

Your opinions on local government

FYLDE Council Leader David Eaves puts up a tired and predictable defence of the leader and cabinet system (Express, February 7).

The reason 28 out of 30 North West authorities have some form of leader and executive system is because the Labour government forced this on all but the smallest councils.

As a small authority Fylde did have the choice of retaining a modified committee system but the leader wanted to concentrate power and exclude others.

Coun Eaves claims the cabinet system is "fast and efficient", yet various town hall projects are no nearer to completion after almost 10 years of this type of governance.

When decisions have been made quickly they have been some of the worst decisions this borough has seen such as the sale of the Melton Grove social housing to a property developer, closure of the swimming pools, introduction of parking charges etc.

He claims the former committee system was expensive, but there were actually fewer committees then than now and there were no "special responsibility" allowances for the leader and seven cabinet members.

Coun Eaves is trying to defend the indefensible.

David Chedd
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David Chedd, left and Tim Armit

THERE seems to be a lot of talk in some small circles about how Fylde Council is run. In fact most people across the borough are not talking about this and in pubs, shops and businesses people don't care. What they do care about is the services the council delivers and the cost of this.

The council is freezing council tax again and services remain the same, that is what matters.

Some years ago the Government led councils to change how councils were run.

In the old days cumbersome, expensive-to-run, slow moving committees were in place. The Government led the way to change this to a cabinet system similar to Westminster. This is cheaper, more efficient and adopted by 28 out of 30 of the north west councils, which demonstrates it works and is supported.

There is some talk about changing this

system, mainly by people not involved in the council or in the council with more focus on how things are run than their own wards. On Friday there is a meeting about this, I will go along as I hope to hear positive suggestions on better ways to run things, I hope I won't just hear whingeing and stories of the old days and how great they were.

This council was failing and losing money, committees had been taken off people as they were badly run, now it's efficient, scoring highly in assessments.

Change always happens. In the late 1960s which a lot of people will remember, 18-year-olds could not vote and homosexuality was a crime. Less than a century ago women could not vote. Politics changes and improves and works better for the people all the time.

Now there is some talk about a referendum about this system, an event which would cost the borough more than £100,000 and possibly force an increase in council tax. And after the referendum where are we? Wanting to spend more money to return to a system proven not to work and further increasing the costs to the public?

Yes, many of us back benchers get frustrated at sometimes feeling we are not directly involved in governing. I am sure this is the same in Westminster. But we sit on committees and attend group meetings and are listened to.

Coun Tim Armit,
Kilnhouse ward, St Annes