

[REDACTED]

My apologies for being unable to attend tonight's meeting, there is a meeting of the Isle of Wight Council at the same time.

I have been raising concerns with Government regarding the changes to Local Government, and the introduction of a Mayor for a newly created authority – Hampshire and Solent. I do not think that joining us with Hampshire in this way will serve the best interests of the Island generally, but there a number of specific concerns I also have. The Mayor will not have oversight of ferries, despite being given powers over buses, railways and roads. The Mayor's title will have the word "Solent" and not "Isle of Wight." Isle of Wight Councillors will be asked to vote on the Mayor deal proposed by Government on 1st October. I am urging all Councillors to reject the proposal and renegotiate with Government to ensure ferry powers are included, the name "Solent" is replaced by "Isle of Wight" and there are ring fenced funds for the Island which cannot be raided by Hampshire.

Flooding and the quality of the road surface on the junction of Station Road has been a long running issue which has never been resolved. We had promising signals from the Council, Island Road, and residents that they wanted to work together and each contribute funding to find a solution over 2 years ago. Under the Parish Council's previous Chair there was an indication that the Parish Council also would be prepared to contribute funds and possibly act as project manager. I have met with the Head of Highways at the Isle of Wight Council to ask for a list of issues that are still getting in the way of allowing this work to proceed. She is due to get back to me in the next two weeks and I will arrange a meeting with the BPC Chair and Clerk (and anyone else they would like to attend) to work through these issues and we see if we can finally get work underway.

Finally, in my role as MP and Councillor, I joined calls to for Bembridge Fire Station to remain in the control of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue, and worked with BPC Chair to issue a press statement. Clearly the preference would be for it to be retained as an operational fire station but recognising the realities faced with, not least, recruitment, keeping the station in public ownership so that it can be used by local groups like the Parish Council is an absolute bottom line. If it is sold off for housing the asset will be lost to the community for good.