

<b>Committee(s):</b> Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee	<b>Date(s):</b> 17/07/2023
<b>Subject:</b> Keats House Activities Plan, 2023/24	<b>Public</b>
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	<b>2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 &amp; 12</b>
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	<b>N/A</b>
What is the source of Funding?	<b>N/A</b>
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Juliemma McLoughlin, Executive Director, Environment Department	<b>For decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Rob Shakespeare, Head of Heritage & Museums, Environment Department	

### Summary

Since 2020, Keats House has produced an annual Activities Plan which summarises the previous year's achievements and identifies priority projects and activities for the current business year. This is used to inform Members, senior officers and internal and external partners and stakeholders of its work and impact.

Presented at Appendix 1 for the information and approval of Members is the draft Keats House Activities Plan 2023/24, which Members are asked to note and approve.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members approve the Keats House Activities Plan 2023/24.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. Keats House is a registered charity (number 1053381) with the City Corporation acting as sole trustee.
2. To support its good governance and as an Accredited Museum, Keats House is required to have a forward plan which demonstrates how it plans to meet its stated aims and objectives within the wider strategies and desired outcomes of its governance arrangements. The Corporate Plan and other key strategies, along

with the Environment Department's aims and objectives determine the strategic outcomes and objectives for Keats House. The Divisional Plan outlines how these are delivered at Keats House through priority projects over a three-year period and the annual Activities Plan showcases our achievements and priorities for the previous and current year. The Keats House Divisional Plan, updated for May 2023, was presented to Members for information at your meeting on 22 May and the Activities Plan 2023/24 is included at Appendix 1.

3. In addition to rebuilding its core services (opening to the public, delivering formal learning sessions, live events, special projects and private hires), Keats House is currently prioritising longer-term projects to enhance physical access to its premises and virtual access to its collections as identified in its Divisional and Activities Plans.
4. Despite some of the continued difficulties faced in the aftermath of the pandemic, Keats House's key indicators are improving year on year, contributing to a range of Corporate and sector outcomes. It continues to work with internal and external partners to deliver creative and engaging programmes which meet Corporate and sector priorities, including access to culture, creative learning, wellbeing and community cohesion.
5. With the implementation of TOM Phase 2 in the Natural Environment Division and the emerging recommendations of the Charities Review, Keats House has the opportunity to fully recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and reshape and grow its services and audiences. A successful outcome for our Museum Accreditation application, which is being worked on in 2023 for an expected invitation to submit in 2024, would validate the work it does to care for and make accessible Keats House and its collections, for the benefit of London and the nation.

## **Current Position**

6. Following the implementation of TOM Phase 2 in the Environment Department, Keats House is now managed within the Culture & Projects Section of Natural Environment Division. The role of Principal Curator (Keats House) is now Head of Heritage & Museums, reporting directly to the Assistant Director Culture & Projects, who in turn reports to the Natural Environment Director. The operational team at Keats House is largely unchanged and will be strengthened and supported by recruitment to currently vacant posts and new heritage officers, working on cross-team projects and reporting to the Head of Heritage & Museums.
7. Keats House has been awarded funding through the Education Strategy Unit for two major partnership projects in 2023/24: 'Culturally Speaking' and 'Word on the Street: Poetry Versus Colonialism Festival'. Delivering these projects will engage Keats House with new audiences, especially young people, and strengthen our strategic partnerships and delivery against key outcomes.
8. The 'Young Romantics in the City' exhibition, changing displays and events programme, which has been funded by Cardiff University and co-curated with Dr

Anna Mercer, will form the spine of our programming until February '24. A new exhibition exploring the hidden histories of Keats House and its inhabitants is in development for March 2024 – February 2025. We will also be planning for and developing our plans to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the house to the public in May 2025.

9. The ongoing development of our formal learning programme continues to be a priority. Major targets for the current year include: delivery of in-person taught sessions and annual summer school; involvement in Education Strategy Unit funded projects and networks; realising the potential of working with the Natural Environment's learning team; and the achievement of a quality award for our learning programme.
10. During 2023, we are also preparing the content for the launch of our online collections database, planned for autumn, and continuing to review and revise our policies and processes to ensure we are ready to re-apply for Museum Accreditation, now expected in 2024.
11. We continue to work with the City Surveyors, a consultant architect, the London Borough of Camden's planning department and local stakeholders to progress works and projects which maintain, preserve and enhance the Grade 1 listed house and garden and the Grade II listed Ten Keats Grove (library building).
12. In line with all sections and teams within the Environment Department, Keats House is committed to developing a five-year improvement plan for the period 2024 – 2029. This will be brought forward for consultation and approval by Members of Keats House Consultative and Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committees by March 2024.

## **Proposals**

13. Members indicate their continued support for the activities and priorities of Keats House in delivering the Charitable Objectives, as well as contributing to Corporate, Departmental and wider strategic and community outcomes, by approving the Keats House Activities Plan 2023/24.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

14. The activities, projects and works outlined in this report contribute towards the achievement of the three aims set out in the City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23: Contribute to a flourishing society; Support a thriving economy; and Shape outstanding environments.
15. The activities of Keats House are also designed to contribute to the aims and outcomes of the City Corporation's Education, Creative Learning and Skills Strategies.
16. Keats House continues to support the Environment Department to Shape Sustainable Future Environments through its Primary and Supporting Aims and Objectives and contribute to the outcomes identified in the new Natural Environment Division's emerging strategic framework.

## Conclusion

17. Keats House is open and accessible to the public and providing its core offer of self-led and guided visits, formal learning sessions, opportunities for life-long learning and engagement with arts and culture.
18. Although all indicators may not return to pre-pandemic levels in the current business year, the number of visitors, school sessions, events and private hires are all increasing, supporting the achievement of our intended outcomes, including a balanced budget for the charity.
19. The 'Young Romantics in the City' exhibition and events programme for 2023/24 has already been launched with supporting events exploring current research themes planned for the future programme. Our involvement in partnership projects such as The Wild Escape, Culturally Speaking and Poetry Versus Colonialism will add value to our engagement, recognition and impact across the cultural sector.
20. A number of projects designed to increase physical and virtual access to Keats House and its collections which were delayed by the pandemic are now progressing and being prioritised for delivery in 2023/24.
21. The achievement of the above will support our application for Museum Accreditation in 2024 and, in the longer-term, deliver a sustainable future for the Keats House Charity, particularly in the lead up to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the house opening to the public, which we will celebrate in May 2025.

## Appendices

- Appendix 1 – [Draft] Keats House Activities Plan 2023/24

## Rob Shakespeare

Head of Heritage & Museums, Environment Department

T: 020 7332 1818

E: [rob.shakespeare@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:rob.shakespeare@cityoflondon.gov.uk)