

## Councillors seek meeting with WIT representatives



Cllr Mary Roche

WATERFORD City & County councillors are to seek a meeting with both the President and Chairman of Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT).

At a specially convened meeting held last week to discuss the issue, councillors agreed that the controversy surrounding the proposed merger between WIT and IT Carlow must be addressed.

Independent Cllr Davy Daniels said this was a major issue for Waterford.

He said much effort had gone into seeking university status for WIT over the years.

"We must work together on this and we can't afford to lose any more time," he said.

Fianna Fail Cllr John O'Leary asked what was wrong with Waterford.

"We seem to always draw the short straw and are always on the back foot," he stated.

"The people who leave Waterford to go to various institutes and universities are a loss to the city and county," he added.

Cllr O'Leary said IT Carlow was "light years" behind WIT.

"Let's get off the back foot and fight. We need university status in Waterford," he said.

Fellow Fianna Fail Cllr Eamon Quinlan said both Waterford and WIT were faced with a difficult decision.

"Waterford and WIT are in the unwanted position of having to make a choice: to take a chance on the long term benefit of a university for the south east based in Waterford, or a short term bump from a technological university by merging with Carlow."

Cllr Quinlan said many of those who opposed a university based in Waterford begrudgingly agreed that WIT was already at university status.

"We should make the case that a university based in Waterford will have reciprocal benefits, educational, technological and economic across the south east as a whole," he said.

Independent Cllr Mary Roche, who sits on the governing body of WIT, outlined further details surrounding the issue.

"As it stands, the only option open to us under legislation is a technological university," she said.

Cllr Roche said she was confident that, with technological university status, WIT would be a challenger for any university in the state.

"As it stands, WIT outperforms two universities in this state in terms of the amount of research funding it attracts," she said.

Councillors were in agreement that the President and the Chairman of WIT should both be invited to address the council.