

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

Simon Glynn

Jayne Moore

- Natural Environment

- Natural Environment

- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Munsur Ali, Jason Groves and Nicholas Roe. The meeting was chaired by John Foley.

The Committee welcomed Simon Glynn to his first meeting of the Committee.

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 matter. 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, did not necessarily come to the House very often, and did not 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 though House staff would always be aware of safeguarding matters (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 it was being explored. 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 encompassed 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 were 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 passed on, 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 on the current exhibits. 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 compiled and refreshed with the CoLC's Education Strategy Unit for 2024, noting the importance of nurturing confidence and interest among school-age children.

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.

In response to a request for clarification on private hire rates, the meeting heard that admission and hire rates were submitted to the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee though there was some flexibility in the case of smaller events that did not require much space.

A Member commented on the lack of progress so far on the issue of the licence. The meeting heard that a draft had been issued and that the frustration on the slowness of the licence's issue was widespread. It was noted that no real progress on the licence had been made since the last meeting of the KHCC and that the most recent licence was issued in 2020. The meeting noted the undocumented status since 2020, and heard that a request had been made

for a document from CoLC to clarify the status until a licence was agreed. Members also noted the impact of the issue on fundraising capacity.

In response to a question on updates to the charities review, the meeting heard that a report on the recommendations was to be submitted to the July meeting of the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee. Those recommendations would inform any longer-term strategy and understanding in respect of the next agreement. In response to clarification on what was holding up progress on the licence. Members commented that while an interim licence had originally been designed to support KCL, it was felt that there might be unwillingness to move forward at the CoLC until the recommendations of the charities review had been submitted (to be submitted in July).

5. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Keats Community Library: The Committee heard that the Hampstead Summer Festival was ongoing and that attendance figures were good. Keats Community Library (KCL) saw 12K movements in May 2023 representing a good recovery with a greater proportion of mainly primary school age children using the library (now 55%, as against 45% pre-pandemic).

A Member asked whether KCL events could or should be published on the CoLC's website (given that KCL was arguably a non-CoLC entity), noting that such events were circulated via the 25K-strong mailing list and via KH social media. It was noted that KCL could be linked to the KH website and that there was merit in exploring closer website interactions.

The Committee noted a message from Nicholas Roe setting out his enthusiasm for the Keats Foundation to be involved in the centenary events scheduled for 2025 at KH to commemorate its opening, including a three-day conference in May that year, with funding support from the Keats Foundation to support other centenary-related events that year.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

A Member commented that there was merit in promoting poetry as an oral experience as well as an experience of the written word, and suggested connections with audiobook producers. The meeting noted that some soundposts already existed in KH and that poetry readings regularly took place. Other oral elements were available and that the oral element of the poetry would continue to be promoted.

7. DATE AND LOCATION OF THE NEXT MEETING

Friday 13 October 2023 at 2.30pm at Guildhall, preceded by lunch at the Guildhall Club at 1.30pm.

The meeting ended at 4.05pm

Chairman

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