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**Surrey County Council Local Committee (Guildford) 13 March 2013**

**Written member questions [Item 6]**

**1. Submitted by: COUNCILLOR BOB MCSHEE**

As John Furey, SCC lead member for Transport and Environment, recently stated “good transport links are vital to economic recovery and nothing is off the table”, I would like to propose that a direct train service is provided between Guildford and Farnham, to take cars off the busy A31. The rail lines already exist, so I ask that Surrey Rail strategy investigate this proposal.

**Answer**

Councillor McShee has highlighted the work currently underway to produce a new rail strategy for Surrey. Efficient railways are vital to economic growth in Surrey and the rail strategy needs to align with the county council’s aim to grow the Surrey economy, along with Surrey Connects’ drive for smart economic growth.

The current rail strategy work provides an opportunity to review the County Council’s position on railway services, inform future franchise consultations and address the current gap in our Local Transport Plan policy. The outcome of the work will be a strategic document that will form a part of Surrey Future. Surrey Future will bring together Surrey's local authorities and business leaders to agree the investment priorities to support the county's economy over the next few decades and establish a list of long-term infrastructure priorities.

The rail strategy work will be used to set out evidence based and realistic areas for strategic investment that the County Council, working with partners, can plan and deliver. The work will support investment decisions arguing that a safe, efficient and easily accessible rail network will help to deliver economic priorities for Surrey, in particular the creation of new jobs.

Engagement with all Surrey district and borough councils has taken place as part of the County Council's development work. The aim is to have a strategy that reflects borough council aspirations for changes to local provision. Engagement has also taken place with key stakeholders, including the Department for Transport, Transport for London, Network Rail, train operating companies and so on. Access to Guildford has specifically been included as part of the options development work. The proposal to operate 2 trains per hour between Alton and Guildford (direct with no

## TABLED

interchange) is one option that is likely to feature in the medium term opportunities section (2015-2019), noting that the final options report is almost complete. This report will be subject to public consultation from the end of March for a period of 12 weeks, with the final strategy to be completed and agreed in July.