

Tensions Run High in City East



Independent candidate Eddie Mulligan.

The inclusion of East Waterford's coastal communities in the new electoral area had a game-changing impact on the results in City East, with a number of long-time Fine Gael councillors losing their seats and an upsurge in support for Sinn Féin and Independent candidates. It was evident from the earliest of tallies on Saturday morning that Dunmorebased Sinn Féin candidate Pat Fitzgerald had polled well but he was overwhelmed when it emerged that his 756 votes in 2009 had jumped to a poll-topping 1,221 first preferences last weekend. In a press conference that afternoon, Senator David Cullinane said the party had been building towards that day in Waterford for the last fifteen years. Also elected on the first count was consistent poll topper Davy Daniels, Independent, whose vote fell marginally over the 2009 result. Direct Democracy Ireland's Larry McCarthy was the first to be eliminated in the area, on the second count, followed by Independent (and former Fine Gaeler) John D Walsh, Fianna Fáil's Eamon McGrath, People Before Profit's Joan Quirke and Liz Murphy, Fianna Fáil. Outgoing Labour councillor Jack Walsh lost his seat on the 7th count, with his vote falling drastically from 922 to 376 last weekend. Early tallies gave rise to Michelle Clancy reports doubts throughout the hall whether Fine Gael could retain three seats in the area and City Councillor Tom Cunningham was the first to go, when he was eliminated in the ninth count. His share of first preferences has fallen from 588 in 2009 to 484 this time out. A large number of Cunningham's votes went to running mates John Carey and Jim D'Arcy but the transfers were not enough to save the seat of the latter. D'Arcy, a former City Mayor, went out on the 12th count, after seeing his votes fall from 815 in 2009 to 509 in 2014. Independent candidate Neil White, who was supported by John Halligan TD and a member of the Dáil's Independent Network, polled well (with 405 votes) and continued to pick up transfers from a cross section of other candidates. He was ultimately eliminated in the 10th count and the transfer of his votes was enough to push fellow Independent Mary Roche, John Carey (FG) and Adam Wyse (FF) over the finishing line. Mary Roche said the count was a tense one, with a lot of new candidates polling well and a 'lot of big beasts already gone in this election'. Roche said she particularly saddened to see Labour's Seamus Ryan lose his seat. "The foot soldiers in Labour have paid a big price for the total sellout at the top." "It's hard to know what kind of a Council it will be but it will be very different, with a lot of people working with people they don't know. There's also a lot of new Sinn Féin councillors, who are saying they won't enter into any pact. It's hard to know how it will pan out." Last to secure his seat was newcomer Eddie Mulligan, Indp. Passage-based Fine Gael's John Carey held his own in the newly-expanded area, despite his 1,113 in first preferences from 2009 falling to 869 votes last weekend. Adam Wyse, who took up the seat of his father Gary after the latter's death last November, said the day was a proud one for all the family: "It's been exciting to see what my Dad went through the last time, how he handled it. I was only 14 back then so I would have helped him canvas, delivering leaflets and so on. It's a nice feeling to live through what he lived through. I doubled his first preferences but he needs to be given the credit for so much of this, he did so much of the hard work."