

Whangarei Leader

Old boys v newbies

By DENISE PIPER

THE battlelines are drawn at the Northland Regional Council between the "old boys network" and the newbies.

Long-serving Whangarei representative Craig Brown was elected chairman in the first meeting last Tuesday – but not without a fight.

Former Kaipara mayor Graeme Ramsey was also nominated for the seat, after ousting ex-chairman Mark Farnsworth in the election.

Whangarei businessman and new councillor Tony Davies-Colley launched a scathing attack on Mr Brown and the previous council.

The choice of chair does not depend on length of service, he said, and it's not about the "old boys network" but about what's right for the region.

Mr Davies-Colley pointed to the Morrison Low report commissioned by the council, which found Northland has been performing poorly for a number of years.

The report recommends an independent, highly respected chairperson.

Mr Ramsey said the council is faced with the task of improving Northland, without parochial views stifling progress.

"In three years' time the public is going to judge us on what we've achieved. It's going to depend on how we adapt and find new ways of doing things. It would be a brave decision for this council to elect me as chairman – I'm a newbie and I'm not well-known but this is a time for boldness."

But Mr Brown stood on a



Chair challenge: Northland regional councillor Graeme Ramsey reads out a formal declaration under the watchful eyes of chairman Craig Brown and Tony Davies-Colley, left.

platform of knowledge and experience, including being Whangarei mayor, a third-term regional councillor and member of the Northland District Health Board.

He brushed aside the criticism from Mr Davies-Colley after being elected four votes to three.

"You and I are pretty tough

speakers and I've got a tough hide – I can take it. You and I will work together well."

He and Mr Ramsey had also worked well together, he said.

■ Northland Emergency Trust chairman John Bain was elected deputy chairman without contest.

HOW THEY VOTED

Votes were split between the returning councillors and the newcomers in the tight decision for Northland Regional Council chairman.

Those voting for Craig Brown were John Bain, Bill Rossiter, Joe Carr and himself.

Those voting for Graeme Ramsey were Bronwyn Hunt,

Tony Davies-Colley and himself.

Former deputy chairman Ian Walker was not present at the meeting and unable to vote.