

Mayor says bridge, clean harbour are both possible

New councillors are sworn in

by Mike Dinsdale

Whangarei can have a cleaner harbour and a second harbour bridge, new mayor Morris Cutforth says — despite being initially opposed to plans for a new bridge.

The new Whangarei District Council, with Mr Cutforth at the helm and long-term councillor Phil Halse as his deputy mayor, were sworn in at the council chambers yesterday.

Mr Cutforth said the day was a day for the "ordinary bloke"

He said after 66 years living and working in the most beautiful district in the country he was approached four months ago by veteran Northland local body politician Peter Jensen and asked to stand as mayor.

"I still can't believe it and here I am," Mr Cutforth said in his welcoming speech.

Hē said while he was a newcomer to local body politics, his family had along history of it in the district, including his great grandfather Richard on the Whangarei Hospital Board and Whangarei County Council in the 1890s and great uncle Frank as deputy mayor in the 1930s.

"As mayor what can you expect? I can't promise you everything, but what I can promise is that I will listen to you and aim to take the district in the

direction you want," Mr Cutforth said.

As part of that the council would introduce 15-minute public forums at the start of each monthly full council meeting where people would be given three minutes to speak to the council. That time could be extended, if agreed by three quarters of the councillors.

Within hours of being elected on October 9, Mr Cutforth said solving the Whangarei Harbour pollution problem was his priority ahead of a planned \$34 million bridge.

"I still can't believe it and here I am,"

Morris Cutforth, mayor

"It depends how far the contract (for the bridge) is along the path.

"The last council was very, very keen

to get it built but, to be honest, I don't think it's necessary.

"The first thing is to clean up the harbour," he said at the time.

But yesterday he said after being in the council and looking through the projects planned and committed to the district could have them both.

Mr Cutforth said now he had access to reports, documents and council staff it had been a "gratifying surprise" to see how much work had been done so far on the harbour clean up and bridge.

Tender documents for the bridge would go out in the next few weeks. "It doesn't have to be either or," Mr Cutforth said.



COUNCILLORS: New Whangarei mayor Morris Cutforth, front, with his full council team, from left, John Williamson, Warwick Syers, deputy mayor Phil Halse, Aaron Edwards, Crichton Christie, Sue Glen, Jeroen Jongejans, Kahu Sutherland, Greg Martin, Sharon Morgan, Brian McLachlan, Merv Williams and Shelley Deeming. **PICTURE / JOHN STONE**