

# Don't change!

I REFER to Coun David Chedd's letter last week and the calls from his fellow opposition councillors to return to a committee system at Fylde Council.

Fylde, like the vast majority of other councils in the North West, operates the Cabinet system but it is not true that the members of the cabinet make all the decisions and the remaining councillors are left out in the cold.

Here is an extract from the council's constitution: "The Executive (ie Cabinet) has to make decisions that are in line with the council's overall policies and budget. If it wishes to make a decision that is outside the budget or policy framework laid down by the council, this must be referred to the full council for it to decide."

All financial decisions affecting the budget are made by full council. All 51 councillors can take part in decision making and they can choose to be active on one of eight other committees, two of which scrutinise cabinet and hold them to account, and of course there is full council where all members have their say.

Are opposition councillors saying that decisions on planning committee are not important, nor on licensing committee or standards committee?

Or is it the function of the audit committee that they are rubbishing?

By calling for a referendum, they are adding costs to the council equivalent to two per cent on the council tax.

Surely, a more sensible route is simply to campaign on this issue at the next borough election when all parties can have their democratic say and the electorate can decide.

**Coun Brenda M. Ackers**  
St John's ward  
Lytham



**Coun Brenda Ackers and (below) Coun Frank Andrew**



FYLDE Civic Awareness Group hosted a meeting regarding the supposed advantages of the committee system over the current cabinet system on Friday.

I was pleased to attend so I could fully understand the differences and how this would affect council working. In the event I could see only more committees, higher costs and slower working in the proposed committee system.

The main thrust of their argument was that the current system is not democratic but I don't see how this can be. There is no piece of legislation that is not discussed in full council before it is voted on, further there are two scrutiny committees, licensing, audit, standards and planning committees which are attended by councillors of all political groups.

Fylde Council elected to change to our current system in 2005 and now 28 out of 30 north-west councils also use the Cabinet system. It is a slimmer more dynamic form of local government. Indeed Fylde is now rated as one of the best performing councils in Lancashire and services have been maintained despite three years of nil council tax increases. A fantastic achievement given the national economic climate.

Committee system supporters are trying to get 4,000 plus signatures on a petition so a very expensive referendum costing in the region £120,000 is forced on the borough. No council tax payer wants this. It is something we don't need, can ill afford and which will result in slower and more expensive local government.

If you want the lowest possible Council Tax and the best services please don't sign this petition.

**Coun Frank Andrews**  
Ribby With Wrea ward