



Minutes of the Dobcross Village Society Ltd Annual Members Meeting 2025

14th September 2025 at 1pm Dobcross Band Club

Apologies for absence were received in advance from 17 members and 3 of these asked for a proxy vote to be given to Nathan Beckwith (chairperson), Stephen Brophy (Treasurer) and Louise Stevenson (Secretary).

44 members and 16 non-members attended the meeting.

Welcome and Introductions.

Suzanne Wright opened the meeting by greeting attendees and introducing the management committee members. She gave a summary of Dobcross Village Society, described the meeting structure, and reviewed housekeeping information. Attendees were informed that feedback or questions could be raised during the meeting, and that a board with post it notes was available at the back of the room for further comments after the meeting concluded.

Summary of the Chairpersons' Annual Report by Nathan Beckwith.

Executive Summary

Dobcross Village Society Ltd was formed through community support and member funding (£63k). The business and lease were acquired to secure the village store and Post Office, with successful establishment of governance, contracts, and operations. A Community Ownership Fund Grant allowed for a major store refurbishment, improving facilities and creating a unique space.

Trading Overview

Shop sales exceeded £200k, surpassing initial expectations and nearly breaking even. Staff have supported each other, contributing to secure employment. Local suppliers are central to the retail offer, and increased use of the post office underscores its role as a vital village hub.



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Volunteers

Thirty dedicated volunteers plus management committee members support store operations. Volunteers' complete induction and training, taking on varied roles. Regular social events foster a strong community spirit and teamwork.

Refurbishment

A £91,200 grant funded purchase and transformation of the business, securing a 15-year lease and creating a multi-functional community hub. All project aims were achieved by April 2025, with ongoing monthly reporting.

Media and Communications

Active social media and media coverage share positive stories about the store and village, promoting events and improvements.

Co-Operative Benefits

DVSL is a Community Benefit Society, owned and run by its members. Community ownership drives success and resilience, thanks to active engagement from staff, volunteers, and members.

Succession Planning

There are 124 invested members and nearly 600 loyalty card holders. The committee seeks broader participation, especially on the management team, for future growth.

Appreciation

Thanks go to all founder members, donors, committee, staff, and volunteers. Their contributions have made this thriving initiative possible.

Nathan indicated that, upon establishment of the new committee, a three-year strategic plan will be formulated collaboratively to ensure its long-term viability. This approach received unanimous agreement from all present.

Summary of the Secretary's Annual Report by Louise Stevenson

After converting pledges to shares in June 2024, we now have 124 shareholders. To secure the Shop and Post Office's future, the management committee drafted a membership strategy for review and approval by the members.

Dobcross Village Society has developed a membership strategy to support the sustainability and growth of its Shop and Post Office, aiming to engage and expand



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its community base. This strategy outlines goals, proposed rule changes, and committee activities to ensure long-term community benefit and participation.

Membership strategy goals: The plan aims to increase membership by 20% within 12 months. This equates to around 25 new members. Maintain retention above 95% and boost engagement by recruiting reserve committee members and volunteers.

Proposed rule change and membership levels: To broaden membership access, the Society proposes reducing the minimum share purchase from 250 to 25 shares at £1 each, subject to approval at the Annual Members meeting and subsequent regulatory consent by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Members asked questions about membership levels and a healthy discussion took place, particularly concerning the following points;

One member queried why 25 shares had been chosen instead of 50 or 100. The committee explained that these levels had been a regularly debated amongst the committee in recent months, with guidance sought from the Plunkett Foundation, whose Model Rules are followed by the organisation. All members received a copy of these rules by email last year, which was acknowledged by the membership. Based on this advice, the decision was made to set the minimum requirement at 25 x £1 shares for membership. It was clarified that if additional funds were needed in the future for a specific project or to maintain shop operations, the management committee would be able to launch a share offer at a higher amount, such as 100 x £1 shares. However, offering a lower number, such as 10 x £1 shares, would not be permissible. The reason for seeking approval is that current rules, specifically clause 8.3, stipulate a minimum of 250 x £1 shares, so the threshold cannot be lowered below this amount without formal agreement from members and approval by the Financial Conduct Authority.

