



Keats House Consultative Committee

Date: MONDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2015
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: COMMITTEE ROOM, 2ND FLOOR, WEST WING, GUILDHALL

Members: Vivienne Littlechild (Chairman)
John Scott (Deputy Chairman)
Ann Pembroke
Barbara Newman
Jeremy Simons
Martin Humphery
Nigel Steward
Jim Burge
Susan Kirby
Harriet Cullen
Steven Bobasch
Diana Gore
David Kitchen

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Lunch will be served in the Guildhall Club at 1pm
NB: Part of this meeting could be the subject of audio video recording

John Barradell
Town Clerk and Chief Executive

AGENDA

Part 1 - Public Agenda

1. **APOLOGIES**
2. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**
3. **MINUTES**
To approve the minutes of the Meeting held on 16th September 2014.

For Decision
(Pages 1 - 4)
4. **KEATS HOUSE PROGRESS REPORT**
A report of the Principal Curator, Culture, Heritage & Libraries.

For Information
(Pages 5 - 10)
5. **QUESTIONS**
6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
7. **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**
Tuesday 22nd September 2015.

KEATS HOUSE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 16 September 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Keats House Consultative Committee held at the Guildhall EC2 at 2.30 pm

Present

Members:

Vivienne Littlechild (Chairman)
Ann Pembroke
Barbara Newman
Jeremy Simons

Susan Kirby
Steven Bobasch
Diana Gore

Officers:

Saimah Tahir
Vicky Carroll

Town Clerk's Department
Culture, Heritage and Libraries

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from John Scott, Martin Humphrey and Harriet Cullen.

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 6 February 2014 were approved.

4. KEATS HOUSE PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Director of Culture, Heritage and Libraries summarising achievements and developments at Keats House during the six months since the last Consultative Committee meeting.

The Principal Curator at Keats House advised that the visitor figures were generally positive although there had been a dip during May- July which was reflected across galleries and museums within London who had noted a similar trend. Visitor figures for August were incomplete at the time the report was published.

The Principal Curator noted that the partnership between the National Trust and Keats House which enabled Members to receive half price entry would end next year. It was felt that whilst this may have some negative effect on visitor numbers, it was likely to have a positive effect on income, since many people produce their membership card upon entry as an afterthought. A Member informed the committee that research into visitor spending habits noted National Trust Members spent less in gift shops than general visitors.

All Members felt it was vital to expand the gift shop in order to support the Foundation and the long term aim was to open an online gift shop as the Keats brand had a strong international following.

In response to a Member's question, the Principal Curator explained that visitors were not charged to use the garden because it was hoped that in the longer term, visitors to the garden may later visit the house and become supporters of Keats House. Members wanted to explore the idea of a robust donation box in the garden as they noted that this had worked well in Jane Austen's House.

A Member requested Keats House to be advertised to Ward Clubs and Livery Company's as a good place to hold events as both the Nightingale and Chester rooms could accommodate large parties. The Principal Curator informed the Committee that ITV had been in contact to hold dinner parties but had ultimately decided on an alternative venue that was more centrally located. The committee agreed that City links should be utilised to promote Keats House for events.

The Principal Curator distributed an events booklet for September to December 2014 and a detailed discussion on the booklet ensued. It was noted that free events were normally in partnership with other organisations that paid for the programme and Family Days had a good attendance. The committee welcomed the idea of adding the name of partners who had paid for the event under the event in the booklet.

The Principal Curator updated the committee on what the project to enhance the interpretation and visitor experience entailed. Research had shown that visitors who had knowledge of Keats life and works could fully appreciate the house and grounds, but the house was less accessible to non-specialists. Easy Tiger had been brought in to tastefully layer in interpretation such as his letters and poetry. The basement would include as a film room which would illustrate Keats life. It was hoped that the combination of these activities would result in a better visitor experience with people staying longer and being better informed of Keats. Members discussed having audio commentary in each room either through the medium of audio headsets or mobile phone apps to add to the experience. Although Keats House did not have Wi-Fi this was something that could be looked into to accomplish audio commentary.

5. KEATS HOUSE FUNDRAISING REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Director of Visitor Development and Services Director, Culture, Heritage & Libraries summarising progress to date with raising funds for Keats House.

