



OLD NOTTINGHAMIANS' SOCIETY
REVIEW OF FUTURE OPERATIONS AND
COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Introduction

The Officers have, for some time, been agreed that the Society needs to redefine itself for the 21st Century and ensure that it provides the support that Members want from a modern Society.

The Society originated as a Dinner Committee, and it is clear that social events, dinners, etc remain an important element of ON life. We should in no way seek to remove that: it should be encouraged and actively supported.

Similarly, there are (or have been) several ON sports clubs and the Sports & Social Club. These also remain an important element, even where membership of the clubs is far wider than ONs, and should be supported.

This review is not about excluding or alienating existing groups, events or functions; it is about including support for all alumni and widening the events and opportunities available.

Some ONs feel that to be an Old Nottinghamian one has to be “of Nottingham” and that the Society should focus on the needs of those in Nottingham. The Officers do not agree with this, and believe that the majority of ONs do not agree. To be an inclusive Society, of value to all Members, the Society must engage with, and support where necessary, ONs wherever they may be.

The Society Objective

The fundamental Society Objective in the Constitution and Rules reads:

“The objective of the Society shall be the promotion of good fellowship among the members, and the promotion generally of interest in the School.”

– *Old Nottinghamians’ Society Rules, article 2*

This has not changed throughout the Society’s history, and does not need to, but the world has moved on and the delivery of good fellowship must move with the times.

In addition to Dinners and Sports:

School pupils (future ONs) need good careers information in making their **decisions on university study** – the ON Society has a vast bank of people who have had a wide range of careers; and the Society should seek to support the School, and the pupils, in providing information (not necessarily advice) on what careers are available.

ONs at university or recently out of university need further information about their **potential careers**, and also the necessary professional networking opportunities to achieve them. Again, the Society has a vast bank of people in all walks of life and should seek to make that available to the younger ONs.

ONs already in careers need **professional networking**, whether it be around their own career moves or generating business / contacts in their existing professional context.

ONs in locations that are otherwise not as “mature” in their current setup (i.e. outside of Nottingham and London) feel disenfranchised and ambivalent towards the Society. The Society should be promoting the good fellowship of its members and the interests of the School not only locally but **nationally and internationally** also. Of the total Society membership, less than 45% live in Nottinghamshire. The remainder are spread around the country and the world.

Statistical and anecdotal evidence

The School's Development Office collates responses to a data capture exercise in respect of alumni. To date, 227 responses have been analysed. Although this is a small sample, it is representative in terms of age and geography. Some 'highlights' might be listed as follows:

Careers and university advice

- 23%** indicated that they would be happy to provide mentoring on university choices
- 34%** indicated that they would be happy to provide mentoring on career/work choices
- 41%** indicated that they would be happy to provide informal or telephone advice
- 30%** were happy for their details to be provided to pupils, for career purposes
- 24%** indicated that they would be happy to actively participate in the Annual 6th Form Careers Event

Conclusion: there is an appetite for professional exchange of expertise in support of the School and fellow ONs.

(It is also worthwhile noting that the majority of conversations at this year's Annual Leavers' Event between pupils and Officers of the Committee were firmly geared towards how the Society could assist in these areas.)

Social events

- 73%** indicated interest in attending reunions and/or the 500th anniversary reunion
- 13%** indicated an interest in organising a social event

Conclusion: the Society should organise itself to give support to the running of social events, whilst not expecting Members to necessarily do the organising

Sports

11% indicated an interest in playing sport for the ONs

Conclusion: the focus on sports, whilst an important part, is only one aspect of ON life, and not the largest.

‘The Old Boy Network’

Anecdotal conversations have supported these views in the sense of “*I would engage with the Society if I thought it would benefit me, but what I want is access to professional networks*” – dare one say it: the Old Boy Network is alive and well.

The apparent structure required

The statistical and anecdotal evidence suggests that the Society should be looking to provide support to:

The School (pupils needing careers advice/info)

New ONs (undergraduates needing similar info)

Established professionals (needing career development and/or business contacts)

Social events and social networking

Sports clubs

In short, the modern Society should be as much *LinkedIn* as *Facebook*, drawing on the best aspects of both of these web-based networks – a professional yet social feeling of connectivity between members, whilst allowing them the freedom and ability to float between the two depending on their needs whether that be social or professionally orientated.