A member inquired about potential dividend payments. Louise clarified that dividends were not included when shares were first offered; profits have always been intended for reinvestment in the business or community support. After holding shares for over three years, members may request withdrawal of their shares according to the published share withdrawal policy.

A member inquired whether the new membership level would provide any additional benefits compared to the previous one. Louise clarified that there would be no differences between the two levels. One member, one vote no matter how many shares people hold. She subsequently reminded members of the relevant information outlined in the share prospectus document.

Members participate and have a voice by:



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- Attending the AGM
- Proposing motions and voting at the AMM
- Standing for and electing representatives to the Management Committee.
- One member, one vote.

In conclusion all attendees agreed that increasing membership is essential to safeguard the long-term future of the Village Store and Post Office for subsequent generations.

Management committee activities: Since October 2023, the committee has convened monthly meetings, participated in training and advisory sessions, and established sub-groups to strengthen governance in alignment with the Society's strategic objectives. A Retail sub-group is scheduled to launch in autumn to provide dedicated support for retail operations and will convene quarterly. Additionally, a Governance sub-group was formed to review matters such as pledge conversions, share withdrawals, and membership strategy as necessary.

Summary of the Treasurer's Annual Report and presentation of Accounts by Steve Brophy

Dobcross Village Society reported on its first full year of operating the community-owned shop and post office, highlighting both challenges and progress. The Society aims to build a sustainable business that meets community needs and becomes profitable.

First year challenges and achievements: The shop faced a £5,000 trading loss impacted by a two-week refurbishment closure but secured a Community Ownership Fund grant that laid a strong foundation for future development.

Financial compliance and management: The Society's bank accounts are with The Co-operative Bank, accountants and payroll are managed by Jackson Brierley Harthan Ltd, and the Society is VAT registered.

Funding sources: The acquisition was funded by £63,011 raised from share subscriptions (£54,050) and donations (£8,961), with the business transferred from Brian Hodgkinson for £28,530 in April 2024.

Trading income and expenditure: Retail sales reached £202,573 (ex-VAT £190,898), up from £147,803 pre-acquisition, with average weekly sales of £4,077. Post Office income was £10,979. Expenditures included stock purchases of £143,836, wages of £52,590, running costs of £12,870, and annual rent of £8,000.



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Year-end financial position: Despite the trading loss, the Society posted an overall surplus of £18,475 due to the timing of the COF grant income and public donations. The balance sheet showed strong cash reserves of nearly £44,000, refurbished assets, and prepaid rent for two years.

Community Ownership Fund grant details: The Society received £91,200 from COF in August 2024, split into £76,000 capital funding and £15,200 revenue support, with strict conditions including 20% match funding and spending deadlines (March 2025). The grant was awarded in March 2024. However, the announcement of the general election and the ensuing purdah period resulted in a delay in the disbursement of funding to the society. Consequently, refurbishment activities did not commence until February 2025.

Future financial targets: The Society aims to break even on trading in the coming year by increasing sales by at least £200 weekly and controlling costs, leveraging a current £8,000 annual buffer from prepaid rent.

Steve reported that 20 local suppliers located within a 5-10 mile radius supply goods to the Village Store, contributing £110,000 to the local community.

Members vote on the Ordinary resolutions .

Steve Brophy gave an explanation to members around the first resolution explaining that most Community benefit society audit requirements depend on turnover and asset values, with societies under £10.2 million turnover and £5.1 million assets generally able to disapply the full professional audit requirement, instead requiring an accountant's report for turnover over £90,000, or unaudited accounts for turnover under £90,000, provided they meet the criteria and follow the correct procedures to get member approval to do so.

A. To disapply the requirement for a full audit for the financial periods 2023-2025 and 2025-2026 but requires an independent accountant's Report.