The Principal Curator had been working with local residents to develop a supporter's scheme and distributed leaflets which had prepared to Members. Supporters now could select 3 different types of membership levels. So far there were 5 couples who had agreed to become patrons. Melvin Bragg had agreed to become Chair of the UK patrons and a renowned individual had agreed to become Chair of the international patrons. The Principal Curator had

been working with a volunteer who has contacted 5 other museums to understand how they manage their membership schemes. Diana Gore, is organising a mail drop campaign to 8,000 homes nearby to establish a supporters group. An event had been arranged in Tower Bridge on the 26 November to raise Keats House profile within the city and Valentine's Day was also being looked at as a potential opportunity to further promote the cause.

Members felt it was imperative that Keats House had its own brand identity. At present Keats House website came under the umbrella of the Corporation of London website. The long term aim was for Keats House to have its own website and online shop which would utilise the worldwide following of Keats and the strength of the Keats Brand.

A Member noted that providing refreshments for visitors would bring in revenue and give a better experience for people.

A representative of the Keats Foundation noted that she was disappointed that it had not been possible for the Keats Foundation and the new fundraising group to work more closely together.

The Chairman and Committee thanked the volunteers for their contribution and ongoing support of Keats House.

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

A Member proposed that the conservatory become a shop for plants which would be provided by West Ham Park. However it was noted that this would need dispensation from the Guerne Family.

A Member noted that the bookshop was retailing a second hand biography of Keats at £30; she requested that books were priced more responsibly in order to attract buyers.

The Committee discussed longer opening hours during winter, this was received positively by the Principal Curator who would look into this next winter as the interpretation project would be taking place this year.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There were no urgent items.

8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that its next meeting would take place on 2nd February at 2 pm and the location would be Guildhall.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Saimah Tahir
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Committee(s):		Date(s):
Keats House Consultative Committee	- For information	2 February 2015
Subject:		Public
Keats House Progress Report		
Report of:		For Information
Principal Curator, Culture, Heritage & Libraries		
Summary		
<p>This report summarises achievements and developments at Keats House during the six months since the last Consultative Committee meeting.</p>		
Recommendation(s)		
Members are asked to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note the report.		

Main Report

Visitor figures

- House visitor numbers for the year so far (April – December 14) are now almost identical to numbers for the same period last year: 20742 this year compared with 20748 last year. (See Appendix 1).
- After a significant increase in the early part of the year, we have noticed a decline in house visitor numbers, compared with last year, since October. We are not sure what is causing this, but we are hopeful that the work we are doing to improve the visitor experience will counteract this trend.

Events

- The events programme continues to attract good numbers. From August-December over 1000 people attended 28 events.
- Family days continue to be popular, attracting in the region of 60-80 people on the third Saturday of every month (smaller numbers were received in December due to the closeness to Christmas).
- For the January – April events programme we are charging for more events, including a musical recital, as suggested by this Committee. Family activities are externally-funded outreach activities are still free.

- Planning for the 2015 Keats Festival is now underway. The dates are Friday 29 – Sunday 7 June 2015.

Keats House Poets season

- The Keats House Poets series, funded by the Arts Council through a partnership with the Geffrye Museum, has now finished. It proved very popular, with over 400 participants over the series.
- Evaluation indicates that the project succeeded in attracting a younger and ethnically more diverse audience than the regular Keats House audience.
- Keats House has approached the Keats Foundation to request funding to run the programme for a further year.

Volunteers

- Keats House now has 47 volunteers working in a variety of roles, including front of house.

Staff

- Frankie Kubicki and Alison Lister have joined the team as Information Officers, replacing Grace and Amy.
- Harri McColm has joined as our new trainee, funded by the British Museum/Arts Council. Her placement at Keats House and the British Museum lasts for 18 months in total.

Interpretation project

- The project to enhance the interpretation and visitor experience, funded by Arts Council England, is in full swing.
- New showcases have been commissioned to enable us to display iconic items from the Keats House collection in suitable environmental conditions – including letters, Keats's books and Fanny Brawne's possessions.
- We have commissioned audio, film, screen-based and textual interpretation which will tell Keats's story throughout the house without disrupting the unique atmosphere.
- The project is on track to be completed by the end of February 2015. It will be open to the public from March 2015. We have been advised to tie the official launch and associated PR activity to the Keats Festival in May/June, as this will provide a stronger hook for the press.