The Committee – current definition

The current Society Rules define the Committee consisting of at least 23 people:

President (<i>elected annually</i>)	1
Deputy President (<i>elected annually</i>)	1
Immediate Past President (<i>ex-officio</i>)	1
Honorary Secretary (<i>at least 1</i>) (<i>elected annually</i>)	1
Honorary Treasurer (<i>elected annually</i>)	1
The Headmaster (<i>ex-officio</i>)	1
<i>Appointed representatives of each of the following:</i>	
Governors	1
School Staff (<i>excluding the Senior Management Team</i>)	1
Grounds Management Committee	1
Cricket Club	1
Rugby Club	1
Tennis Club	1
Golf Club	1
Shooting Club	1
Additional Members (<i>elected for 3 years in rotation</i>)	9
Total	<u>23</u>

The Committee – current membership

As of September 2011, the Committee is as follows:

Daniel Shaw	<i>President</i>
Matthew Draper	<i>Deputy President</i>
Steve Hobbs	<i>Immediate Past President</i>
Robert Wood	<i>Honorary Treasurer</i>
Kevin Fear	<i>The Headmaster</i>
Mark Flanagan	<i>representing the Governors</i>
John Coates	<i>representing the Grounds Management Committee</i>
Phil Renshaw	<i>representing the Rugby Club</i>
Clive Bentley	<i>representing the Golf Club</i>
Chris Adams	<i>Additional Member (term ends 2011)</i>
John Britten	<i>Additional Member (term ends 2011)</i>
Chris Barnes	<i>Additional Member (term ends 2012)</i>
Charles Powell	<i>Additional Member (term ends 2012)</i>
Andrew Ready	<i>Additional Member (term ends 2012)</i>
Simon Jackson	<i>Additional Member (term ends 2013)</i>
Bill Oldham	<i>Co-opted Member</i>
Katrine Scott-Mitchell	<i>Co-opted Member</i>
Total	<u>17</u>

The Committee – the case for change

In the modern age, the Committee has the following deficiencies:

Lack of structure and resource

Essentially, there is no structure. There are no reporting lines or accountabilities.

In addition, when certain strategies have been approved at Committee level, there tends to be a lack of resource to fulfil the basic requirements to facilitate those strategies.

This issue and a proposed solution are outlined later in this document with specific regard to the duties of the Secretary and Treasurer.

Lack of defined roles

Beyond the titular roles, no Committee member has any defined role within the Committee. For example, there is no Committee involvement in Professional Networking.

Non-alignment of representation and accountability

Sports Clubs and the GMC account for 6 Society Committee places but are neither responsible to the ON Society nor the Committee, and therefore report in only on the basis of information not accountability. The viability and membership of these Sports Clubs also continues to fluctuate in terms of both ONs and 'open members'.

Lack of consistency

In terms of Social Events, the organiser of the Annual Dinner is an elected Additional Member; the organiser of the Beeston Fields lunches is and has been co-opted; the organisers of the London events and the Oxford and Cambridge Dinners are not represented at all. There is therefore no structure to the Social side.

Vacancies in defined positions

Beyond the current vacancy in the Honorary Secretary role, there has been no School Staff representative for several years – largely because the role cannot be defined such that any volunteer from the Staff knows what is required. The Cricket and Tennis Clubs are now defunct, and there are 3 vacancies out of the 9 Additional Members – only 1 Additional Member out of a possible 3 was elected at the last AGM.

The Committee – conclusion

The current Committee structure does not readily support the requirements of a modern Society as defined by statistical and anecdotal evidence gathered over the course of the last few months. Nor does it compare favourably with other Alumni Societies' structures of similar size. It is also not representative of the Society's Members.

If the Society is to provide support of the nature described, it needs to structure its Committee in such a way as to drive the Society forward in delivering its aims.

The new ‘committee’ – proposed structure

In order to reflect the areas of support required, the following structure is proposed.

The Council

The Council will consist of up to 16 individuals: the **Officers**, comprising **Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Treasurer** and **Secretary**, plus up to 12 **Councillors**.

The **Officers** will also form the **Executive Board (the “Board”)**.

The **Board** will be responsible for medium- and long-term policy and strategy, and ensuring that the Society acts according to its values and in the best interests of its Members. It will also act as a high-level liaison with the School and other groups affiliated with the School to ensure the Society effectively supports the School, while retaining its unique character and independence.

The **Council** will be responsible for approving or rejecting proposals made by the Board, approving policies, and raising concerns brought to them by Members. Individual Councillors will also be specifically appointed to focus on important areas of Society business, for example, School liaison, professional networking, social events and sports clubs.

Elections and eligibility

Officers will be elected at Society AGMs for terms of **3 years**, and will be eligible for re-election. Elections will be staggered so that the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Secretary are elected in separate years.

Councillors will be elected at Society AGMs for terms of **1 year**, and will be eligible for re-election.

Any vacancy not filled at a Society AGM can be filled by a decision of the Board, subject to ratification by the Council. If the vacancy is on the Board, the appointment must be confirmed at the following AGM.

