

# Politically Correct

## Charlie Duffy

Independent councillor for Clifton ward on Fylde Council

**Do you agree with Charlie?**

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# Bring back committees to make local decisions

I've been an Independent Fylde councillor for two years now. I stood for election because of Fylde's decision to sell Melton Grove, a housing estate for the elderly in Lytham, to a private developer instead of to a registered social landlord, and also because of the way the decision was made.

Now that I have seen from within how Fylde Council operates, I have a better understanding of how this happened.

At the 2011 local elections, 26 of the 51 elected councillors were Conservative.

However, Fylde Council has a leader and cabinet system of governance, so even with this slim majority, all day-to-day decisions are taken by the Conservative leader and the six Conservative councillors that make up

**'The best anyone can do is ask cabinet to reconsider'**

his cabinet.

Yes, their decisions can be challenged, but the best anyone can do is to ask cabinet to reconsider its decision.

I have yet to see any challenge being successful.

The majority of the councillors, Conservatives included, have little say in the decision-making process.

Fylde operated under a committee system until a few years ago, when Westminster told us we had to change.

Westminster has now accepted they were wrong

to force this change on all councils and are allowing us the choice of going back to the tried and tested way of working.

Fylde Civic Awareness Group is petitioning for a referendum on our system of governance.

If you live in Fylde, you can sign this petition and allow the councillor you elected to do their job.

Needless to say, the ruling powers at Fylde are not happy about this.

They will tell you the committee system is more expensive, despite the fact that central Government's impact assessment says otherwise, and they will tell you it won't work, even though it worked perfectly well for many years.

The case for change is laid out on FCAG's website at [www.fylde.biz](http://www.fylde.biz).



**BIG DEBATE** Fylde Civic Awareness Group meeting at the Glendower Hotel, St Annes

# Formal rules suppress cut and thrust of debate

Have you ever come to a meeting of Fylde's full Council?

Fifty one councillors, made up of Conservatives, Independents, Liberal Democrats and Ratepayers, some of whom want to have their say on whatever is being debated.

I'm not suggesting that you come along for a night out, but is there a chance that you could find it interesting - the cut and thrust of political debate, opinions being exchanged and friendly banter flowing to and fro?

Unfortunately not - it's all very formal and stale most of

the time, so I wouldn't bother if I were you, unless there's something on the agenda that really interests you.

The rules of debate for full council meetings at Fylde have been built up over a number of years.

Most of them make sense, in isolation, but collectively they result in pretty much the same kind of debate as you'd see in the House of Commons, although perhaps with fewer councillors actually falling asleep.

Fylde Council is not the House of Commons, despite

what one or two councillors would wish, so there is no need for the rules to be the same.

We should be able to come up with a set of rules that allow the debate to be controlled, but at the same time a little less formal than at present.

I'm not suggesting that we should change the rules just so that people will come along to watch, or so that the webcast will get more hits on YouTube, but come on, if the meetings were a bit more interesting, at least we might get a bit more involvement from the people we are all there to represent.



# Consider the job yourself

A friend recently asked me which level of government I thought had the biggest influence on people's lives - Westminster, Lancashire County Council, Fylde Council, or his parish council.

After a long discussion about who was responsible for which taxes and services, we agreed that the answer depends on what you have, how you live and what you want.

It wasn't until afterwards the right answer came to me - the question was wrong.

It left out the single most important influence.

It left out you. You are the one who can tell your council-

lor or your MP exactly what you think.

You are the one who knows exactly how decisions made by politicians affect you, and who decides who you want to represent you at each level.

Next time your elected representative isn't representing you, tell them.

Most importantly, next time you are asked to choose who should represent you at any level of government, take the time to find out as much as you can about those asking for your vote. If there's nobody you like, consider doing the job yourself.