

First move in council plan

By Gareth Vickers

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THE future of the Fylde democratic system could be set for historic change – if residents back proposals from a civic awareness group.

Democracy and Localism, a special meeting held tomorrow at the Glendower Hotel, North Promenade, St Annes, could be the start of a revolution in local politics – and is attracting interest from all over the country.

Staged by members of the Fylde Civic Awareness Group, the meeting will inform people how the new Localism Bill allows residents to call for a change in the manner a council operates.

The group wants to gather support for a change from the current cabinet system, back to the committee system, which ran until 2005.

Coun Paul Hayhurst, leader of Fylde Council for nine years under the committee system, where all 51 councillors could have a say on decisions, as opposed to the more streamlined cabinet system, which has seven portfolio holders, said: "I feel the cabinet system is totally unsatisfactory.

"With a large, diverse borough like Fylde, many areas do not get a say in



The Glendower Hotel, North Promenade, St Annes, where the meeting is taking place tomorrow. Inset - Coun Paul Hayhurst

decisions. I feel the committee system is far better in that everyone can have their point of view heard.

"I do not think people realise when they vote for a councillor, in the main, they cannot make decisions on their behalf. Most of the time when a councillor hears about a decision, they read it here first in the Lytham St Annes Express."

Fylde Civic Awareness Group clerk Fred Moor added: "With the introduction of the Localism Act, we're now in a position to challenge the current structure. We have to get five per cent of people in Fylde, around 4,000 residents, willing to sign a

petition for change.

"Once we get the signatures, we can deliver the petition to full council."

If plans are pushed through, Fylde Council could become one of the first councils in the country to change its structure through people power – with a referendum held on any decision.

The move has sparked interest across the country, with a councillor set to attend from West Dorset District Council which also has a cabinet system.

Current Fylde council leader, Coun David Eaves, argued there is a place for the cabinet system in a letter to The Express.

He wrote: "The cabinet

system works.

"There is opportunity for all other councillors to question any decisions or recommendations made by cabinet through scrutiny committees.

"We do not have the resources to return to a committee system.

"If we returned to that, the only person who would foot the bill for any change would be the council tax payer.

"I believe many people in Fylde are interested in what is delivered, rather than the way it is delivered."

For more information on the event, and ticket details, contact Fred Moor on (01253) 728047.