

Dinnington St John's Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on Monday 13th April 2026 at 7.00pm in The Lyric, Dinnington

Present: Cllr N Ruff (Chair of DSJTC), 29 parishioners attended, A Wright (Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer for DSJTC), C Radford (Administrator for DSJTC – note taker).

1. Welcome from the Chair

Cllr N Ruff (Chair) addressed the meeting and welcomed those in attendance.

2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish meeting – 14th April 2025

Resolved: That the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting be approved as true record and to be signed by the Chair and kept on file.

3. To consider any matters arising from the minutes

No matters were raised.

4. Chair's Annual Report 2025/26

Read by the Chair of Dinnington St John's Town Council (DSJTC), Cllr N Ruff:

Welcome everyone

Today it is my privilege to give you all an update on the Town Council's progress and workstreams. This update covers the last 12 months which is the second year since the current Council's election.

I will do this in two stages:

A review of the past 12 months

An outline for the next 12 months

1. A review of the past 12 months:

I outlined at last year's meeting that many incoming Councillors were new to the role and we have continued in our understanding of the previous council's agenda and where resources – whether financial, people or planning – had been put in place.

We have also continued in our journey of embracing new responsibilities and understanding the rules and regulations that sit around Town Councils.

The committee structure has worked well with closer links to key assets:

Neighbourhood Plan Committee

Purpose of Neighbourhood Plan Committee:

- *To be responsible for progressing delivery of Neighbourhood Plan project items, including liaising with all external and internal stakeholders as required.*
- *To identify sources of funding for project items where possible and appropriate.*
- *To be responsible for updating and reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan when required.*

The sale of land on East Street has resulted in raising a significant sum which will be reinvested in the local community. This is worth over £500,000.

There are also ongoing conversations to ensure that:

- other council assets are working well for the community,
- consultations on estates being built in the area, ensure services are in place for new estates
- use of empty homes and how to bring them back into a habitable state, particularly for those who would otherwise struggle to provide a home for their family, and
- exploring funding for additional sports pitches.

We are thankful to Dave Johnston who has supported the committee and particularly his report and ongoing work to outline the case for a new medical centre in Dinnington.

Community Committee

Purpose of the Community Committee

To oversee all community-related issues including the organisation of the annual Christmas Festival, Community Club and any community-based events.

The Community Committee have continued their regular focus on providing meeting spaces and events free of charge to the residents of Dinnington with a regular monthly event which has enjoyed entertainment from singers, line dancing, quizzes and family events to include children at Easter and Halloween. The monthly bingo continues to be very popular and the committee have recently discussed further activities at different times for the wider community to access. Following the continued success of the annual Christmas Festival, discussions are well under way for this year's event.

Lyric Committee

Purpose of the Lyric Committee

To oversee items specifically concerning The Lyric; through the monitoring finances, improvements and customer experience.

The management of the Lyric Theatre has seen a move from using a spreadsheet booking system to a more accessible system for all staff which ties in with the management of the finances. This will allow greater reporting capacity in the future. The theatrical events at the Lyric have included various tribute acts, local theatre and dance group performances and the space is regularly used for local groups to meet in addition to parties and weddings.

The committee continue to assess the maintenance requirements of the building and have begun discussions on redecorating and the possibility of installing solar panels.

Staffing and Complaints Committee

Purpose of the Staffing and Complaints Committee:

To oversee all staffing issues including employment, line management, discipline and grievance, performance and pay awards and staff pensions; and to process all formal complaints received by the council in accordance with the council's Complaints Policy.

The time spent looking at Council policies and procedures has revealed further areas for development in line with legislation such as the Employment Act 2025. The Staffing and Complaints Committee have commissioned a staffing review to ensure the staffing structure continues to meet the needs of the council, particularly now the Assistant Clerk has taken early retirement. The discussions are ongoing and include ensuring the Town Council is fulfilling all its responsibilities towards the wellbeing of staff.

The committee have also undertaken the work of procuring the services of an interim clerk and the appointment of a new clerk, following the departure of the previous clerk last year.

Staff have been issued with new uniform and appropriate high-visibility clothing where required.

Emergency Response Committee

Purpose of the Emergency Response Committee

To review and plan for any Emergency Response that the Town Council may react to; covering flooding, snow, large scale disasters, wild fires or other emergency responses that may be required.

The Emergency Response Committee has ensured that equipment such as torches and walkie-talkies are in place and accessible. They have reviewed the list of emergency contacts and reviewed the provisions to be made available should the Lyric building be needed as an emergency shelter.

In addition to the committees, we have two working groups:

Twin Town Working Group

The original plan to twin with a town in France did not progress and contact has since been made with a town in Scotland which has a similar mining history to Dinnington. The group have communicated with representatives and further progress between the two Councils will be made over the coming months.

Volunteer Policy Working Group

Opportunities for volunteers to assist with the work of the Town Council have been identified and a number of residents have offered to support Town Council activities. A new policy is being developed along with a process for appointing volunteers to ensure clarity around expectations and the safety and wellbeing of volunteers.

2. An outline for the next 12 months

We continue to keep our focus on the 'art of the possible' and be bold in what we want for our community. Our Council has ambitions that it intends to meet.

There are a number of risks and challenges which the Town Council have identified and which are very much part of our focus for the next 12 months including:

Anti-social behaviour - especially with our teenage residents. What can the Council do to help?

