

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**23rd April 2019

Labour councillors slam ongoing Southeastern fiasco

Bexley Labour's Group of councillors slammed the Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling's decision to further delay the award of the next Southeastern franchise at Bexley's full council meeting held on 17th April, following the recent announcement of an extension with the existing operator until the 10th November 2019 with a possible further extension until April 2020.

Labour councillors have continually expressed their concerns that the decision will worsen rail services in Bexley, with a lack of 12 car trains, increasing poor reliability of existing rolling stock, above inflation fare increases fares, higher fares than other parts of London and signalling delays, with Bexley residents further frustrated by this delay.

At the meeting, Cllr Stef Borella pressed Tory councillors to support measures to allow TfL to manage train services across South London in order to improve passenger services and integration. Bexley's Tory councillors have consistently refused to support proposals for TfL to manage the service and failed to object to previous contract extensions to award the service to Southeastern.

Speaking after the meeting, Councillor Stef Borella (Northend and Slade Green Ward) Shadow Spokesperson for Transport said: "This mess and lack of investment has been created by a franchising system that is no longer fit for purpose. Bexley Labour councillors are calling for rail services in Bexley to be devolved to TfL to operate to allow better accountability. Sadly, this has been ruled out by Chris Grayling on purely political grounds and not in the interests of Bexley residents."

He continued "It is also clear that TfL needs to be properly funded. A decision in 2015 by the then Mayor of London, Boris Johnson and then Chancellor George Osborne to cut £2.8 billion from the TfL budget has had a detrimental effect on transport investment. Bexley Labour councillors believe that if TfL funding was restored to previous levels it would enable the transport improvements that Bexley residents deserve."

-ENDS-**Notes to editors**

- The recently published Strategic Case for Metroisation in south east London published by TfL can be viewed at <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/strategic-case-for-metroisation.pdf>
- For further information, please contact Councillor Stef Borella on Stefano.borella@bexley.gov.uk