



THE STERNIANS' ASSOCIATION

LORD WANDSWORTH COLLEGE • LONG SUTTON HOOK HANTS RG29 1TB

Dear Sternian

I am writing to you at the request of the Sternians Association Committee to let you know about some changes that the Committee wish to introduce to do with the administration of The Sternians' Association.

In November 2022 the College celebrated 100 years since the arrival of the first pupils at Long Sutton. The academic year 2022-2023 was marked by numerous events and celebrations culminating in the Centenary Festival weekend on 23rd and 24th June 2023.

As the College enters its second century the Committee decided that this would be a sensible time to review its role and structure, whilst taking account of developments in the way the Association has been run over the last few years.

Current arrangements

The current arrangements are Governed by the Constitution and Rules of the Association. The Constitution is, in effect, a standard version of a constitution for a member funded organisation that has been adapted to suit the needs of the Association. Historically, Sternians made contributions to the Association by way of subscriptions, or other donations. In return they had voting rights that enabled them to have a say in which officers were elected to run the Association and through those elected officers how the Association was run.

In recent years the College, through the staff in the Development and Alumni office, has incrementally, and with the full agreement of the Committee, taken on most day-to-day functions associated with running the Association that were historically Committee responsibilities.

Since 2006 the College has provided the funding for the Association through the provision of an annual budget. All of the running costs (such as design and postage for sending out the Sternian magazine) and arrangements for and delivery of Sternian events, communications and activities are paid for by the College.

In summary there is little traditional 'Committee work' for the Committee members to do apart from to act in a representational role at Sternian events.

Presently there are three vacant posts on the Committee, with the Chair's post becoming vacant in summer 2024 when my interim term ends. As some of you may know, I only accepted the position in the absence of any other Sternian coming forward to take the role sadly vacated by John Bacon due to illness. I do not intend to continue after the end of this academic year. There is no elected Vice Chair to succeed me, and no appetite amongst current Committee members to take on the role of Chair or indeed Vice Chair.

This situation is in contra distinction to the Trust Fund where Paul Richings, Chair of the Trust Fund, has recently recruited two new Trustees from an extraordinarily strong field of 32 Sternian applicants.

In summary, there is little interest amongst Sternians to take on traditional Committee roles. The current Committee members are happy to continue to lend their valuable support and enthusiasm to the Association, in representational roles, but not in its present form.



Given the current circumstances the Committee met on 20th October 2023 to consider how best to modernise the Association.

The following options were considered at that meeting.

1. **Stay the same.**

We recognised that this has the attraction of comfort and familiarity but felt that this would not reflect the reality of the current position. The College funds and administers the day-to-day running of the Association, including the budget. All Sternian events and initiatives are organised by the Development office, and the funding for these will continue as the Sternian programme will always remain a key priority for the College. In addition, a new Sternians' fee is now added to the termly school charges for each pupil since September 2023. These funds are ring-fenced for the Sternian programme to be expanded and help subsidise many events to ensure they are as accessible as possible to all Sternians.

Items that may have traditionally been funded by the Association, such as the splendid bust of Sydney Stern now sitting proudly outside the new science centre, are paid for by the College or from separate fundraising efforts.

Apart from a few historical subscriptions that have continued since 2006 there is little annual income generated by the Association. In 2022-23 income was slightly over £600.

Accordingly, the Committee does not recommend maintaining the status quo.

2. **Disband completely.**

The Committee would not recommend this option. The Sternian Community itself is thriving. Evidence of this was apparent at the wonderful Centenary Weekend in June 2023, and the range of events currently available. Sternian engagement is high across many events and initiatives, and these play an integral role supporting pupils and other young Sternians with careers advice and mentoring which has a significant value. Completely to disband would cause anxiety, unnecessary upset and would, rightly alienate many Sternians.

Again, this option is not recommended by the Committee.

3. **Restructure.**

The Committee feels strongly that it is time for a change. There is a consistency of approach from established Committee members based on their experience of the last few years. They are Sternians who have dedicated their time and effort to the Association (in some cases over many years). They are not Sternians who are advocating change for the sake of change. They are convinced that this is the way forward in the best interests of the Association.

What might a restructure look like?

Apart from Chairing the AGM, the Chair has an important but purely representational and liaison role. The bulk of the Treasurer's work is administered by the College, with his main task being to present the accounts at the AGM. We have an active Archivist, but he is principally engaged in writing a history of the Founder. He has, also expressed the view that the time has come for the



College to invest in a properly funded archiving project to administer the substantial amount of material that needs recording, cataloguing, and curating.