RMBC - and their inability to respond to us in an intelligent and timely manner.

Our MP - whose availability and visibility is clearly compromised following his recent promotion.

Housing - empty homes continues to be a blight on our community.

Redevelopment of the high street - Community liaison and business owner buy in could and should be a primary function of the Borough Council.

Securing the future of the Lyric Theatre as multi-purpose venue that allows for community use as well as profitable events to ensure development work can be undertaken.

And there are many more.

However we have, as a Council, significant opportunities to meet those challenges - with thought, care and with gusto.

The sale of land to allow the first social housing development for a while in our community is very nearly complete and will bring further funds to the Town Council to develop the Lyric building, Cemetery and other Town Council assets. We expect the money in our bank account this calendar year. We have a meeting arranged later in the year to discuss projects to be undertaken by the Town Council and will be reviewing staffing policies in line with the staffing review and the changes to Employment Law.

A programme for staff training is being developed which began with all staff undertaking first aid training recently and will continue with maintenance staff undertaking lifting and handling training, office staff gaining the CILCA qualification and other training needs being identified through staff appraisals. The results of the staffing review may require further investment to make our Council fit for purposes and future proofed.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those Councillors both past and present that have built the platform upon which we are adding, and to all our staff for their dedication and support.

5. Open Session – Cllr N Ruff (Chair)

Questions raised by the public

A member of the public asked why after 2 years the Volunteer Policy is still not in place and was concerned that he has not had replies to previous enquiries.

Cllr Ruff confirmed that a meeting had been held this afternoon by members of the Volunteer Working Group who are working to get the policy brought in as soon as possible but noting it is essential that the policy is suitably worded in order to protect both DSJTC and the volunteers.

A member of the public who regularly attends the Neighbourhood Plan Committee meetings spoke to the attendees of the meeting requesting support for a petition that he is due to launch regarding the essential need for a new medical centre in Dinnington. The petition's aim is to put pressure on government, our local MP and the NHS Integrated Care Board to review the current provision and what is needed for the future. Over the last 5 years 700 new homes have been built within Dinnington, with 1200 more scheduled to be built. This adds an expected 4000 more residents on top of the current 13,000 putting a huge strain on the current resources.

Housing developers have paid £1.2m to RMBC in recent years and 25% of this should be allocated to Town and Parish Council to improve local infrastructure. The 75% is for RMBC to allocate to local area projects and has not yet been received.

Another member of the public living on a new estate within Dinnington says he would be keen to get involved with a Community or Campaign Group in order support the demand for improved local services. Cllr Ruff explained he feels that this would be most successful if joined with a committee within DSJTC such as the Community Committee or the Neighbourhood Plan Committee in order to have more impact.

A resident living close to the Universal Glass premises on Rotherham Road updated fellow attendees that there are currently 134 objections lodged against the EA Permit. Background was provided to those attending the meeting who may be unaware that an Action Group was set up in December 2025 against increased processing at the factory due to fine glass particles in the air, foul smells and shards of glass on the roads close by. Universal Glass have been issued with an Abatement Order to clean up the area but the Action Group do not believe that there have been any improvements made.

It was agreed that the Town Council Clerk will contact RMBC Land Contaminations Team to request that samples are tested to enable further discussion. There are concerns over what local residents, children and pets are currently exposed to.

The Chair was asked by a member of the public why provisions are made by the Town Council for elderly and young residents of Dinnington but there is nothing for teenagers in the area and if a skate park could be built. This prompted a discussion about the current use of youth clubs in the area and increased anti-social behaviour. The Chair agrees that more investment is needed in this area, further links could be made to support the work of the Rugby Club, they currently have over 300 children taking part in activities on a weekly basis.

The recent visit of the Assistant Mayor was discussed. It was confirmed that this visit was at the request of RMBC Borough Councillors and DSJTC were not aware and could not then notify residents. The visit was unannounced and the purpose was so that the high levels of anti-social behaviour, including the riding of electric bikes on pavements and in the middle of the road in Dinnington, could be seen first-hand. Better relationships with the Police need to be made and improved responses and actions to reports of issues by residents as it is felt that there are no current effective deterrents.

The Chair read out an anonymous letter received regarding concerns over the maintenance and management of the Cemetery at Park Avenue. With supporting photographs supplied along with the letter, the Chair confirmed that the Council is currently undergoing a Staffing review and work in this area is ongoing. Further investigation is needed but it could be that there are training issues and whether staff are being used efficiently. The Chair is sorry to hear that this member of the public feels upset by the current situation when visiting the Cemetery but this is a good starting point to bring in regular Cemetery updates by the Clerk to full council meetings for further discussion.

Another member of the public brought the meeting back to the issues with youngsters in the area and advised attendees that £680k was paid to RMBC by Barratt Homes some time ago for the provision of new school pitches or for 2 new multi-purpose pitches at Dinnington Rugby Club. It has now come to light that in order to actually get any of the money spent a group needs to be formed, made up of representatives from DSJTC, Sport England, RMBC and other central bodies to decide how it is spent.

As no further questions were asked, Cllr N Ruff (Chair) thanked everyone for attending. Cllr Ruff went on to announce that this would be his last meeting as Chair of DSJTC as he would be stepping down from the role and a new Chair will be elected at the May Annual Council meeting, explaining he will be staying on as a Councillor. The meeting was then closed.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____

Meeting closed at 19.53 hours

Chairman Signature: