

EASTERN HEALTH BOARD

Minutes of Proceedings of Special Meeting of the
Eastern Health Board held in the Boardroom, St. Brendan's Hospital,
Grangegorman on Thursday 27th March 1980 at 6 p.m.

PRESENT

Ald B. Ahern, T.D.,
Mr. J. D. Behan
Cllr. D. Browne
Cllr. M. Carroll
Cllr. J. Connolly
Cllr. B. Durkan
Ald. A. FitzGerald
Cllr. Mrs. A. Glenn

Mr. K. Harrington
Cllr. F. Hynes
Ms. N. Kearney
Dr. P. McCarthy
Cllr. M. Freehill
Dr. B. Sheehan
Cllr. J. Sweeney
Cllr. G. Timmins T.D.,
Cllr. Mrs. M. Waugh

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr. H. Corrigan, Prof. J.S. Doyle
Cllr. T. Leonard and Dr. A. Meade

IN THE CHAIR

Ald. A. FitzGerald

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. J. J. Nolan
Mr. T. Keyes
Mr. F. Donohue
Mr. J. S. Reynolds
Mr. F. Elliott
Mr. R. N. Lamb
Mr. J. Sadlier
Mr. P. I. Lyons
Prof. I. Browne

Mr. J. Clarke
Mr. P.J.Swords
Mr. J. Doyle
Mr. H. Dunne
Mr. C. Mansfield
Mr. A. O'Brien
Mr. M. Cummins
Miss F. Heaney
Miss E. Larkin

9/80 On a proposal by Cllr. Sweeney seconded by Dr. Behan it was agreed that the meeting would end no later than 9 p.m.

40/80 ALLOCATION FOR NON-CAPITAL EXPENDITURE 1980
and BOOK OF ESTIMATE OF EXPENSES 1980

Mr. Nolan introduced Report No. 12/1980 on the allocation for non-capital expenditure for 1980 and the Budget Estimate for 1980 and the Secretary read the report to the members.

In reply to Cllrs. Carroll and Freehill, Mr. Donohue said that the Board must honour all statutory allowances and hoped to maintain 1979 levels, but if there were any major deviations from the forecasts made for the year it might be necessary to reduce on non statutory services. Cllrs. Glenn, Connolly and Waugh, Ms. Kearney and Dr. Sheehan in discussion warned against cut backs

in the areas of the home nursing, home help and other support services for the elderly indicating that the alternative to such support was expensive hospital treatment.

In reply to Cllr. Browne, Mr Sadlier said that he would report later on suggested priorities in the allocation of the maintenance budget and that St. John's Day Centre in Clontarf had a high priority.

Members expressed great concern about the severe reduction in the allocation for maintenance, having regard to the poor state of the Board's property as seen at visiting committee meetings.

With regard to voluntary bodies, Mr. Donohue told the Chairman that the Board had been asked by the Department when making grants to take account of the 1979 expenditure plus approved increases in staff and materials. However, additional developments and increases in costs such as in oil price rises may give rise to curtailments in expenditure.

The Chairman advised the members that the Chief Executive Officer and himself would be meeting the Minister on Wednesday 2nd April and they would inform the Minister that it was considered untenable that the Eastern Health Board, serving one-third of the population of the country and with many services of national character, was so limited in its allocation of funds. They would press the Minister to recognise the special case of the Eastern Health Board in relation to the services provided by the Board and its in areas such as its maintenance programme.

Dr. Behan referred to the difficulty facing the Board where the Board has no responsibility or authority over approximately 50% of the Budget for the health services in its area being the part of the Budget allocated to the general voluntary hospitals. It would be necessary for the Board to have access to the Accounts of these hospitals, otherwise the legislation should remove the liability for this service from the Health Board. In relation to the psychiatric service, Dr. Behan asked that he be given the breakdown of expenditure incurred by the various agencies providing services for the Board in the same way as the Board's own services were shown and he also asked for a detailed list of Section 65 Grants paid in the psychiatric area, showing the income and accounts of the organisations receiving the Grants. He also asked for the same information in relation to private psychiatric services. Mr. Keyes said he would have this information provided. In reply to Dr. Behan, Mr. Keyes said that the Minister for Health had removed the responsibility for the financial allocation to St. Vincent's Hospital, Fairview, from the Health Board to the Board of the Hospital. Dr. Behan commented that this was a further downgrading of the status and role of the Health Board.

