



Editorial *NH Advice*
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Formal probe only proper

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WILL they — won't they? Last month, when asked whether the council would look into the behaviour of its CEO, and the manner in which he confronted a newspaper columnist who criticised him, Whangarei mayor Morris Cutforth said there would be no disciplinary action.

Given that there was no action taking place, the mayor exercised his right to defend Mark Simpson's character and behaviour.

There was no process to prejudice, he could say what he wished.

But in doing so, Mr Cutforth passed judgement on a situation he admitted he did not fully comprehend.

And a situation that, despite what Mr Cutforth said, is now being looked into formally. In fact, within days of Mr Cutforth saying nothing would happen, something was happening behind council doors.

It seems that someone within the council — staff or politicians — has rightly said "hang on, there's a process that we should be going through".

If the Whangarei District Council wishes to demonstrate professional business conduct, then a formal look at the matter is absolutely the right thing to do.

It may be that nothing eventuates. It may be or that something eventuates.

But at least the council can say it has done the right thing, the professional thing.

Mr Cutforth was a political pawn put forward to oust former mayor Stan Scemoff, but he has had difficulty making the transition from pawn to king.

The 2010 election result demonstrated the respect the Whangarei community had for Mr Cutforth — he is generally well-liked, and popular.

As a mayor and politician, Mr Cutforth is a lovely bloke.

He has also — and it may simply be coincidentally — endured one or two health scares since entering politics.

If he chooses to run again, it will be a surprise.