

KEATS HOUSE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 7 November 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Keats House Consultative Committee held
at Keats House, Keats Grove

Present

Members:

Graham Packham (Chairman)	Graeme Harrower
Vivienne Littlechild (Deputy Chairman)	Martin Humphery
Steven Bobasch	Jeremy Simons
Bob Hall	

In Attendance

Officers:

Julie Mayer	-	Town Clerk's Department
Vicky Carroll	-	Culture, Heritage and Libraries
Bob Warnock	-	Superintendent of Hampstead Heath

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 4th May 2017 were approved.

Matters arising

- A new PR Consultant had been engaged to help promote the new exhibition on Keats and Milton, which will include engaging with local publications such as the Ham and High.
- Mr Martin Humphery (formerly of the Hampstead Conservation Area Advisory Committee) advised Members that, following Mr Nigel Steward's resignation as the Heath and Hampstead Society's representative, he would be taking over, by virtue of his position as Vice President of the Society. Members noted that Mr Humphery was no longer a member of the Hampstead Conservation Area Advisory Committee and, at this stage, it was uncertain as to whether they would be sending another representative to the Keats House Consultative Committee.

- Members were pleased to note that the finger post signposting to the House had been replaced.
- The City of London Corporation had appointed a new maintenance contractor and the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath reported this new service was working well.
- The boiler flue had been re-routed temporarily, recognising that this is not the best solution aesthetically, Members noted longer term plans to re-line the chimney and redirect the flue into it.
- The Principal Curator has approached a variety of stakeholders in respect of setting up a working party for the 200th anniversary of Keats' death in 2021. Members noted the Keats-Shelley House in Rome and King's College London have expressed an interest in collaborative working. The Keats Foundation's interest in this project was also noted and Members would receive updates on further discussions. Mr Bobasch, Keats Community Library, had sent some ideas to the Principal Curator.

4. **KEATS HOUSE PROGRESS REPORT**

Members received a report of the Director of Open Spaces which summarised the achievements and developments at Keats House since the last meeting of the Consultative Committee in May 2017.

Visitor figures had significantly increased for another year running, as had engagement with the events programme.

There had been some impact on school figures as teachers faced increasing difficulties getting permission from headteachers to take children out of school. Committee members suggested that some parents may also be concerned about safety on school trips or reluctant to volunteer to help and this may be impacting on figures.

The Keats House Education Officer offered a range of activities in the House and garden and, whilst she could visit school assemblies etc, Members noted that this was a part-time post of just 15 hours a week. Members agreed strongly about the value of school trips in bringing pleasure to education and encouraging those children who interact better out of a classroom environment. The Education Officer was also working with the Hampstead Heath Education Team to collaborate on the Keats House summer school, the theme of which will be '*Outside*'.

The Principal Curator advised that the previous year's school figures had also been boosted by having the Children's Laureate Michael Rosen as Poet in Residence. Michael was continuing to work with Keats House, providing professional development for teachers. Members noted that 50 school children a week visited Keats Library and the Library representative agreed to discuss opportunities with the Principal Curator for cross promotion.

Members suggested there may be opportunities to increase the number of groups visiting Keats House. The Principal Curator explained that, in the past, Keats House was closed to the public in the mornings but opened especially for group visits, which was not cost effective. The House was now open to the public in the mornings and groups were encouraged to visit during normal opening hours, which has led to an increase in visitor numbers and income overall. Members noted the shortage of spaces for coach parking. The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath offered to investigate whether facilities on the Heath could be provided for parking at the House.

Members noted that the House's integration with Open Spaces had been working well; i.e. the House had benefited from support from the Heath Constabulary and staff welcomed being part of a larger, local team within the City of London Corporation. Members valued the Principal Curator's links with staff in former Culture, Heritage and Libraries teams and asked officers to be mindful of retaining them after her forthcoming departure.

Members were pleased to note that income had been increasing in respect of private hire events and the Principal Curator tabled the latest events programme. Members suggested promoting the House to Livery Companies and Ward Clubs; i.e. offering evening curated tours on week days, with refreshments. The Principal Curator advised that the House had hosted one Ward Club Meeting but this not been actively promoted. The Chairman suggested a marketing briefing to all Livery Clerks, which could be followed up at a forthcoming meeting of the Livery Committee.

This year's Open House had been very successful, with some 1,000 visitors and, whilst this had not generated income, it helped to raise the profile of the House. The Principal Curator welcomed suggestions in respect of future events and a Member quoted previous successes; i.e., readings from love letters and a session from a young spoken word artist. Members were reminded that there had been no 'Poet in Residence' last year, because of the budgetary situation at that time, but this year's Poet was very well connected and was supporting the curation of the Events Programme. Members expressed their gratitude to the Keats Foundation for their on-going support of Keats House Poets.