Carried unanimously.

B. To approve JBH Uppermill as our accountants.

Carried unanimously.

C. To approve the proposed membership strategy.

Carried unanimously.



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Members vote on the Special resolution.

A. To amend rule 8.3 of the Model Rules to reduce the minimum number of £1 shares required for membership from 250 to 25.

Carried unanimously.

B. To authorise the management committee to issue a membership share offer with a specified minimum number of shares of 25.

Carried unanimously.

Election of Management Committee Members.

Louise clarified that the management committee can have up to nine members at any given time. Currently, five individuals are standing for election, leaving four positions available. She noted that opportunities to shadow the management committee have been offered on multiple occasions over the past year; however, only one person has participated in this initiative and is now a candidate for the committee.

Before the election of officers, several questions were raised by the members regarding the positions that needed to be filled by new volunteers. Several participants emphasised the importance of ensuring the new committee members possessed the appropriate skills for the role and be more specific about the roles to be filled.

There is a vacancy for a Treasurer who does not need to be an accountant but should have some financial knowledge. This position could be divided such that one individual manages the payment of weekly invoices—without needing to serve on the management committee—while another oversees the broader financial responsibilities. Steve Brophy, the outgoing Treasurer, indicated he will continue to submit the quarterly VAT returns /help with the stocktake and provide ongoing support to the incoming Treasurer.

The Secretary position remains vacant, but two current committee members will manage some responsibilities of the role, specifically taking meeting minutes and handling membership matters. Someone is still needed to oversee and coordinate the remaining duties. Louise noted that she will continue to be involved in the background and ensure a thorough handover process along with ongoing support. Penny mentioned that a similar transition took place when she began taking minutes a few months ago.

There is also a vacancy for a Vice Chair and general committee members.



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Louise clarified that it is not essential for all skills to be present within the management committee itself. Individuals with the required expertise may be engaged for specific tasks as needed. For instance, Carole Bell assisted in developing the safeguarding policy, while Rachel Bird is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the Health and Safety policies. Michael Powis provides ongoing support by maintaining the website and ensuring consistency across all policies, as well as contributing significantly to the presentation of documents for the Annual Members Meeting (AMM). These examples illustrate a few of the many instances where external expertise has benefited the committee. Louise expressed thanks to these people for their support and to everyone else who has also provided support with one off tasks.

Louise then went on to conduct the election of management committee members.

The following people were elected unanimously on block to the management committee;

Nathan Beckwith, Cari Ryan, Chris Mills, Suzanne Wright and Penny Sankey

Questions from members.

A member requested information regarding alternative channels for disseminating updates beyond Instagram and Facebook. Suzanne W responded by confirming that regular updates are communicated through articles published in the Dobcross Diary, as well as via posters and informational leaflets available at the Village store. While Instagram and Facebook remain valuable communication tools—evidenced by the Instagram post concerning the national rollout of new post boxes, which garnered over 91,800 views—multiple methods are employed to ensure information reaches the community effectively.

Additional suggestions included introducing a quarterly newsletter. Louise has sent information to members via email and recently utilised Mailchimp's complimentary service for AMM updates, thereby preventing inbox congestion. She noted that Mailchimp was effective in ensuring members received the communications, as it provides a log indicating which recipients have opened each email. This feature enabled Louise to follow up with individuals who had not accessed the message, ensuring it had not been diverted to their junk mail folders.

A question was asked about "The funded by UK Government" by a member. They felt it should say funded by the village. It was explained that this logo had to be used as we have been awarded a Community Ownership Fund grant and it is



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mandatory to display this. The management committee will explore ways to acknowledge community funding.

Louise confirmed with everyone that the venue, day, and time were suitable, and all agreed.

Date of next meeting.

Half Yearly Informal meeting March 2026 and AMM September 2026.

The meeting was closed by Nathan Beckwith at 14.15 and he thanked everyone for attending.



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