

4,000 challenge system

Cabinet vote 'will cost tax payers'

As the Fylde Civic Awareness Group delivered the petition to Town Hall, Fylde Council's leader raised concerns about the extra cost of a referendum vote to the borough.

Coun David Eaves said anyone backing the committee system should do so at the 2015 elections – rather than a “costly” referendum.

He added: “This has been championed by a particular group of individuals. The petition has been collected over a large number of months.

“Clearly the 4,000 signatures have to be checked, to see if they are legible and from voters in the borough. It's not something I support. It's a shame this referendum is going to be forced on the majority of the council's 78,000 residents.

“It will come at a cost. I imagine the organisers are targeting the May 2014 European elections.”

On Tuesday the FCAG delivered more than 4,000 signatures to the Town Hall.

If all signatures are recognised by Fylde's returning officer, it will trigger an automatic and binding referendum, most probably at the May 2014 European Elections.

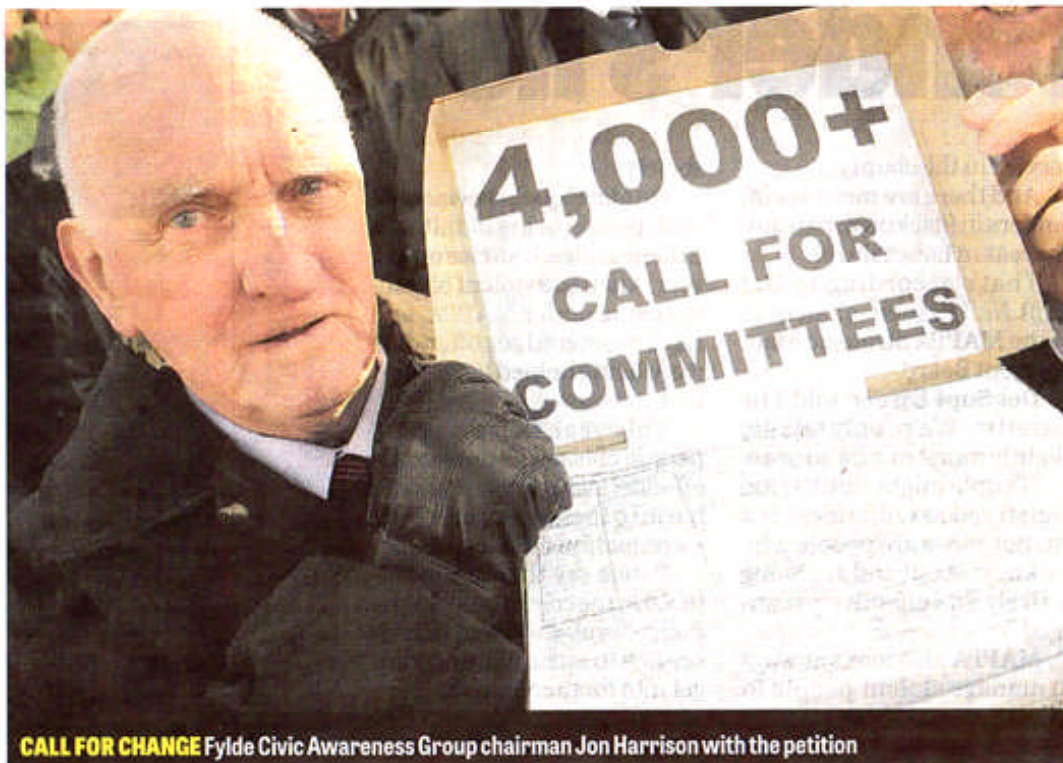
The group hopes to time the referendum vote with the elections to reduce costs for the council.

FCAG vice-chairman John Bainbridge, said: “We listened to concerns about the cost of a stand-alone referendum and rearranged our schedule to coincide with the European elections next May.

Irrespective of Fylde's accounting arrangements, the cost of this governance referendum need only be marginal, because all the voting arrangements will have to be in place for the European Elections.”

It is understood that up to 40 councils across the country are considering changing back to committees.

A dozen have already decided to do so including Hartlepool, Reading, Brighton and Hove, as well as Cambridgeshire and Nottingham-



CALL FOR CHANGE Fylde Civic Awareness Group chairman Jon Harrison with the petition

'...a change will deliver more open governance'

shire County Councils and Kingston-upon-Thames, Sutton, and Barnet in the London area.

Chairman of the FCAG group, Jon Harrison, added: “We have always believed the change would

deliver more open and democratic governance with decision-making by a majority of councillors in full council.

“Not by a group of just seven councillors acting as a cabinet.”

By GARETH VICKERS
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A referendum which could lead to the scrapping of Fylde Council's cabinet system, allowing all councillors to have a say in decisions affecting the borough, could be set to get the go ahead.

It comes after more than 4,000 people in the borough signed a petition challenging the current model, which allows decisions to be taken by a small cabinet of councillors.

In February, members of the Fylde Civic Awareness Group (FCAG) held a seminar in St Annes to investigate change to the current system, which they believe is undemocratic, putting power in the hands of too few people.

The group hoped to gain signatures from five per cent of voters from within the borough of Fylde – around 3,070 people – to go from the cabinet system of seven portfolio holders to the committee system, allowing all councillors a say in decision-making.