

# Council leader defends cabinet

By Chris Dixon

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FYLDE Council leader David Eaves has defended the authority's system of governance, as protests at its cabinet system grow.

Coun Eaves told The Express that despite a seven-strong cabinet being in charge of the Council, there is ample opportunity for councillors to take part in the running of the borough and scrutinise the cabinet's decisions.

He made his comments following the announcement of a democracy and localism seminar in St Annes, which will aim to force the authority to return to its former committee system.

Coun Eaves said: "Some seem to suggest that the cabinet and executive system is something highly unusual that has been adopted by the unscrupulous Conservative councillors in Fylde; this is very far from the truth, as out of the 30 authorities, across the political spectrum in the North West, 28 operate a leader and executive system.

"The Full Council meets seven times a year, includes all 51



Coun David Eaves has defended the cabinet system at St Annes Town Hall

councillors, and approves and adopts policy framework. The Full Council also has the opportunity to discuss and debate all important decisions."

Coun Eaves said committees including the development management committee, public protection committee and licensing committee also give other councillors an input into the authority's workings.

He added: "The Council also has two overview and scrutiny

committees whose purpose is to hold the executive to account.

"What is of vital importance is that without a doubt the present system has significantly contributed to the establishment of Fylde as a high-performing authority.

"Streets are cleaned to a high standard, refuse collection and recycling rates are at the highest level, parks and open spaces are manicured, council finances are classed as robust.

"The Council attracts major events to the area to promote the local economy, invests in its town centres and continues to subsidise Lowther Gardens and the Pavilion and supports its pools.

"All this against a backdrop of no Council Tax increases for the past three years, and meeting the challenge of reduced public sector funding.

"The cabinet system works. It is fast and efficient and that is why the committee system has almost disappeared.

"The former system was expensive and if it were to be re-instated the costs would have to be met by the tax payer."

More than half of the tickets for the seminar, set to take place at the Glendower Hotel in St Annes on February 15, have been snapped up. Fylde Civic Awareness Group is staging the event and is looking to secure 4,000 names on a petition which will force Fylde to look at an alternative to the committee system, which some believe disenfranchises councillors. Details of the seminar are available at [www.fylde.biz](http://www.fylde.biz) or on (01253) 728047.