



# Proposed Membership Strategy

Dobcross Village Society Ltd Annual Members' Meeting 14.09.25

## What is a Membership Strategy Plan?

A structured approach used to define our membership goals and our policy towards achieving them. Essentially it is a plan to attract, engage, retain and inform members to cultivate a thriving membership base.

## Why we need one

According to the Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report, 83% of associations reported an increase in membership when they had a strategic plan. If one measure of the success of our organisation is the number of members, and the breadth of reach of the membership within the village community, then attracting new members, retaining existing members and fostering engagement of new and old members is essential to that success – as is a constant refreshment of the membership base to ensure that each generation of Dobcross residents has access to membership and feels that it can participate in the life of the Society.

## Key Components of a Membership Strategy Plan

### 1. A Mission Statement

A Membership Strategy should align with our organisation's overall mission.

That mission is defined in the Society's Rules:

"9.1 The Society's Purpose is to carry on business for the benefit of the community.

9.3 ...The objects of the Society shall be to carry on business for the benefit of the community by sustaining access to post office services and the provision of a retail offer, and creation of employment, volunteering and skills development opportunities."

Our membership strategy also needs to be designed to advance those declared aims.



### Dobcross Village Society Ltd

The 'Dobcross Village Society Ltd' is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration no. 9169. Trading as the Dobcross Village Store and Post Office. A member of The Plunkett Foundation.



Funded by  
UK Government

The Management Committee therefore considers that as the purpose of the Society is to provide sustainable and reliable Post Office, banking and retail services to as large a cohort of Dobcross residents as possible, and to reinvest any profits generated into the Dobcross community for the benefit of that community through engagement with as broad a range of members of that community as possible, in order to fulfil that mission we need to engage with as many members as reasonably practicable.

## Goal setting

We need to define clear, specific and measurable goals for the Society generally; but, in respect of membership, the Committee considers that we should set goals of:-

- Increasing membership by 20% over the next 12 months.
- Increasing membership diversity
- Maintaining membership retention at over 95%.
- Enhancing member engagement by:-

Securing a reserve or shadow member for each position on the Management Committee;

Maintaining/increasing volunteer engagement at/from current levels, whether that be volunteer engagement in the shop function or expanding volunteer involvement – for example into management functions.

## Target member identification

All adult inhabitants of Dobcross and the wider Saddleworth area, regardless of, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, social class.

Consideration to be given to future expansion of membership share offers to include the opportunity for people to buy shares as gifts for people under 18, with the shares to be held by the donor until the donee reaches the age of 18 at which point they can become a shareholder in their own right, as a possible way of expanding membership.

Consider ways to inform existing loyalty card holders who are not yet members/shareholders about the benefits of membership, as they already engage with the business and may share its values.

## Membership levels and pricing

To achieve our target growth in membership, it is considered that the Society needs to offer shares with a lower minimum purchase price.



### Dobcross Village Society Ltd

The 'Dobcross Village Society Ltd' is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration no. 9169. Trading as the Dobcross Village Store and Post Office. A member of The Plunkett Foundation.



**Funded by  
UK Government**

The minimum investment for the original/founder members was set at £250 (250 x £1 share). Some potential members, who may have been unwilling to invest £250 in what was a wholly uncertain venture, may now be willing to invest that sum, having seen that the Post Office and shop's future has been secured in the medium term. Alternatively, we may have 'drained the well' of potential members who are prepared to invest at that level, and to increase and broaden membership we may need to offer membership at a lower investment level.

The Committee proposes for discussion at the AMM:

Lowering the minimum investment to £25 (25 x £1 share).

## PROPOSAL

In order to do that, the Committee considers that it is necessary to reduce the minimum number of shares required for membership to broaden and deepen membership within the local community, whilst at the same time encouraging community engagement by maintaining the purchase price at a level which encourages members to consider that they have a significant investment in the Society and its aims and objectives. To effect this change, amendment to the Society's Rules will be required, and will need ratification at the Society's AMM. This will then require Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) approval.

The alternative Rule changes is set out at the end of this document.

To further develop our membership strategy, the Committee considers that it is necessary to consider the Society's strengths and weaknesses and how our approach to Membership issues can enhance our strengths and strengthen our weaknesses.

### Strengths:

We have a proven record to date of managing an effective takeover and thereafter successful management of the shop and Post Office functions. The shop and Post Office are on a stable financial footing with effective management now in place. The Society has been appropriately constituted in accordance with the Co-operative principles, and we have made progress on Corporate Governance e.g. formalising staff terms and conditions of employment and member/volunteer engagement; and have developed effective PR and media relations with local and regional media and politicians. However, in order to move forward beyond the immediate saving of the shop and Post Office we need to broaden and grow our membership with the aim of broadening and growing community engagement with the shop and Post Office functions and, ultimately, to grow turnover to ensure that



### Dobcross Village Society Ltd

The 'Dobcross Village Society Ltd' is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration no. 9169. Trading as the Dobcross Village Store and Post Office. A member of The Plunkett Foundation.



