

Hospital in crisis

Meeting details range of ongoing issues at UHW



The scale of the crisis facing University Hospital Waterford (UHW) was outlined in stark terms to local political representatives last week. Councillors from Waterford joined their regional counterparts in attending a meeting with UHW General Manager Grace Rothwell on Tuesday last. The aim was to provide an update on the ongoing funding situation, capital developments and service planning at UHW.

They heard that the pursuit of full 24/7 cardiac care at the hospital is at least two to three years away. Despite Simon Harris promising to deliver a 'commissioned lab in 17 months' in September 2018, the second cath lab build is only now beginning the phased procurement stages of planning application and tender development which will require a two year build-out plan. Meanwhile, it also emerged at the meeting that tenders for the mortuary are over budget and will be reviewed - adding a further delay to the pursuit of a new facility.

Furthermore, it has emerged that there are over 200 staffing vacancies at UHW due to a recruitment moratorium and that budgeting for bed opening in the new Dunmore Wing, delivered in April 2019, has not yet been approved. Health campaigner Cllr Matt Shanahan (Ind) said the issues discussed at the meeting came as no surprise to him. "The fundamental proposition put forward by hospital management was that UHW must deliver within this year's HSE service profile," he said.

"This point was hammered home to those present! To me this is the 'stand-out' statement that this hospital will continue to be operated in a state of acute distress with no emergency plan in action and no contingency to appeal for further required resourcing." Cllr Shanahan said UHW remains the "most underfunded in the country relative to its patient catchment, its activity and its output". "Budgets remain as they have been for many years, inadequate to the needs of the services it is supposed to deliver," he said.

"The hospital head count is being deliberately suppressed with nobody in HSE calling out the inequity that exists between it and peer hospitals nationally."