Dr. Behan also suggested that the estimated expenditure for maintenance shown under existing individual headings as appropriate to each hospital clinic and not shown as one bulk figure. Dr. Behan said he considered it incorrect that Section 31 of the Health Act imposed a limitation by Minister on the expenditure by the Health Board when such a limitation not apply to other areas for instance the voluntary hospitals.

The following motion was proposed by Dr. Behan and seconded by Dr Freehill:-

"That the Board's legal adviser be requested to obtain Senior Counsel's opinion as to whether Section 31 of the Health Act, including the penalties for breaching it, are ultra virus the Constitution."

Cllr. Sweeney and Dr. McCarthy objected to the proposal on the grounds that the money is provided by the Minister and he is entitled to exercise control. They said a proper allocation was what was needed.

The motion was then put and agreed, Cllr. G. Timmins dissenting.

Cllr. Durkan referred to the differences in the financial provision or services at Naas Hospital as against St. Coluncille's Hospital, particularly the areas of catering and medical and surgical supplies. The Chief

Executive Officer said that Mr. Lamb and Mr. Reynolds would examine these headings again and advise; Cllr. Durkan. Cllr. Sweeney referred in particular to the favourable rate at which the Board is able to cater for elderly people, particularly in the hospital at Rathdrum. He said he would like to see details of costs in the private homes catering for the elderly.

Cllr. Mrs. Glenn referred to the separate allocation made for the Board's share of expenses of the General Medical (Payments) Board and said she believed that this scheme was wasteful and that doctors should be asked to be more realistic in their prescribing. Dr. Sheehan said that while he believed there was considerable waste in provision of the services generally he believed that the services were founded on the wrong principle, that greater emphasis on community care and general practitioner services in particular would help to keep people out of hospital where it is costing £340 a week now to keep a patient. He would like the Board to be in a better position to encourage patients to leave hospital by providing funds to maintain them at home. The following motion was proposed by Cllr. Carroll and seconded by Cllr. Hynes and agreed:-

That if the allocation to the General Medical Services (Payments) Board is insufficient during 1980 any shortfall should as it arises be funded separately by the Department and the allocation should not form part of the Section 31 responsibility of the Eastern Health Board."

Summing up the situation the Finance Officer explained that the allocation for the two hospital programmes for 1980 is 10% to 11% higher than in 1979. In implementing the economies the Community Care Programme was cut back some what less than the other programmes and has been allocated about 15% over 1979. Because the statutory allowances and the terms of such as the Refund Scheme do not vary greatly the programme is not affected by inflation so much as by trends. These can only be estimated at the moment. It was hoped that the measures listed at pages four and five of the report would keep the Board's expenditure within the allocation. However, if early ret showed that expenditure was running beyond the allocation it would be necessary to come back to the Board again.

The Chairman detailed the submissions which would be made to the Minister at the meeting on the 2nd April and it was agreed by the members that these matters be pursued vigorously:-

- (1) The need for a minor capital allocation to cater for special works.
- (2) The need for an allocation for Welfare Homes and Day Centres where the Board's policy is for the provision of 3 per annum, having regard to the economies in the care of the elderly resulting from the provision of this accommodation.
- (3) The maintenance needs of the Board, particularly in the case of St. Brendan's and St. Ita's Hospitals and the danger that the fabric of the Board's premises will deteriorate beyond repair.
- (4) The need to continue the special allowances for the dental and ophthalmic schemes for persons with full eligibility.
- (5) The need to recognise the special role of the Eastern Health Board and its increasing role in national centralised services through such institutions as St. Patrick's and Dundrum and the need for special consideration as the premier health board in the country.

The following motion was proposed by Alderman FitzGerald and seconded by Cllr. Connolly and agreed:-

"Having regard to the terms of the Department's letter of 29th February, 1980 and: having considered the terms of Report No.12/1980, including the measures proposed to contain main expenditure within the limits of the Department's allocation, it is resolved that the said allocation,while totally inadequate for the Board's requirements, be adopted and apportioned as recommended by the Chief Executive Officer and notified to the Minister accordingly as required"

Dr. Behan asked that representations be made early to the Minister to enable him to consider the Board's position in any future Budget provisions. The Chairman said that it was hoped to meet the Minister at one of the meetings of the Seminar and with the experience of the operation of the revised allocation over a month or two.

The members all joined Mr. Harrington, Cllr. Sweeney and Dr. Behan in complimenting the officers on the preparation of the documentation for the meeting and the information provided for the discussions.

The Chairman proposed that the May meeting of the Board be held in Naas and the June meeting in Wicklow and this was agreed.

The meeting ended at 8.40 p.m.

CORRECT. J. J. Nolan
Chief Executive Officer

Signed

CHAIRMAN