

**FULL COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 20 JULY 2016**

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

Earlier this month I wrote to all elected members with a copy of an email trail between the Isle of Wight Council (IWC) and a representative of the MP's office in which the latter suggested working with Red Funnel to ensure they were acting in a visibly different manner to Wightlink, before suggesting *that "a loss of business from Wightlink to Red Funnel would be the most damaging outcome for Wightlink"*.

Such was the Council's concern about this matter at the time that the relevant director wrote to the then Council Leader (Cllr Ian Stephens) to say that *"the Council cannot be part of this and you will see my email to Carole etc is an attempt to distance us from this activity"*.

In light of this proposal from the MP's office to improperly interfere in the ferry market, can the Council Leader please advise whether the local authority will allow any form of input, involvement or attendance at meetings from representatives of the MP's office in the work of the forthcoming Transport Infrastructure Taskforce (particularly in its deliberations relating to cross-Solent travel), as surely to do so would not inspire confidence amongst key stakeholders that a fair and balanced approach is being taken?

## ***Response***

I am delighted that Mr Christopher Garnett OBE has again offered his services free of charge, to the Isle of Wight to act independently, seek out and collate the views of all stakeholders and discuss with the government the infrastructure needs of the island. He also has the support of both and also that of the Department for Transport, the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership and Island's MP.

Although not everyone agreed with his conclusions I think most people were impressed with his inclusive approach to the study he completed on Island Line. As previously he will work independently of the council but with its support, appointing who he feels are the most capable individuals to assist his work. Full Council will be able to take its own view as to whether it supports of the outcome of Mr Garnett's work, as will all stakeholders.