Learning

- School figures continue to increase steadily. For April-December 974 school students/teachers visited, compared with 921 last year, an increase of 6%.
- Our partnership with UCL School of English, funded by Share Academy, resulted in further visits from UCL students, plus several excellent public events delivered in partnership.
- Our 'First Story' project, in partnership with Keats Community Library and funded by the Clore Foundation, is underway. A number of school groups have already received workshops with published writers, and more are planned for the New Year.

Income generation

- The revised hire charges have had a positive effect on income from private hire. Since April 2014 we have made over £9000 from venue hire.
- One obstacle to maximising income from private hire is that we are unable to make money from catering. This is mainly because we do not have a premises licence so we have to let people bring their own drinks. In the longer term it may be beneficial to have contracts with approved caterers – they would help to promote the venue and we could take a cut of the catering charges. It would also make events easier to manage as the caterers would know the venue and its restrictions.
- The shop continues to perform better than last year. From April to November it has taken £14,600 compared with £12,400 for the same period last year.

Fundraising

- Our fundraising programme with local residents has resulted in a patrons and membership scheme being set up. We now have 10 Patrons, 5 Champions and 11 Supporters. The scheme, plus donations solicited by the group, has raised £7,600 to date.
- Instead of the event originally proposed for Tower Bridge, the group is now planning a fundraising event at Keats House to coincide with the Keats Festival.

Building maintenance

- Staff from the City Surveyor's team have been to inspect the conservatory and are arranging for it to be repaired by a specialist contractor, since MITIE were unable to do this.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Visitor Figures

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Principal Curator

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Keats House Visitor figures: Overview and Annual Comparison

Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Total

General Visitors

2012-13	1480	1493	1514	1358	1485	1359	1510	801	731	798	797	977	14303
2013-14	1190	1378	1384	1201	1690	970	932	643	589	557	611	1019	12164
2014-15	1209	1141	1050	1271	1447	1012	852	491	360	166	0	0	8999

School/Sixth Form Led Sessions (Pupils + Adults)

2012-13	0	138	25	64	16	37	107	31	21	30	0	35	504
2013-14	21	48	48	202	0	18	127	89	36	97	167	129	982
2014-15	52	88	81	163	0	5	65	142	69	0	0	0	665

School/Sixth Form Self-Guided Visits (Pupils + Adults)

2012-13	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	35	15	19	108	38	248
2013-14	0	0	73	47	35	78	35	37	17	47	56	22	447
2014-15	86	0	71	43	47	26	36	0	0	0	0	0	309

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Further/Higher Education Groups

2012-13	0	27	18	67	0	10	43	65	0	82	0	0	312
2013-14	0	12	76	0	6	68	93	116	0	18	16	0	405
2014-15	5	57	50	51	23	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	202

Other Groups

2012-13	26	98	38	57	55	42	61	67	0	19	26	0	489
2013-14	27	5	76	0	0	15	23	22	0	20	23	55	266
2014-15	39	44	0	12	0	97	0	0	0	0	0	0	192

Keats House Events

2012-13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013-14	210	506	177	175	8	158	570	204	110	324	286	394	3122
2014-15	420	498	790	353	162	286	373	185	176	130	0	0	3373

Private Hire Events

2012-13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013-14	0	160	236	230	12	204	230	385	137	121	75	200	1990
2014-15	92	116	155	36	234	276	292	250	116	212	0	0	1779

House Subtotal

2012-13	1506	1756	1595	1546	1556	1448	1754	999	767	948	931	1050	15856
2013-14	1448	2109	2070	1855	1751	1511	2010	1496	889	1184	1234	1819	19376
2014-15	1903	1944	2197	1929	1913	1702	1634	1068	721	555	0	0	15566

Garden

2012-13	281	774	390	457	774	625	433	266	146	173	185	288	4792
2013-14	499	546	809	982	798	623	466	487	248	157	374	797	6786
2014-15	500	711	702	600	483	777	733	452	561	152	0	0	5671

Offsite Events

2012-13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013-14	0	35	4	4	14	15	22	15	42	20	23	29	223
2014-15	32	32	16	20	32	34	20	20	6	15	0	0	227

Grand Total 2014-5

2012-13	1787	2530	1985	2003	2330	2073	2187	1265	913	1121	1116	1338	20648
2013-14	1947	2690	2883	2841	2563	2149	2498	1998	1179	1361	1631	2645	26385
2014-15	2435	2687	2915	2549	2428	2513	2387	1540	1288	722	0	0	21464

Figures for January 2015 are incomplete.