

Committee(s): Keats House Consultative Committee	Date(s): 03/05/2024
Subject: Update Report for Keats House Charity, 2023/24	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Bob Roberts, Interim Executive Director, Environment Department	For discussion
Report author: Rob Shakespeare, Head of Heritage & Museums, Environment Department	

Summary

Since 2019, Members have received the Trustees Annual Report on activities at Keats House as the basis for updating your Committee on achievements and progress at the House.

Presented at Appendix 1 for information and discussion is the draft report on activities at Keats House between April 2023 and March 2024.

Members are asked to note the achievements at Keats House in rebuilding its services and programmes and the extent to which it delivers the objectives of the charity and contributes to Corporate, Departmental and wider outcomes.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members note Keats House's achievements in 2023/24 (as outlined below and described in more detail at Appendix 1) and how these support the priorities, aims and objectives outlined within the Corporate Plan 2018-23 and other key Corporate strategies, the Environment Department's primary and supporting aims and objectives, and the objectives of the Keats House Charity.

Main Report

Background

1. Keats House is a registered charity (number 1053381) with the City Corporation acting as sole trustee.
2. As a registered charity it is required to submit an annual report and financial statement, detailing its activities and to ensure compliance with the Charities Act 2011. The update included at Appendix 1 forms the basis of the draft report for 2023/24, including activities from April 2023 to March 2024.
3. This has been a year of transition for Keats House, with the continued aftermath of the pandemic and the organisational changes following the implementation of TOM2 in the Environment Department impacting directly and indirectly on the team and its activities.
4. The implementation of TOM2 has resulted in Keats House being managed within the Natural Environment Division's Culture & Projects Section. This has resulted in some fundamental changes in the way the team and its supporting services operate, many of which were previously provided by North London Open Spaces.
5. Keats House continues to rebuild its core services by increasing audience numbers and engagement, supporting a growth in income and increased contribution to a range of Corporate, Departmental and sector outcomes. It continues to work with internal and external partners to deliver creative and engaging programmes which contribute to a range of priorities, including access to culture, creative learning, wellbeing and community cohesion.
6. Keats House continues to reposition itself to better support the objectives of the Environment Department, the City Corporation and wider cultural sector, with the retention of Museum Accreditation seen as a key target in recognising the role Keats House plays in the cultural life of London and the nation, and beyond.

Current Position

7. In 2023/24, Keats House was open to the public on 200 days (up from 172 in 2022/23), on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, 11am – 1pm and 2 – 4 or 5pm.
8. The 'Young Romantics in the City' exhibition, which opened in February '23, provided the focus for much of our live events and social media programming throughout the year. Cardiff University funded the project through their 'Innovation for All' grants programme with Dr Anna Mercer, Lecturer in English Literature (Romanticism), playing a key role in co-curating the exhibition, along with the associated changing displays and public events programme.
9. The overarching theme of our public programming and social media campaigns in 2023/24 was #YoungRomantics, with the exhibition driving much of our digital

output, along with promotion and celebration of key events and initiatives.

10. A total of 36 different public events were delivered, including poetry readings, talks, book launches, family and literary workshops. We also hosted the Keats Foundation annual conference and one day of the 'Colonial Histories Network' conference in partnership with Wordsworth Grasmere and Lancaster University, attended by delegates from academic, cultural and community organisations around the world.
11. We have continued to increase engagement with schools, offering poetry, drama and creative writing sessions to teachers and students in formal education and home-schooled groups. Our involvement in delivering three special projects, funded by the City Corporation's Education Strategy Unit through their Cultural & Creative Learning Grants, has helped broaden our learning offer and partnership working, and our annual Summer School enables students to immerse themselves in creative writing during four days at Keats House.
12. Collections research projects have prepared our catalogue records for online access, informed temporary displays and exhibition development for the 'Hidden Histories of Keats House' exhibition in 2024/25. Updating policies and processes to ensure we are ready for our Museum Accreditation submission, now expected in 2024/25, has also been a key focus of our non-public work throughout the year.
13. Keats House was able to support a range of local community partner events and private hire requests. These included events for Hampstead Summer Festival, which benefits two local charities: Keats Community Library and Hampstead School of Art. Income from the private hires, though increasing year-on-year, has yet to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels.
14. We are working with City Surveyors to schedule reactive, cyclical and planned preventative maintenance projects for both the Grade I listed house and garden and the Grade II listed Ten Keats Grove (library building). The required permission and consents have now been approved by the London Borough of Camden's Planning Department for the replacement of fire detection and security systems across the site and these works will be scheduled as soon as possible in 2024/25.
15. A new, longer-term agreement to be offered to Keats Community Library (KCL) for the operation of their local library service from Ten Keats Grove, which is an asset of Keats House charity, was developed and approved by Members of the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee on 29 January 2024. This has yet to be agreed to by KCL.

Proposals

16. Members indicate their continued support for the activities and priorities of Keats House in delivering the Charitable Objectives, as well as contributing to Corporate, Departmental and wider strategic and community outcomes.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

17. The activities, projects and works outlined in this report contributed towards the achievement of the three aims set out in the Corporate Plan 2018-23: Contribute to a flourishing society; Support a thriving economy; and Shape outstanding environments. Activities from April 2024 will be mapped against the outcomes identified in the new Corporate Plan 2024-29 and Natural Environment strategic themes and measures.
18. Keats House continues to support the Environment Department to Shape Sustainable Future Environments through its Primary and Supporting Aims and Objectives and contribute to the outcomes identified in the Natural Environment Division's new strategic framework.
19. The activities of Keats House are also designed to contribute to the aims and outcomes of the City Corporation's Education, Creative Learning and Skills Strategies.

Conclusion

20. Keats House has been able to extend its opening hours in 2023/24, while continuing to deliver public events, special projects and formal learning sessions which provide opportunities for life-long learning and engagement with arts and culture.
21. The increasing number of visitors and overall engagement is supporting the achievement of a balanced budget for the charity despite the slow recovery from the pandemic and challenges faced across the visitor economy.
22. The 'Hidden Histories of Keats House' exhibition and events programme for 2024/25 has been planned, exploring the, sometimes untold, stories of those people who lived at the house after Keats left and before it became a museum.
23. Once fully realised, the organisational and strategic re-alignment of Keats House will allow for a sustainable future for the charity, particularly in the lead up to the 100th anniversary of the house opening to the public, which we will celebrate in May 2025, by when we expect a full recovery of our audiences and income.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – [Draft] Annual Report for Keats House Charity 2023/24

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