Any Member will be eligible to be an Officer or a Councillor.

The Headmaster and the School's Development Director will both be Councillors *ex officio*.

Of the remaining 10 Councillors, it is envisaged that no fewer than 4 will be under the age of 50.

No Member will be both an Officer and a Councillor simultaneously.

Specific positions

The Officers

The positions of Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer will share the roles and responsibilities of the Board.

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman will concentrate on the external relationships between the Society and the School and other groups, and developing a long term strategic direction for the Society.

The Secretary will concentrate on Membership and constitutional issues, and it is envisaged will be assisted by a dedicated administration assistant who will be financed by the Society (but who will sit nominally in the School's Development Office) and who will assist both the Secretary and the Treasurer in tasks such as membership queries, minute taking, preparing meeting papers etc

The position of Treasurer is self-explanatory.

The President

One of the Councillors will be elected as **President** at the AGM.

The President will act as the Society's figurehead, attending School and Society events and functions. Although they are likely to be involved and interested in the fundamental development of the Society, this aspect will be the concern of the Officers.

The liaison co-ordinators

Four of the Councillors will act as liaison co-ordinators for **Professional Networking, Communication, Social Events** and **Sports Clubs**

They will be appointed by the Board and approved by the Council.

The Communication liaison co-ordinator will work with the Secretary on information gathering and distribution, via the website, newsletters, online social networking and letters to Society Members.

The other liaison co-ordinators will work with non-Council members as described below.

The proposed Council – overview

For ease of comparison, below is the outline of the structure of the proposed Council:

Chairman (<i>elected for 3 years</i>)	1
Deputy Chairman (<i>elected for 3 years</i>)	1
Secretary (<i>elected for 3 years</i>)	1
Treasurer (<i>elected for 3 years</i>)	1
The Headmaster (<i>ex-officio</i>)	1
Development Director (<i>ex-officio</i>)	1
Councillors (<i>elected annually</i>)	10
<i>to include the President and liaison co-ordinators for Professional Networking, Communication, Social Events and Sports Clubs</i>	
Total	<u>16</u>

Beyond the Council

Behind this structure, the proposal is to have:

- A series of **Regional Representatives**, appointed by the Board and approved by the Council, tasked with providing the local input into Professional Networking at all levels, including (in Nottingham) with the Careers Department at the School. These individuals would work with the Professional Networking liaison co-ordinator.
- **Social event organisers** – e.g. the organiser of the Annual Dinner, Beeston Fields, London, Oxford, Cambridge, others. These individuals would work with the Social Events liaison co-ordinator.
- **Representatives of the various Sports Clubs** – e.g. Rugby, Golf, Grounds Management Committee, etc. These individuals would work with the Sports Clubs liaison co-ordinator.

Appendix

Addressing the concerns of those who have served/organised for many years

Inevitably, at first glance, those who have served for many years on the Committee, delivered many successful events or represented their clubs effectively for many years might see change as a revolution and a 'slap in the face'. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The proposed changes not only seek to serve the Society membership better with their needs in the modern age, but also seek to provide a framework for a better organised and more accountable support structure for those running clubs or organising events. It is evolution, not revolution.

Sports Clubs

Is it really beneficial to those clubs for a representative to attend Committee meetings 3 times a year of a Society his club is not accountable to, and report the sporting results to the rest of the Committee? Surely not – those results, and other news, should (and in some cases already are) disseminated to Society members via Newsletters, websites, etc. What the club needs, surely, is access to that communication channel and a conduit through which to access support when needed; not 3 times a year at Committee. This conduit would be the Sports Clubs Liaison.

Social Events

Is it logical that Beeston Fields is the only event specifically represented at Committee level, and 'unofficially' via a co-opted member? Nottingham is represented, but the organiser is an elected Additional Member, not ex-officio; London, Oxford and Cambridge are not represented at all. Surely not – these organisers need access to the Society network for publicity purposes, the Society and the School for scheduling purposes and, where relevant, administrative or financial support in running their events. New events, elsewhere in the country, should be encouraged and supported. The conduit for this would be the Social Events Liaison.

Professional Networking

There are small elements of professional networking within Nottingham and London (and no doubt elsewhere, but unknown to the Society or the Committee). An example would be the meetings arranged at Weavers by the late David Smalley or, albeit a primarily social event, the regular Kean's Head / Early Doors meeting. There is no suggestion that these events/groups should cease; they should be encouraged, expanded and widened but to do this one must look to the modern needs of the Society to attract more numbers to these types of events. The Society provides no support to this activity, which is identified as being perhaps the most important to the membership, and provides no conduit for groups to be formed elsewhere. This conduit would be the Professional Networking Liaison.