

Clarity call on events centre

By DENISE PIPER

CONCERNS have been raised about transparency of the Northland Events Centre Trust after the Whangarei District Council exempted it from making a statement of intent.

The council receives statements of intent from three of its council-controlled organisations - the Whangarei Tourism Trust, Whangarei District Airport and Northland Regional Landfill Ltd Partnership. The statements outline objectives and budgets for the coming financial year.

But on June 23, the council decided to exempt the Northland Events Centre Trust from having to make a statement of intent, saying the compliance cost of \$840 was too much to warrant the exercise.

The trust will still have to report back to the council about its performance, under terms yet to be agreed.

The aim of the trust is to operate and maintain a high-quality multi-purpose events centre at Okara Park.

The trustees are businesswoman Clare Davies-Colley, lawyer Ian Reeves, New Zealand Refining Company chief executive Ken Rivers, Whangarei District Council chief executive Mark Simpson and councillor Warwick Syers.

Resident Clare Swinney says the

exemption makes the trust less transparent.

Mayoral hopeful Warren Slater believes the council is making way for rugby to get more possession of the stadium. He questions why the events centre trust has been exempted but not the three others.

"The events centre has been a hot potato for residents - they oppose the way it was funding. A lot of people think it was only for rugby and I think they feel there could potentially be a hole in it. I would've thought the council should be more prudent and make sure everything is above board for that reason."

But council support services manager Alan Adcock says the statement of intent is a lot of work for little benefit.

Whangarei Art Museum, another council-controlled organisation, plus Springs Flat Contracting Company and the Mayoral Relief Fund are also exempt from a statement of intent, he says.

Councillor Merv Williams, who is on the Whangarei Tourism Trust, says a statement of intent is relatively obtuse.

He says information in the council's annual plan will give a much clearer indication of an organisation's purpose and performance.