

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee	31 January 2022
<b>Subject:</b> Keats House Admission Fees and Private Hire Charges 2022/23	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	2, 3, 4, 5 & 12
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	N
<b>If so, how much?</b>	
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Environment	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Principal Curator (Keats House), Open Spaces Department	

### Summary

This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for 2022/23 for admission to Keats House, including school students attending taught sessions, and the private hire rate for the Nightingale Room in the adjacent Ten Keats Grove building, which is managed by the Keats House team.

It is proposed that admission fees and private hire charges are increased by 4.9%, in line with the Retail Price Index figure (October 2021), then rounded up to the nearest £0.25 increment. This is to reflect increased costs and maintain Keats House's position in relation to comparable venues, as well as fees and charges at Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members agree the proposed fees and charges for 2022-23 as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. On 29 March 2021, your Committee approved the recommendation to maintain admission prices to Keats House, which had been reviewed in December 2018, due

to the ongoing pandemic and deferred culmination of the Keats200 bicentenary programme.

2. The income generated from fees and charges contributes towards the cost of operating Keats House as a museum and visitor attraction.
3. Fees and charges at Keats House are not based on full cost recovery and are significantly subsidised by the City Corporation through the Keats House Charity as part of its cultural contribution to London and the nation.

### **Current Position**

4. The fees and charges at Keats House were last benchmarked and approved by your Committee in December 2018, for the period of the Keats200 bicentenary programme (2018 – 21), which aimed to increase access and inclusion.
5. At that time, benchmarking was conducted against a small number of comparable venues in the local area and London region. This was refreshed in autumn 2021 to inform the recommendations included in this paper (Appendix 2).
6. At the meeting of your Committee held on 29 March 2021, Members approved the proposal to maintain those same admission fees through to the conclusion of the Keats200 bicentenary, which had been deferred from February to November 2021 due to the pandemic. Members also approved the recommendation to increase the private hire rate for the Nightingale Room in Ten Keats Grove, by the RPI increase used across the Department at that time.
7. As well as a range of concessions, Keats House has a number of sector-specific agreements which offer set rates for certain membership / ticketing schemes. These include: National Trust England Members and London Pass holders (50% concession of full ticket price), Art Fund Members (100% concession), as well as offering reduced or free entrance to various ‘friends of’ groups, sector bodies, City of London Members, staff and volunteers.
8. In recent years, Keats House has participated in the National Trust London Partners Scheme, which offered 50% reduction to their members. As a result of the pandemic, NT have suspended this scheme from the end of 2021, although NT members are currently still receiving the reduced rate when visiting Keats House.
9. On 1 December 2021, the Principal Curator agreed a new return rate with ‘Go City’ – the providers of the London Pass Scheme – of £4.50, based on an improved 40% reduction on the, then, cost of the full price ticket. Admission for a visitor with

a London Pass is free at the point of entry.

10. In 2020/21, a reduced income target of £4,000 was set against admissions including school groups, with only £1,508 achieved due to the impacts of lockdowns, restrictions and changing visitor behaviours.
11. In 2020/21, the annual income target of £19,000 for private hire was removed, with just £47 achieved due to the pandemic and its impacts.
12. COVID-19 has significantly impacted on all income for 2021-22 and will continue to do so until there is a full recovery from the COVID-19 global pandemic, including the return of UK and international visitor numbers and confidence. In addition, there have been increased costs associated with making the site and visitor offer COVID-secure. Since March 2020, the series of National Lockdowns and the introduction of various restrictions has impacted on operations at the venue, including: the opening of Keats House to the public; the numbers able to attend when open; visitor and customer appetite for visiting, spending and planning events. Despite the lifting of most restrictions and the prospects of a recovery in the spring / summer of 2022, these impacts are still ongoing for an, as yet, unknown period.
13. Keats House reopened to the public from May 2021, with restrictions on the numbers attending and enhanced hygiene measures to meet COVID-secure / 'We're Good to Go' guidance and visitor expectations. Between May and December 2021, 1,896 people have visited Keats House, achieving £6,095 in income from admissions. As at January 2022, Keats House is open for 12 hours over three days per week, compared with 30 hours over five days per week prior to the pandemic.
14. School visits to Keats House are proving popular, along with online sessions, and events and private hires have also resumed, albeit at reduced levels, with these activities achieving some vital income for the house.