Members were reminded of the refurbishment of the landing in 2015, as a temporary exhibition space, and the House was now sufficiently resourced to maximise the area. Currently there were no show cases, just wall mountings, but there were plans to source a table top case. The next exhibition would be on Milton's influence on Keats. The Principal Curator had been in discussion with an academic partner about a potential future exhibition on the influence of romanticism on the '*New Romantics*' fashion era of the late 1970's/early 1980's. The academic is intending to apply to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding for a research project, with Keats House being the public engagement partner.

The Superintendent was pleased to advise that there had been a very good response to the advertisement for a new Principal Curator and interviews would

take place on 14th November. The current Principal Curator had updated the job description and written the job advertisement and the Head of the Guildhall Art Gallery would be on the interview panel. The Chairman suggested that the current post holder could add value by being on the panel but it was noted that this was not currently general practice for the Corporation.

Members also noted other recent recruitments, particularly a new Customer Service Apprentice on a 14-month placement. The Principal Curator advised that this had been very successful and was hopeful that a further apprentice could be recruited once her placement finished. Whilst income from private hire was likely to cover maternity pay for one member of staff, Members felt very strongly that maternity benefits should be funded centrally and not from local risk budgets.

Members noted that approximately 50 volunteers supported the public events programme, as well as helping in many other areas. Private Hire events were supervised by Keats House staff, with support provided by casual staff, who were on zero hours contracts, at London Living Wage. Members noted that casual staff were generally students or employed elsewhere and all were DBS checked. Members asked for their gratitude to volunteers to be recorded and noted, volunteer parties were arranged in the summer and at Christmas.

Members noted that Keats Community Library's Licence to occupy Ten Keats Grove had been renewed, for a further three years, with a request for a comfort letter for a further 2 years. Members suggested that a 5-year term be considered at the next renewal.

Keats House had received Full Accreditation by Arts Council England, following the submission of its accreditation form last year.

The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath advised that he would be applying for a 'London in Bloom' Award for the House next year. A Member commented on the large amount of bird droppings by the Library. These were cleaned regularly by the garden volunteer team but the Superintendent would investigate whether the tree could be pruned to limit the issue.

Members noted that the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee had approved Keats House's proposal to apply for a Premises Licence from the London Borough of Camden and, during the discussion on this item, the following points were noted:

- Internal consultation had taken place and further discussions were planned with local stakeholders. The Heath and Hampstead Society had asked for a meeting with the Superintendent.
- Members felt strongly that, given this was a particularly quiet residential area, the terminal hour should be 10.30pm, with 30 minutes dispersal time.

- The Principal Curator advised that there would be no off-sales beyond alcoholic gifts in the gift shop, and it was not intended that unsealed containers would be taken off the premises.
- Officers had met with both the City of London Corporation's in-house Licensing Team and Camden's Team (pre-application) to ensure that the application met the 4 Licensing Objectives. Members noted there would be further statutory consultation once the application had been submitted.
- The new Director of Open Spaces was very experienced from his time with Royal Parks and would be the Designated Premises Supervisor.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

5. **VERBAL UPDATE ON KEATS HOUSE ACCESS IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

The Principal Curator was heard in respect of the recent competitive tendering process to appoint an Architect, funded from Camden's Community Infrastructure Levy. Some very early drawings were tabled and Members noted that the improvements would cover the following:

Toilet block – Members noted the plans to keep this functional and easy to clean, whilst generally improving its appearance. The existing two cubicles would be retained, as there was not sufficient space for three, and they would be gender neutral with baby changing facilities. Members suggested installing a gent's urinal to keep queues down (but space limitations prevent this) and installing sensor activated heaters.

Path lighting – Members were keen to retain the residential feeling of the House and the Principal Curator advised that the lighting would be very low and at ground level. Furthermore, the lighting would only be used when visitors were arriving and leaving, after nightfall, and would be of a discrete design but robust enough to withstand gardening equipment. Members noted the current floodlights at the rear of the building, which acted as a security deterrent, and additional lighting would be positioned near the toilet block and at the far corner of the library.

Entrance – Members noted that this area had been prone to flooding and therefore a drainage solution (soakaway) would be added, which would not need to be fitted to the mains drainage and would therefore be cost-effective. The project would also remodel the entrance to the House, to make it more welcoming and befitting of a public museum. Members noted that plans included a new gate, moving the composting and recycling bins, moving the path to create more grass area and York stone paving to the front of the House. The Principal Curator advised that a planning application would be necessary.

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

There were no questions.

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

The Keats House Consultative Committee asked for their thanks to Principal Curator, Vicky Carroll, to go on record for her invaluable service over the past 5 years and would like to wish her every success in the future.

Dates of 2018 meetings:

11 April -11.30 am - at Guildhall

3 October – 2.30 pm – at Keats House

The meeting ended at 4.10 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Julie Mayer
tel. no.: 020 7332 1410
julie.mayer@cityoflondon.gov.uk