

KEATS HOUSE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Friday, 23 June 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Keats House Consultative Committee held at Keats House, 10 Keats Grove, NW3 2RR on Friday, 23 June 2023 at 2.30 pm

Present

Members:

John Foley (Deputy Chairman)

John Griffiths

Stephen Ainger

Steven Bobasch

Jim Burge

In Attendance

Officers:

Rob Shakespeare

- Department of Open Spaces

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Munsur Ali, Jason Groves and Nicholas Roe.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

On DBS checks: A Member sought an update on the issue. The meeting heard that young people were frequent visitors to the House and therefore enhanced DBS checks were appropriate – but that volunteers were always accompanied by a DBS-checked staff member, they did not necessarily come to the House very often, nor did they meet criteria around regulated activity (therefore they did not meet the frequency and role-based criteria for DBS checks). In the event that a learning volunteer role was developed then it was likely that a DBS check would be appropriate.

In response to a question on the practicality of allocating a volunteer to always be with a staff member, the meeting heard that there was no way of avoiding a situation whereby a volunteer was always with a paid staff member.

In response to clarification on non DBS-checked people in the gardens visited frequently by children, the meeting heard that children were always with parents or carers and were therefore not the direct responsibility of the House (while school groups were accompanied and supervised by teachers and paid staff members – as set out in the risk assessment).

On the inclusion of Keats House in the Destination City strategy, a Member commented that there was no mention of Keats House on the Destination City (DC) website and that there ought to be a link to the Corporation's other assets, including the London Metropolitan Archives. A Member noted that the matter had been raised with the DC executive and that the matter was being considered. The meeting noted improvements to the Keats House website.

A Member sought clarification on museum accreditation: the Committee heard that Keats House has not yet been invited to be involved, and the Museum will not need to make a submission before 2024.

RESOLVED, That the minutes of the meeting of 28 October 2022 be agreed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

4. **UPDATE REPORT FOR KEATS HOUSE CHARITY, 2022/23**

The Committee noted the report of the Executive Director, Environment together with three appendices: [Draft] Annual Report for Keats House Charity 2022/23; Keats House Divisional Plan 2023-26, May 2023 update; and [Draft] Keats House Activities Plan 2023/24.

Noting the importance of retaining and protecting core funding, a Member asked whether there was any competition for funding for Keats House (KH) in the light of City of London Corporation (CoLC) reorganisation initiatives. The meeting heard that opportunities for access to hitherto untapped funding were being explored across the full CoL heritage portfolio, and that there appeared to be no negative impacts to KH.

A Member asked whether any external funding targets or benchmark expectations had been set. The meeting heard that the current year's income target was fixed, and that KH benefited from the generous CoLC support for core staffing and service delivery. The meeting heard that longer-term targets included an expectation that new posts would be self-funding. The Committee noted that positive or negative balances at the end of the year were directed in or out of the charity reserves. The reserve was expected to be reduced to the charity reserve target level of £20K, and investments are being made in collection cataloguing management software alongside other projects including improvements to the visitor entrance area and the front pedestrian entry area (a dual-height wall).

A Member asked why it had taken so long for the boundary wall to be given attention and whether there was a budgetary impact to the delay. The meeting heard that a combination of factors came into play: London Borough of Camden had initially approved spending to enhance accessibility to the grounds and house to include improvements to toilets, pathways and lighting (partly to facilitate evening events) - however the consultation process had been lengthy, and costs had increased after the pandemic necessitating further quotes resulting in only partial approval of all the costs. A further proposal was being supported by the CoLC that could draw on a local community levy that would require local stakeholder support.

In response to a question on the expiry date for planning application submissions, the meeting heard that the time limit was three years and that a light-touch reapproval was likely, particularly as some of the project had been started.

Noting that a new councillor at Camden was in place, a Member asked whether councillors had been contacted. The meeting heard that local councillors would be contacted soon.

A Member sought confirmation that best practice among CoL museum accreditation expertise was being shared – the meeting heard that such knowledge was being actively shared including expertise at the Guildhall Art Gallery, noting that the level of excellence in governance at CoL was an asset to the museum accreditation process.

A Member sought clarification on the connection with Cardiff University and the rationale behind the support from Cardiff. The meeting heard that KH also worked with Roehampton University, and that the status of KH within the field of Romanticism had resulted in interest from academics in the field.

A Member pointed out that the CoLC's Education Board was in the process of refreshing its education strategy and sought confirmation that KH was abreast of that strategy, particularly in respect of outdoor learning. The meeting noted that those links were being actively developed and that plans were being developed with the CoLC's Education Strategy Unit for 2024.

A Member commented on the relatively slow recovery of private hire events, noting that it was a widespread issue among comparable venues, and suggested that ward club events might be worth exploring.

5. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**
6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**
7. **DATE AND LOCATION OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The meeting ended at time not specified

Chairman

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