**Funded by  
UK Government**

the Store and Post Office remain financially viable. Other noteworthy successes were secured grant funding, refurbishment and increase in footfall.

### **Weaknesses: lack resources or expertise**

- Member ownership differentiates community benefit societies from other types of business. An active and engaged membership is critical to the future success of the business.
- There is a lack of 'depth' in terms of engagement by members in the management of the Society. If we lost even a small number of committee members, we would have no obvious qualified/suitable replacement. As a result, we need to expand not only the number of members but also expand the number of members who are actively engaged in the running of the Society.
- Lack of knowledge of members' priorities for the future direction of the Society
- Lack of long-term business strategy which sets out how to increase turnover and extend services.

Consequently, members do not feel involved in the decision-making process that set out the Society's future aims and objectives (links to member fatigue/apathy below?)

### **Opportunities: potential areas for growth and improvement**

- Still only a minority of households in the village have any member in the society – clearly there is the opportunity for considerable expansion of our membership base.
- There are opportunities for expansion of community engagement: collaboration with local businesses/organisations to provide a wider range of products and services through the store – for example vegetables from local allotments/growers?
- There are opportunities for growth and improvement through collaboration with other cooperatives in the area, for example in relation to sourcing of products.

**Threats: challenges that may hinder our success and consideration of how our membership strategy can best meet those threats.**



#### **Dobcross Village Society Ltd**

The 'Dobcross Village Society Ltd' is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration no. 9169. Trading as the Dobcross Village Store and Post Office. A member of The Plunkett Foundation.



**Funded by  
UK Government**

- External, ‘environmental’ threats beyond our immediate control, such as a national programme of Post Office branch closures, or political/financial changes increasing overheads or business costs: eg further changes to National Insurance legislation, Minimum/Living Wage legislation or business rate relief etc.
- Demographic changes in the village: eg changes in age profile or population movement in/out of the village
- Membership/donor fatigue/apathy now that the immediate threat to the Post office and shop has receded.

Expansion of our membership base in accordance with this Strategy, together with continued efforts to increase member engagement are considered the most appropriate ways to meet these perceived potential threats.

- a. Securing a reserve or shadow member for each position on the Management Committee;
- b. Maintaining/increasing volunteer engagement at/from current levels, whether that be volunteer engagement in the shop function or expanding volunteer involvement – for example into management functions.

## **Interaction with the Marketing and Communication Plan**

The Society’s Marketing and Communication plan needs to incorporate plans for promoting membership through communication with prospective and existing members in order better to understand how we can expand our membership/improve our offering and develop channels for feedback from the community.

## **Proposed rule change**

The Existing Rules are drafted in such a way that each share has a value of £1 [Rule 8.1 ] and the minimum shareholding is 250 shares [Rule 8.3 ] and it also says “The Society may from time to time make a public share offer, and any such offer may specify a minimum number of shares.”

In theory we could, therefore, launch a share offer specifying that the minimum number of shares in that share offer was 25, but people would not be able to take up that offer unless they already held 250 shares or more! The rules don’t allow for us to launch a share offer with less than the minimum number of shares stated in our rules.



### **Dobcross Village Society Ltd**

The ‘Dobcross Village Society Ltd’ is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration no. 9169. Trading as the Dobcross Village Store and Post Office. A member of The Plunkett Foundation.



**Funded by  
UK Government**

It is proposed that to remedy this inconsistency the Society Rules be amended as follows:

- I. The first sentence of Rule 8.3 to be amended
- II. The new Rule 8.3 to be approved with the following wording.

*The minimum shareholding shall be 25 shares. The Society may from time to time make a public share offer, and any such offer may specify a minimum number of shares which shall not be below the minimum shareholding specified above.*

To clarify, the minimum shareholding set by the management committee will never be below 25. If the above rule change is agreed by members at the AMM, it will then need to be sent to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) for approval.

At the AMM, two motions are required: one to approve the rule change, and another to grant authority to the Management Committee to offer shares, with a specified minimum of 25 shares.

**Motion 1.**

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

**Motion 2.**

- **The management Committee is authorised to make a membership share offer with a specified minimum number of shares of 25.**

Alastair Wright

On behalf of the Management Committee of the Dobcross Village Society.



**Dobcross Village Society Ltd**

The 'Dobcross Village Society Ltd' is a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Registration no. 9169. Trading as the Dobcross Village Store and Post Office. A member of The Plunkett Foundation.



**Funded by  
UK Government**