

KEATS HOUSE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Thursday, 27 October 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Keats House Consultative Committee held at Keats House on Thursday, 27 October 2016 at 11.00 am

Present

Members:

Vivienne Littlechild (Chairman)	Martin Humphery
Graham Packham (Deputy Chairman)	Barbara Newman
Steven Bobasch	Ann Pembroke
Dennis Cotgrove	Jeremy Simons
Bob Hall	Nigel Steward

In Attendance

Officers:

Julie Mayer	-	Town Clerk's Department
Vicky Carroll	-	Culture, Heritage and Libraries
Nick Bodger	-	Culture, Heritage and Libraries

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2016 were approved.

4. KEATS HOUSE PROGRESS REPORT 2016/17

Members received a report of the Director of Culture, Heritage and Libraries which summarised achievements and developments at Keats House since the last meeting in June 2016 and provided an overview of performance and programmes for the first 6 months of the financial year, including statistical data relating to footfall and income.

During the discussion and questions, the following points were noted:

- There had been a small decrease in visitor figures during the period covered but this was consistent with the planned reduction of events and the decision not to host a Keats Festival in 2016. Officers expected some upturn when the House re-joined the National Trust in the New Year.

- There had been a steady rise in tourist numbers in London since the Brexit vote, probably as a result of the weak pound, but this was primarily attracting shoppers. Retail sales at Keats House shop are steady.
- The Open House Weekend had been very successful.
- The Apothecary's Company had a lot of information about Keats' health and, with the 200 year anniversary of his death approaching; it might be timely to hold an event with a public health theme.
- Mr Bobasch agreed to provide the Curator with a contact for the Hampstead Heath Business Forum.
- The House will remain open for the same hours during the winter months and currently has a very strong volunteer base. Members noted that at least 2 permanent members of staff were required on site at all times.
- The new '*Legible London*' signage strategy was progressing and, therefore, it was unlikely that individual street signs signposting the house would be replaced. However, the finger post at the foot of Keats Grove has been missing for some time and the Curator agreed to investigate. Members noted a recent change in visitor behaviour, whereby visitors tended to use smart phones for directions rather than paper maps and signage.
- 'Poet in Resident' events were likely to attract sponsors; the Germaine Greer event was very successful.
- School visits have been very successful recently and Members noted that 'Romantic Poets' were on the School Curriculum.
- The License application was being progressed and Members would receive an update at the next meeting.
- The House's Accreditation Documents had been approved by the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee on 24th October 2016. This approval was required once every 3 years.
- Keats House had been nominated for a 'Time Out' Love London Award.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

5. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

The new representative for the Keats Foundation advised that next year's scholars' Conference would be held at Keats House, as previously. The Foundation were also keen to commemorate the 200 Year Anniversary of Keats' death in 1821 and offered on-going support to the House.

The Keats Foundation's website was being upgraded and it was suggested it be linked to Keats House Page. Members noted that works were on-going to improve the City of London Corporation's Website. However, at this stage, Keats House could not have a stand-alone site.

The Curator agreed to check whether the installation of a new boiler flue had resolved the problems experienced last winter.

Water ingress damage to the decorations was being addressed; officers advised that gutters were liable to overflow due to their original design.

Members noted that the cyclical works programme still existed but within the new Service Based Review priorities.

Members commended the appearance of the gardens and the 'visit our gardens' sign and expressed their gratitude to the 'Heath Hands' volunteers.

The Library had experienced some problems with re-setting their boiler and the representative asked if the switch could be relocated within the building. Members noted that, whilst Library maintenance fell within the City Surveyor's remit, the Curator would pass on Members' concerns.

Members noted the forthcoming VisitEngland Quality Assessment Scheme which provides an accreditation on facilities.

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm

Chairman

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