

FULL COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2016

Written question from Steve Ray to Councillor Shirley Smart, Executive Member Public Transport, Tourism, Recreation and Heritage

On 19th November 2014, Full Council voted unanimously to support the creation of a taskforce to look at the future of transport provision on and to the Island.

On 19th July 2016, an Isle of Wight Council press release announced the formation of an infrastructure transport taskforce to take this forward, and that this body would be "independently led" by Christopher Garnett, who had recently produced a controversial report on the future of Island Line.

The decision to support Mr Garnett's appointment to this role appears to be one made in isolation by the leadership of the local authority, rather than any referral back to Full Council to ensure that the choice for such an influential role secured democratic legitimacy. This is particularly surprising given that Full Council disagreed, as recently as 16th March 2016, with Mr Garnett's earlier conclusion that there does not appear to be any clear logical arguments for Island Line being part of a wider franchise.

Although I understand that the taskforce has a wider remit than just Island Line, it is significant that its first major piece of work is to produce a report on Island Line to be published in December, which will be written by Mr Garnett and then presumably endorsed by his hand-picked members of the Taskforce.

In light of this, and in order to safeguard the democratic view of Full Council being given priority in any further representations to the DfT, can the Leader confirm that the Taskforce's forthcoming report on Island Line will be subject to consideration by Full Council prior to it being submitted to the DfT (unlike Mr. Garnett's earlier report on Island Line)?

Anticipated Supplementary:

And if not, why is he is allowing IW Council resources (including staffing, meeting rooms and equipment) to be used in facilitating the work of a Taskforce which is almost certain to produce a report promoting a model for Island Line which runs contrary to the settled view of elected members?

Response (Provided by Cllr Jonathan Bacon in the absence of Cllr Smart)

The report of the Infrastructure Task Force is about the wider infrastructure needs of the Island and not solely about Islandline. Any decision about Islandline is part of the separate franchise process and the DfT deadline for tenders from the two bidders closed in September 2016.

A report will go to Full Council. The emphasis will not just be about Island Line but the wider infrastructure needs of the Island. The process is as I understand it taking a long time - I'm hoping to meet with Mr. Garnett soon to discuss progress - but my current understanding is that the presentation of that report to Full Council will probably not be until March of next year (2017).