

Cabinet system needs overhaul

WHILE I was the councillor for Ashton Ward, for 12 years up to 2010, first as a Conservative and eventually for the last six years as an Independent, restructuring of Fylde Council was put forward.

At the time we went to the people and pushed the concept of the executive committee with cross party membership to be fair to all.

It was felt that an all-out cabinet system was not for us. At that time it was stated that there was to be a probationary period of 12 months, after which a full scale whole council debate would take place to ascertain whether or not this temporary system was working and could be made permanent.

It was not stated we would never be able to return to the former system. Indeed it was agreed that if it was proven unsuitable that there would be no great obstacles in the way of returning to the former committee system.

At no time was it suggested that failure of an executive committee meant institution of a full blown cabinet system. Because of these reasons at the time I reluctantly agreed to 'give it a go'. However, in less than the stated 12 months we were landed with a cabinet system!



I was not in favour then and am still not nowadays. Therefore I welcome the Fylde Civic Awareness Group's seminar being held on Friday, February 15, at the Glendower Hotel to discuss this vital issue.

My belief is that in local government it is not the best method for local representation of the people. No matter how you look at it, having ultimate decisions made by a small number of councillors is not democratic. A democracy is a form of government authorised by the majority of the electorate. A cabinet is virtually an oligarchy—ultimate government by a few, where power is placed in a few hands.

In my pre-council days when I was taking a lot of flak putting forward the majority view of the public in this town

regarding the fate of Ashton Gardens the committee system served us, the residents of The Fylde, well.

I do not think the cabinet system during its period in power has treated us the same.

There are clashes of personality between members of the cabinet and even between members of the public and a small group in power. I feel this does not happen with the committee system. However much it is argued that a cabinet listens to the majority I do not think this has proved the case during the period the cabinet in Fylde has been in power.

Ultimately the final decision has been made by a few. This was not what I wanted to see as a councillor. I preferred to represent the people of Ashton Ward in the wider arena that the committee system allows and that is what I still prefer.

The argument that one cannot go back is no argument. The new localism bill shows it is possible to change.

In conclusion, I feel cabinet local government is undemocratic, oligarchic in nature and contrary to the best ideals of local government. I would urge everyone to vote against it when given the chance to do so.

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