

<b>Committee(s):</b> Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee	<b>Date(s):</b> 15/07/2024
<b>Subject:</b> Keats House Activities Plan 2024/25	<b>Public</b>
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse Engaged Communities</li> <li>• Vibrant Thriving Destination</li> <li>• Flourishing Public Spaces</li> <li>• Providing Excellent Services</li> <li>• Leading Sustainable Environment.</li> </ul>
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> Emily Brennan, Natural Environment 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 2024/25, which Members are asked to note and approve.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members approve the Keats House Activities Plan 2024/25.

### Main Report

## **Background**

1. Keats House is a registered charity (number 1053381) with the City Corporation acting as sole trustee. Its object is: 'to preserve and maintain and restore for the education and benefit of the public the land with the buildings known as Keats House as a museum and live memorial to John Keats and as a literary meeting place and centre.'
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 vision, aims and objectives determine the strategic outcomes and objectives for Keats House. The annual Activities Plan showcases our achievements and priorities for the previous and current year. The Activities Plan 2024/25 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 maintain and enhance the premises and provide virtual access to its collections.
4. Despite some of the continued difficulties faced in the aftermath of the pandemic, Keats House's key performance measures are improving year on year, although they have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. Keats House 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.

## **Current Position**

5. The operational team based at Keats House comprises four individuals (2.3 fte), covering the key roles of operations, exhibitions and programming, learning and visitor services. All officers are responsible for opening Keats House to the public, supported by casual staff and a small, dedicated volunteer team. The operational team are managed by the Head of Heritage & Museums and sit within the Culture & Projects Section of the Environment Department's Natural Environment Division.
6. The house is open to the public for 20 hours per week: Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays & Sundays, 11am – 1pm and 2 – 5pm. As well as buildings maintenance and collections care and conservation work, learning sessions and special events can also take place when we are not open to the public but have staff on site.
7. The new admission charges approved by your Committee at its meeting on 18 March 2024 have been implemented, helping Keats House to meet its overall income target of -£114k in 2024/25.

8. The new 'Hidden Histories of Keats House' exhibition opened to the public on Wednesday 15 May and will be on display until March 2025, supported by changing displays and an events programme throughout the year. During 2024/25, we will be developing our plans to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the house to the public in May 2025, which will inform our 2025/26 exhibition and events programme.
9. The ongoing development of our formal learning programme continues to be a major priority. Targets for the current year include: continued delivery of in-person taught sessions and the annual summer school; successful delivery of Education Strategy Unit funded projects (during both 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years), including a partnership project with the Natural Environment Learning Team; and the achievement of a quality award for our learning programme.
10. Building on our 2023/24 academic year projects, Keats House has been awarded funding through the Education Strategy Unit for three major partnership projects from September 2024/25: 'Culturally Speaking', 'Green Changemakers' and 'Change the Record'. Delivering these projects will engage Keats House with new audiences, especially young people, and strengthen our strategic partnerships and breadth of delivery against key outcomes.
11. We continue to provide capacity for, and benefit from, the support of volunteers and work experience placements. Volunteers regularly provide tours of the house for our visitors, undertake weekly collections care routines and deliver monthly poetry readings and ad hoc front of house and event support. During 2024/25, we plan to review and refresh our volunteer scheme to ensure it reflects current best practice and is consistent with other volunteer schemes across the City Corporation, particularly those based at other cultural and heritage sites.
12. During 2024/25, officers are working with an external provider to prepare for the launch of our online collections database, and continuing to review and revise the policies and processes required for a successful Museum Accreditation submission.
13. Keats House is working closely with City Surveyors to identify and schedule a range of actions and projects to maintain, conserve and enhance the Grade 1 listed house and garden and the Grade II listed Ten Keats Grove (library building). Some of these may require closure of the premises to ensure they can be completed safely and efficiently, but these closures and their impact will be minimised and clearly communicated in advance to avoid disruption to our customers. Two projects to upgrade our security systems have been recently completed during a three-day closure from 5-7 June.
14. A new agreement for Keats Community Library to operate from Ten Keats Grove until March 2029 is close to being finalised, according to the terms approved by Members of your Committee at your meeting on 29 January 2024.
15. Following the publication of the new Corporate Plan 2024-29 and the Natural Environment strategic framework, which includes a Learning & Heritage Strategy, Keats House is committed to developing a five-year Management 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 during the course of 2024/25.

## **Proposals**

16. 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 2024/25.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

17. The activities, projects and works outlined in this report directly contribute towards the achievement of five of the six outcomes set out in the City of London Corporate Plan 2024-29, including: Diverse Engaged Communities, Vibrant Thriving Destination, Flourishing Public Spaces, Providing Excellent Services and, particularly through our 'Green Changemakers' project, Leading Sustainable Environment.
18. The activities of Keats House are also designed to contribute to the aims and outcomes of the City Corporation's Education, Skills and Cultural & Creative Learning and Strategies and, increasingly, its Climate Action Strategy.
19. Keats House continues to support the Environment Department's vision to Shape Sustainable Future Environments through its Primary and Supporting Aims and Objectives and contribute to the outcomes identified in the Natural Environment Division's strategic framework.

## **Conclusion**

20. 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.
21. The 'Hidden Histories of Keats House' exhibition and the events programme for 2024/25 is underway, and special partnership and priority projects are being delivered. Successful completion of these will strengthen Keats House's profile and impact across the Corporation and add value to the cultural and visitor offer in London.
22. It is predicted that key performance measures, including the number of visitors and income from admissions, sales and hire of the premises will all return to close to pre-pandemic levels during 2024/25. This will support the achievement of our intended outcomes, including a balanced budget (i.e. £209k net local risk expenditure) for the charity.
23. The achievement of the activities outlined above will support the retention of Full Museum Accreditation 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 2024/25

### **Rob Shakespeare**

Head of Heritage & Museums, Environment Department

T: 020 7332 1818

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