

**Minutes of Proceedings of Special Meeting of
Nenagh Town Council held in the Civic Offices, Nenagh
on Wednesday, 16th July, 2008**

Councillors Present: Cllr. S. Morris Cllr. T. Moylan
 Cllr. V. O'Dowd Cllr. H. McGrath
 Cllr. J. O'Connor Cllr. T. Mulqueen

Also Present: D. Purcell, Town Clerk
 S. O'Callaghan
 K. Clifford

Apologies: P. Heffernan, Town Manager
 Cllr. T. Sheary
 Cllr. S. Farrell
 Cllr. T. Morgan

The Mayor, Cllr. V. O'Dowd presided.

The Mayor welcomed all to the meeting which had been called to discuss Nenagh Hospital. She said that Nenagh Town Council was concerned that Accident and Emergency Services may be withdrawn or downgraded. The matter had been discussed at the last Council meeting and it had been decided to invite the Nenagh Hospital Action Group and the Health Services Executive to this meeting. Unfortunately the HSE were unable to attend. The Mayor then invited Mr. Paul Malone, Chairperson of the Nenagh Hospital Action Group to address the meeting.

Mr. Malone gave a brief statement outlining the current position and the Action Group's views on the situation (copy attached).

The Mayor thanked Mr. Malone for his informative talk. She said that the Oireachtas representatives from North Tipperary had also been invited to attend the meeting but only Senator Alan Kelly was present. The Mayor then called on Senator Kelly to address the meeting.

Senator Kelly thanked the Mayor for inviting him to attend the meeting and outlined his position with regard to the future of Nenagh Hospital and asked for the Members support in fighting any change in the status of the hospital.

Cllr. O'Connor said that this was the third time that the HSE had been unavailable to attend a meeting with the Council and suggested that a letter be sent to the HSE expressing disappointment and requesting a date that the Council could attend a meeting with them in Limerick. It was agreed that this would be done.

A general discussion then took place. The Members thanked the Nenagh Hospital Action Group and Senator Kelly for attending the meeting and for their input.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Mayor: _____

Town Clerk: _____

Date: _____

**STATEMENT BY NENAGH HOSPITAL ACTION GROUP TO MEETING OF NENAGH
TOWN COUNCIL, WEDNESDAY JULY 16TH 2008.**

NENAGH HOSPITAL ACTION GROUP TO QUESTION HSE ON RATIONALE FOR
REPORTED PLANS TO MOVE SERVICES FROM NENAGH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Nenagh Hospital Action Group thanks the Mayor of Nenagh, Cllr Virginia O Dowd and the members of Nenagh Town Council to address you on the important issue of the future of services at Nenagh General Hospital.

The Nenagh Hospital Action Group, set up in the aftermath of the publication of the Hanly Report on the reconfiguration of acute hospital services in the Mid-West, has campaigned consistently for the retention of essential services at Nenagh General Hospital, on behalf of patients and their families. With the support of the wider community, we have consistently argued that removing acute services from Nenagh would be potentially very damaging to patients in North Tipperary, but also that it is not necessary and does not make sense on a number of levels.

As part of that campaign, we published "Small Hospital, Big Service" - a working proposal for the future of Nenagh Hospital. This was published in April 2006 and despite the time which has passed since then, the contents of the report are still relevant, and still true.

For instance, we showed in this report that the vast majority of patients who are admitted in Nenagh are treated in Nenagh - only a small number need to be transferred to a centre of tertiary care. That is because the vast majority of patients need secondary care, not tertiary care. Thus, transferring all A and E patients to a centre like Limerick, particularly without additional resources being made available there, to us makes no logical sense.

Obviously we must listen to the arguments being made by the HSE, and particularly by the medical side, for a reconfiguration. Clearly, patient safety is at the top of our agenda too.

Thus we welcome the opportunity to meet the HSE, hopefully in the near future, to discuss the issue of services at Nenagh General Hospital.

NHAG has requested the meeting following public reports of plans by the HSE to remove critical services from Nenagh, plans which were revealed at a meeting of mid-west staff addressed by HSE chief Professor Brendan Drumm.

We note however that reports of the meeting have been made public inadvertently, due to the publication of an internal staff email and that this is the only knowledge we have of any such plans to move services from Nenagh to Limerick Regional Hospital.

We also note that the email raises more questions than it answers, and this is why we have requested this meeting as a matter of urgency.

We have a number of questions we want to put to the HSE. These are some.

1. Where is the Teamwork Report?

The Teamwork Report, we were told, was to report on the future of acute hospital services in the Mid West. The NHAG held two meetings with representatives of the Teamwork report and the Steering Group, making the case for the retention of services at Nenagh Hospital. That case was based on our own report "Small Hospital, Big Service".

We have been told on more than one occasion that the report is "imminent". It has not been published and we do not know what it contains. However it is being used as a rationale for plans to centralise hospital services, particularly acute services, into Limerick. Because we have not seen the report, we do not know what that rationale is based on. Apart from the cost to the public purse of the drawing up of this report, we feel that the fact that we contributed to it, in good faith, gives us the right to at least see its conclusions and in particular the rationale for the alleged recommendations it has made.

We want the opportunity to respond to it but are not being given that. We also understand that it has not been signed off by the Board of the HSE. How therefore could it be used as a basis of fundamental policy decisions, if it has not been signed off?

2. What is the rationale for the moving of acute services from Nenagh General Hospital?

There is much talk in the national media about how small hospitals are not safe. We know that there have been hospital failures eg the Portlaoise cancer issue, the Rebecca O'Malley misdiagnosis. But these failures were not to do with acute services, nor were they all in small hospitals. They were systems failures. Instead the HSE speaks in dark tones about small hospitals as if they are unsafe. Small hospitals like Nenagh are only made unsafe by HSE decisions to cut essential services. In fact Nenagh Hospital is saving lives and our main concern is that lives will be lost if vital services are lost to Nenagh.

3. What, if any, additional resources are being made available to Limerick Regional Hospital to accommodate additional admissions from Nenagh?

We know that Limerick Regional Hospital is one of the busiest hospitals in the country and we have no evidence to show that it can cope with patients from Nenagh. When the Hanly report was published, we were then told that no services would be removed from Nenagh until such time as they could be made available in Limerick. This time, it appears that even this assurance won't be available.

It is now more than two years since we, the Nenagh Hospital Action Group, published "Small Hospital, Big Service". In it we not only showed the valuable service Nenagh provides to the hospital network in the mid-west, we also showed that Nenagh provides value for money as well as true patient-centred care at the heart of the community.

We have had no evidence presented to us since to undermine our findings. What we do have is a lot of evidence to show that the HSE is dead set on its mission to centralise acute services in the mid-west in one hospital – Limerick Regional Hospital and the by now famous email proves this.

We have not given up on the provision of necessary hospital services at Nenagh, and neither has the community of Nenagh and North Tipperary. We look forward to our meeting with the HSE and to reporting back to yourselves and to the community on the outcome of our talks.

Mr. Paul Malone
Chairman
Nenagh Hospital Action Group

July 16th 2008