

KEATS HOUSE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Friday, 3 May 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Keats House Consultative Committee held at Keats House, NW3 2RR on Friday, 3 May 2024 at 2.30 pm

Present

Members:

Munsur Ali (Chair)

John Foley

John Griffiths (Deputy Chairman)

Stephen Ainger

Steven Bobasch

Jim Burge

In Attendance

Officers:

Rob Shakespeare

Simon Glynn

Jayne Moore

- Department of Open Spaces

- Department of the Built Environment

- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alexandra Lavery, Nicholas Roe, and Jason Groves.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

On opening times information on the notice board outside the House: Members noted that a sign had been temporarily removed due to its unsuitability to wet weather, and a new notice board is expected to be delivered by the end of May 2024. The new signage will include a QR code (as before) together with written information.

A Member commented that while matters were discussed, the discussions were never expressed as a consultation which is the purpose of the Committee, as per the Committee's title.

RESOLVED, That the minutes of the meeting of 13 October 2023 be approved as an accurate record of the proceedings.

4. PROGRESS AT KEATS HOUSE APRIL 2023-2024

The Committee viewed a presentation on the progress at Keats House (KH) for the year up to April 2024 that included information on the 'Young Romantics in the City' exhibition entirely funded (together with a successful events programme) by Cardiff University as well as the wider events programme

including live-interpretation, creative writing workshops, nature painting workshops, and poetry readings.

On the transition from Culture Mile learning to Education Strategy Unit funding for special projects, the meeting noted that KH was involved in several projects including the Word on the Street (with LMA as a lead partner) and Poetry vs Colonialism, also Culturally Speaking and Young City Poets, both with a range of cultural partner venues and outputs, including online.

Members also viewed images of KH partnership work with the Hampstead Summer Festival, and noted the volunteer engagement.

Members viewed images of the consented new visitor entrance along with proposals for the new boundary wall.

Members noted that the latter has not yet been submitted for planning and listed building consent because elements of the KH proposal was (unexpectedly) not supported by the conservation officer, and the Committee noted that the support of other entities such as English Heritage and Historic England would be sought ahead of subsequent submissions. A Member noted that some elements which had been removed from the design to meet the conservation officers concerns should be considered for reinstatement, due to the unique character of the site.

RESOLVED, That Members agree to engage Historic England with the process, and that the proposed designs be circulated to key local stakeholders ahead of a further planning proposal to London Borough of Camden backed by support where relevant.

5. **END OF YEAR UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES AT KEATS HOUSE**

The Committee received the report of the Interim Director, Environment alongside the appendix 1 (draft report on activities at Keats House from April 2023 to March 2024).

Members noted the achievements at Keats House in 2023/24 and the way in which they support the priorities, aims and objectives outlined within the Corporate Plan 2018-23 and other key Corporate strategies, the Environment Department's primary and supporting aims and objectives, and the objectives of the Keats House Charity (number 1053381), the City Corporation acting as its sole trustee.

Members noted the upcoming 'Hidden Histories' exhibition.

A Member asked for clarification on the term 'literary meeting place' from the charity's objective, and the meeting heard that the term covered a range of cultural activities designed to engage with a wide range of audiences, including younger people, with an emphasis on literary creativity and cultural learning.)

A Member asked for further information on progress with learning partners. The meeting heard that partnerships are in progress with a number of institutions including Dr Johnson's House, the Museum of the Order of St John, Guildhall Art Gallery & Roman Amphitheatre, and future funded projects include further work on themes around Poetry vs Colonialism and carbon literacy (including the creation of climate-resilient gardens).

A Member commented on the benefits of including audio content of poetry readings accessible via the website.

RESOLVED, That Keats House will contact A New Direction for partnership opportunities, as well as continuing to be responsive to partnership contacts.

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

7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

Members noted that the response from Keats Community Library (KCL) to the option agreed at the most recent meeting of the Culture Heritage & Libraries Committee stated that the consultative process was viewed as flawed, and that KCL did not know how the matter was represented to the Committee in the non-public session. The Committee decision resulted in an above-inflationary increase in charges to KCL following a review of the costs of running and maintaining Ten Keats Grove.

The meeting noted that the evaluation was meticulously carried out and that the cost presented was apportioned in line with KCL use, though KCL disputes the fairness of and rationale behind the cost allocation, noting that KCL is unable to pay the full economic cost of the building and generates visitors to the site.

Noting the extensive and detailed consultation process over a two-year period that has included a range of options, negotiations, term extensions and delays, Members agreed that a prompt resolution is desirable for the benefit of all parties.

Members noted that a proposal from KCL would be forthcoming.

A Member noted that a major development project at a private dwelling opposite KH could be under way that could involve blocking the road for an unknown period of time to excavate a basement and re-build a house, noting that planning permission has not been received and that comments can still be made. Members agreed that consideration would be given to the matter.

Members noted that a maintenance and upkeep programme is under way.

A Member commented that the path to the House is unsafe when wet due to moss, and heard that a jet washer has been purchased. The Member was urged to report all incidents and near misses at the site.

8. **DATE AND LOCATION OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place on 11 October 2024 at Guildhall at 2.30pm, preceded by lunch at Guildhall at 1.30pm.

The meeting ended at 4pm

Chairman

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