpsey, requesting an opportunity for Chief Officers and Chairmen to brief him on the work of the Health and Social Services Councils in the context of the Review of Public Administration.

Mr Brown drew attention to discussions at a previous meeting in regard to members meeting the First and Deputy First Ministers to outline concerns about the apparent disparity that exists in implementation of the Health and Social Care Authority and the Patient and Client Council. Although the correspondence had been passed to the Health Minister Mr Brown requested that in light of the Assembly now being operational a further request be made. Following discussion and a vote it was agreed that the Chief Officer write again to request a meeting.

71/07 **NHS DIRECT**

This item had been tabled by Mr Stevenson. Due to his unavailability to attend the meeting the item was deferred to the September Council Meeting.

72/07 **CORRESPONDENCE**

The correspondence list had been circulated with the agenda.

Additional items of correspondence included:

- Asthma UK Northern Ireland Report 'The State of Play'
Emergency Asthma Care in Northern Ireland
- EHSSC Minutes of 19 April 2007

73/07 **OTHER BUSINESS**

Mileage Rates

Mr Millar commented upon the increase in fuel prices and requested that mileage rates be reviewed. Mr Graham agreed to raise this issue at the next meeting of the Executive Committee of Health and Social Services Councils of Northern Ireland.

Northern Health and Social Services Board Ambulance Liaison Committee

Mr Graham was asked to write to the Northern Health and Social Services Board to voice concern about the cancellation of a meeting of the NHSSB Liaison Committee and the absence of a rescheduled date.

74/07 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held at 1.30pm on Wednesday 5 September in the Magherafelt District Borough Council area.

The meeting closed at 3.18pm.

Chairman

Secretary

Date