

Mayor not so critical

By DENISE PIPER

NEW mayor Morris Cutforth admits it has been easy to criticise the council when standing outside looking in.

But on his first day in office he backed down on several points he made on the campaign trail.

Mr Cutforth was officially declared Whangarei mayor during a formal ceremony last week.

During his welcoming speech he admitted that having access to reports, documents and staff made him realise how much work had been undertaken at the council.

Plans and systems for a clean harbour were already on paper, he said.

"A few weeks ago I thought my role was to develop these plans, now I realise it's my job to ensure these plans are done, and very soon."

Mr Cutforth said his concerns over the second harbour crossing being at the expense of a clean harbour had been allayed.

"The processes are well under way and tenders will be going out in the next few weeks."

He also admitted it was not necessary to call in the auditors to look at the council books - something he had called for on the campaign trail.

Auditors from Audit New Zealand signed off the council's 2009-10 annual report and Mr Cutforth said another audit was not necessary.

But he said it would be good to change the report so the "average Joe Bloggs" could understand it.

The mayor did make some changes, including introducing a 15-minute public forum to full council meetings.

Members of the public must ask for a chance to speak before the meeting and will be given three minutes each, with time extensions allowed if 75 percent of the council agrees.

He also said he wanted to look at the idea of youth councils and youth forums.

During his welcome speech Mr Cutforth called the campaign trail gruelling.

"I just hated it. It's awful driving down the street and seeing your face everywhere."

He said his inauguration was a day for "the ordinary bloke" and he paid credit to family members who had also served in Whangarei.

The ceremony included performances by the choir of St Francis Xavier School, Rick Kennaway and Opera North.

He used to sing with Opera North and even joined in for one of their numbers.

He chose to hang up the mayoral robe and chains at the full council meeting after the ceremony, saying he wanted a more inclusive approach.