

Minutes of the Extraordinary Property Committee Meeting

Date: Wednesday 10 December 2025

Time: 5.30pm

Venue: Town Hall, Bridge Street, Downham Market PE38 9DW

Present

Councillors C Pyatt (Vice Chair), Leach, Pegg, Leivers, Lewis, Cambell-Robb (6)

Tina Griffin, Deputy Clerk

2 non-committee members Cllrs J Pyatt and Simms

1 member of the public

The Chair reminded members to turn their phones to silent and explained the emergency evacuation procedures.

1. To note Apologies for Absence – apologies received from Cllrs Jordan and Perkin.

2. To receive declarations of interest and consider requests for Dispensations.

None declared.

3. Public Participation

Cllr J Pyatt asked for an update on the Hollies bus stop and if it is now complete.

It was confirmed that it is still awaiting the electronic timetable system from Norfolk County Council.

4. To discuss the way forward for the gritting contract and agree actions.

Cllr Pyatt referred to the recent complex advice received from the Council's professional advisors and the document circulated by Cllr Pegg regarding a potential cause for concern where a Councillor is also a Council contractor.

Cllrs were individually asked to put forward their views and they raised the following:

- The Council's duty of care to ensure its property is safe for the public to use.
- Anomalies within the legal advice received and the 'grey areas' it appears to present. It was highlighted that the advice does not offer definitive answers.
- The potentially difficult situation in which the Council finds itself.
- The precedent of Councillors working as contractors with the Council, and why this is only now a matter for concern.
- Other local authorities do not grit their car parks, and perhaps DMTC could consider that option.
- Clarification that the current gritting contract has been 'suspended' not 'ceased'.

- Public expectations as the car parks have been gritted for more than 14 years. The need for signage to warn the public if this is not taking place.
- That the method of delivering the legal advice to the contractor feels unsatisfactory, and should have been a matter for committee or Full Council.
- The matter of compensation if the contract is withdrawn added to the cost of securing the services of an alternative contractor.
- The years of excellent service by the contractor.
- The salt used by the Council's maintenance team cannot be taken from the NCC grit bins. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that a small supply has been purchased separately to treat the Town Hall steps etc for just that reason.
- Any gritting already carried out prior to 25 November 2025 (date of meeting with contractor) needs to be paid for.

Resolved:

1. To continue the suspension of the gritting contract until Full Council can properly consider the advice received. If icy conditions are expected and the contract is inactive, to display signage in all DMTC car parks cautioning the public that gritting is not currently taking place.
2. To make the following recommended options to Full Council on 13 January 2026:
 - a) To consider continuing the contract with the current contractor if he is willing.
 - b) To consider terminating the contract with compensation.

Proposed Cllr Leivers

Seconded Cllr C Pyatt

All in favour

Meeting ended 18.20pm