If the roles of the Committee are effectively catered for by the College, what could a restructured Sternians' Association look like. What functions are necessary for the smooth running of the Association and, most importantly, for effective liaison with the College?

Liaison between the Sternians and the College

Traditionally, this was conducted through an annual liaison meeting between the College and representatives of the Executive Committee. The need for such a formal meeting has diminished as the College Governing body has increased its Sternian representation. Richard Janaway, Alice Waller (since 2023) and I are all current Sternian Governors, ensuring that any Sternian or Foundation concerns can easily and swiftly be raised in the Governing Body forum. These Governors are also acutely aware of the need to keep the interests of the Foundation front and centre of any decisions made by the Governing body.

College News is regularly communicated to all Sternians via monthly E-newsletters and the excellent annual Sternian magazine. Other Sternian liaison continues daily directly with the Philanthropy & Alumni Relations Office (P&AR Office, formerly the Development Office).

Stakeholder consultation with the Sternian body

Conventionally, the AGM has been the principal forum for consultation. In recent years numbers have been healthy (2022 – 27 members, and 2023 – 33 members) but the business transacted at the AGM is now essentially a formality, consisting mainly of updates (Chair, Headmaster and Sternian Trust Fund), signing off the accounts and the election of officers – when there are sufficient volunteers to fill such vacancies. Arguably, the holding of a face-to-face AGM is a barrier to inclusive participation as it is only accessible to Sternians able to travel to the College on the day it is held. If an AGM is needed moving forward, a remote meeting would allow any Sternian in the world to dial in and participate (as happened with the recent online reunion) and would be consistent with the way increasingly large numbers of Associations conduct their affairs today.

The Committee feels that what is needed in 2023, and beyond, is a more responsive means of consultation with the Sternian body. That would inform what is desired by Sternians through College communications, events for Sternians and an opportunity to express a view on what Sternians would like to purchase by way of clothing and mementos.

This consultation process could easily be effected through a series of virtual meetings held with a representative group of Sternian volunteers – an Advisory Board. If an appointment process is needed, it could be conducted by the Sternian Governors and the Development office in conjunction with the headmaster and could be for up to 3 years. All current Sternian Committee members would be automatically invited to join the Board.

It is felt that this form of advisory board would feel less of a commitment compared to taking on a formal committee role and as such would likely appeal to a broader mix from our diverse Sternian community (range of ages, those from overseas, variety of occupations etc.). This in turn would ensure that the P&AR Office would gain insight from a wider range of Sternians to ensure the alumni



THE STERNIANS' ASSOCIATION
LORD WANDSWORTH COLLEGE • LONG SUTTON HOOK HANTS RG29 1TB

programme meets the needs of the whole Sternian community. An advisory Board would also remove the need for an AGM.

The Committee also considers that it would make sense to retain some representative capacity for the Sternian body, so that the College can reach out on special occasions and events to a Sternian to represent the alumni at events such as Foundation Day and Remembrance Day. This could be achieved by appointing a Sternian President and Vice-President who would agree to be available for such occasions. The President would undertake the role for one or two years, with the Vice-President deputising at any events for which the President is unavailable. The Vice - President (Vice-President) would then succeed the President after their time in post, with their successor then taking over. Appointment could be made by the Sternian Governors, in consultation with the P&AR Office. Over time it is hoped that the Advisory Board may prove to be a useful source of candidates for President and Vice-President.

Any new arrangements would be reinforced by updating the Memorandum of Understanding (available to view on the website) that has been in place between the College and the Association since 2011.

The Committee is conscious that any amendments to the Constitution can only take place through an AGM, with a two thirds majority of those voting at such a meeting if there are fifteen or more members present.

My purpose in writing to you all is to start a period of consultation with all Sternians that will run until **12 February 2024**. The Committee will then meet towards the end of February 2024 to consider feedback received as a result of this consultation and draft a final proposal that will then be put to an AGM at the end of the Spring. The Committee is keen to conclude this exercise by the next summer so that new arrangements are in place for the academic year 2024-2025.

We would really welcome your views on our proposal, including whether you think there are other ways forward that should be considered, plus any other matters that you would like the Committee to consider.

Please send your feedback directly to me at saclemmy59@gmail.com

I look forward to hearing from you.

Simon Clements, Sternian Chair