### **Proposed Fees and Charges 2022-23**

15. It is proposed that admission fees for 2022/23 are generally increased by 4.9%, in line with the Retail Price Index figure for October 2021, as used across the Department, then rounded up to the nearest £0.25 increment (Appendix 1).
16. The proposed admission fees include a concessionary rate, offering a c.40% discount on the standard adult charge, in line with the concessionary rate at Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park sites. This is intended to enable a diverse range of people who may be economically or socially excluded from visiting Keats House to do so.

17. It is proposed to include National Trust members – who under their London Partners Scheme previously benefited from a 50% reduction – in the Concession rate, thus providing them with a 40% reduction on full-price admission. This is to encourage visits by NT members generally and particularly those visiting Willow Road and Fenton House nearby, while recapturing some additional income following the ending of the scheme.
18. The '£2 for Keats200' rate, used for both the 'Community Ticket' and students attending taught sessions, proved anecdotally popular and was a useful way of marketing the house to local residents and teachers. It is therefore recommended that this should be retained, though also subject to the 4.9% inflationary increase and rounded up, resulting in a new rate of £2.25. However, the £30 minimum charge for school groups is now insufficient to cover even the basic costs of delivering these sessions and it is proposed that this is increased to £50. This still provides good value for taught sessions, especially as self-led visits would remain free for all students attending.
19. It is proposed that the hourly rate charged for hiring the Nightingale Room in Ten Keats Grove is increased by 4.9%, in line with the Retail Price Index figure (October 2021) and again rounded up to the nearest £0.25 increment.
20. The times of the private hire charges have been slightly amended to reflect operational issues at the house and explicitly refer to the Chester Room, on the advice of Members.
21. It is recommended that some discretion is granted to the Principal Curator (Keats House) to vary rates according to operational and other considerations at the time of the booking. For example, it may be desirable on some occasions when the house is closed to the public but staffed to allow a group to use the Chester Room rather than the Nightingale Room, while still charging the lower room hire rate. The reasons for all such instances will be documented by the Principal Curator, or delegated officer, for audit purposes and to ensure business transparency.
22. It is requested that these proposals are approved for the whole of 2022/23, during which time options for the future operation of Keats House, including Ten Keats Grove, will be considered in light of the longer-term impact of the global pandemic and recovery, the Charities Review and Target Operating Model. These options will then be brought to the relevant Committees for consultation and the decision of Members.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

### **Strategic Implications**

23. The setting of fees and charges at Keats House contributes towards the achievement of the three aims set out in the City of London Corporate Plan 2018 – 23. Contribute to a flourishing society (2 – 4), Support a thriving economy (5) and Shape outstanding environments (12).
24. The proposed fees and charges support the three objectives and outcomes set out in the Open Spaces Business Plan 2021-22 (a) Open spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible, (b) Spaces enrich people's lives and (c) Business practices are responsible and sustainable.

#### Financial Implications

25. The City's Financial Regulations require all Departments to recover full costs when setting fees and charges to persons or external organisations or submit reasons to the appropriate service Committee when that objective is not met. It is therefore at the discretion of individual spending Committees to determine the actual level of fees and charges relative to the services they provide, after taking into account local considerations and priorities.
26. Officers and Members are committed to working to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on budgets and to ensure our finances are on a sustainable footing for the medium-term.

#### Legal Implications

27. Officers have been asked to remind Members of the City Corporation's obligation, as the sole Trustee of the Keats House Charity (Charity No. 1053381), to make all decisions in relation to Keats House in the best interests of the charity.

#### Risk Implications

28. Income for 2022-23 will continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing recovery, as recorded in the Departmental Risk Register.

#### Equality Implications

29. A Test of Relevance has been completed in relation to the proposed fees and charges. A full Equality Analysis is not recommended.

#### **Consultees**

30. The Chamberlain has been consulted in the production of this report.

#### **Conclusion**

31. Keats House continues to provide good value as a visitor attraction, both regionally (Appendix 2) and also for UK and international tourists. The income generated

through admission fees and private hire charges contributes towards the cost of providing Keats House as a museum and visitor attraction.

32. Maximising income from all sources will continue to be a priority during the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, as the Charity looks to rebuild its operating and business models.
33. It is proposed that admission fees and private hire rates are increased by 4.9% (rounded up), in line with the Retail Price Index figure (October 2021) to part offset increasing costs, while retaining a good value, competitive offer for our visitors and customers. Some discretion is granted to the Principal Curator to vary fees and charges to reflect market conditions and achieve best value for the Keats House Charity.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Proposed Fees and Charges for 2022-23.
- Appendix 2 – Benchmarking exercise, refreshed autumn 2021.

## **Contact**

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