

JOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH --- MEETING 16 MAY 2022

OPENING STATEMENT – JAMES MENTON –CHAIR ST. VINCENT'S HEALTHCARE GROUP (SVHG); FOUNDING DIRECTOR –ST. VINCENT'S HOLDINGS CLG (SV HOLDINGS)

Chair,

Thank you Chairman for the opportunity to meet your committee this afternoon.

I act as Chair of SVHG and was Founding director of SV Holdings and I am joined today by

- Ms. Imelda Reynolds – a fellow SVHG director
- Professor Janice Walshe- Consultant Oncologist at SVHG
- Dr. John Holian- Medical Consultant ; Chair of the SVUH Consultant Medical Board and a fellow SVHG director
- Mr. Donal O'Raghallaigh -- Partner with McCann Fitzgerald, Solicitors , who has acted as legal counsel to SVHG on the NMH project

Everyone at SVHG believes that Ireland is on the verge of a historic decision about the future of women's health care. It is historic in terms of infrastructure development with all the positive and badly needed new facilities that will be delivered with it. There is universal agreement that the status quo in terms of facilities currently available at Holles Street are wholly inadequate.

The relocation of the National Maternity Hospital (NMH) to the Elm Park healthcare campus is a key part of the Government's maternity strategy. We are proud to be a partner and play our part in what will be, when operational, a complete transformation of maternity and neo-natal care not only in Dublin but also as a National care centre.

From our perspective the transformation of maternity care services, of which the proposed transfer of NMH to our Elm Park campus is one part, coincides with and is in part facilitated by the complete transformation of the SVHG after over 175 years of ownership by the Religious Sisters of Charity (RSC).

In 2017, the RSC announced they were ceasing any involvement in SVHG and all representatives of the RSC resigned from the Board with immediate effect. The April 2022 transfer of the RSC's SVHG shareholding to SV Holdings (our new shareholder) was the last formal step in the reaching the Board's objective of becoming a truly secular organisation free of any religious influence.

We were determined to achieve this objective and we have done so.

Who is SV Holdings?

SV Holdings is the new owner of SVHG and is a registered Irish charity; a “not-for-profit” company governed by Irish law.

It is not a “Public Juridic Body” and there is no vehicle in the registered Constitutions of SVHG or SV Holdings by which any religious authority or control can be exerted. This is a fact.

It is also a fact that the RSC transferred their shares to SV Holdings without any conditions requiring the practice of any Catholic ethics or any religious ethos.

SV Holdings sole function is to act as holding company. Its purpose is to hold the shares in SVHG, and to promote healthcare interests through its shares in SVHG

SVHG?

SVHG is also a registered Irish charity; a “not for profit” company governed by Irish law.

SVHG’s vision and purpose is:

- To be a valuable part of an Irish healthcare system that achieves best outcomes for patients and their families;
- To be known for the highest standards of patient care, clinical excellence, medical research and staff education;
- To remain a voluntary, independent group that invests all our funds in the treatment and care for our patients.

The active governance, management and ownership of our three hospitals - SVUH, SVPH and St Michael’s is the responsibility of a diverse and experienced SVHG board ; our highly qualified management teams and our 5,000 staff who constantly strive to achieve the best outcomes for our patients and their families. As a not-for-profit company with charitable status, all our funds are reinvested in the treatment and care of our patients.

Religious Ethos and Culture

St. Vincent’s Healthcare Group is a secular organisation. The hospital has no religious ethos.

Services have been and will continue to be delivered in accordance with best international medical practice, compliant with the laws of the Ireland and to people of all faiths and none. There are multiple protections in place to ensure no religious authority or control can be exerted.

SVHG’s founding values are dignity, compassion, justice, equality and advocacy - values found in many institutions across the world and which cannot be interpreted as any attempt to directly or indirectly impose a catholic ethos.

In previous Committee hearings this week there have been many references to our culture. Culture in all our hospitals is driven by a single focus - to provide the best possible care to our patients.

Partnership

We were approached by Government to become a partner with them and the National Maternity Hospital, Holles Street in the relocation of maternity services to the Elm Park campus. The opportunity to assist in the provision of world class maternity and neo-natal healthcare together with our longstanding working relationship with Holles Street, informed our decision to support and partner on this 21st century project.

The new NMH facility will be located in the centre of the campus and will be physically integrated with SVUH to ensure the best and seamless care for high risk and pregnant women. This seamless care to NMH patients will be provided by ready access to over 250 Consultants covering over 50 healthcare specialities.

The lands at the Elm Park campus have been owned outright by SVHG for 20 years.

Ownership of the Elm Park campus lands is essential to ensure the ongoing provision of the best possible care for all patients attending the Elm Park campus either in SVUH, SVPH or in the new NMH at Elm Park. The SVHG campus is large and complex with many different health and related services on its site. Two landowners and thus two separate independent hospitals would make it very difficult, if not impossible, to manage the Elm park campus and would also present significant risks to patient care. The Mulvey Agreement noted this important SVHG principle in the Mediation Agreement between all three parties.

The Decision to proceed

The important decision about to be made about the building of the National Maternity hospital on the Elm Park campus is of course properly a political decision but involves the essential co-operation and agreement of the two voluntary hospitals involved.

We hope our presence today will assist you as legislators.

SVHG is now embarked on a new course. It is lay. It is secular. It is a healthcare organisation which hopefully soon will welcome the National Maternity Hospital to our Elm Park campus. It is a place that culturally and ethically fully upholds the values and the laws of our Republic.

Thank you.

James Menton

16 May 2022