

## FULL COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 20 JULY 2016

### **Written question from Lee Wilson to Councillor Jonathan Bacon, Leader and Executive Member for Resources, Organisational Change and Children's Services**

In response to a question I tabled just over a year ago, the Council Leader indicated that his preference was for Island Line to remain "part of the package" of the South Western Rail Franchise. Despite this, and a resolution by Full Council in September 2015 in support of this view, he then commissioned Christopher Garnett to undertake a study which concluded the opposite – which led Cllr Bacon to suggest that Island Line "might benefit from local management" as the Council submitted the Garnett Report to the Department for Transport (DfT) prior to its subsequent consideration by Full Council. Despite all these mixed messages, in March 2016 Full Council reaffirmed its view in support of Island Line remaining in the South Western Rail Franchise, and in doing so openly disagreed with both the Garnett Report and the then Rail Minister (Claire Perry MP).

In light of this – and the recent publication of the Invitation To Tender (ITT) by the DfT – will the Council Leader now take the opportunity of the recent appointment of a new Rail Minister (Paul Maynard MP) to forcibly make the case in support of the Council's view, and in particular urge the DfT to drop the franchise objective to work towards Island Line becoming a self-sustaining business during the course of the next franchise, which is both discriminatory and unviable?

### ***Response***

In September 2015 the Department for Transport (DfT) announced its intention to require the new south western rail franchise holder to, work with the council to secure a long term sustainable solution to the future of Island and for it to become self-sustaining in the medium term. This was despite representations made by the council prior to this announcement.

The DfT would appear to have remained consistent and immovable in its approach to Island Line by including this requirement in the invitation to tender for the franchise. This despite representations made by the council and the many stakeholders on the Island. Of course, one of the things we do not know at this stage is what the bidders for the franchise might propose in order to achieve the DfT's goals.

Nevertheless, I can advise that I and Councillor Ward will be joining Andrew Turner MP at a meeting he has arranged tomorrow with the new railway minister Paul Maynard where Island Line will again be the subject of the discussion.