

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Culture, Heritage and Libraries	Dated: 09/12/2024
Subject: Mid-year update report for Keats House 2024/25	Public report: For Information and Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes 	Diverse Engaged Communities Vibrant Thriving Destination Flourishing Public Spaces Providing Excellent Services Leading Sustainable Environment
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Katie Stewart, Executive Director of Environment
Report author:	Rob Shakespeare, Head of Heritage & Museums, Natural Environment.

Summary

This report updates Members on activities at Keats House for the period April – September 2024. This update was seen by Members of the Keats House Consultative Committee at their meeting on 11 October 2024.

During 2024/25, Keats House is working to deliver the objectives identified in its annual Activities Plan, which in turn contribute to the achievement of Corporate and Departmental outcomes and priorities.

This report also provides the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee with assurance that risk management procedures in place for Keats House are satisfactory and meet the requirements of the Corporate Risk Management Framework and the Charities Act 2011.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that:

- a. For Information – Members note the activities at Keats House outlined below.
- b. For Decision – Risk Management: It is recommended that Members confirm, on behalf of the City Corporation as Trustee, that the register appended to this report satisfactorily sets out the key risks to the Keats House charity and that appropriate systems are in place to identify and mitigate risks.

Main Report

Background

1. Keats House is a registered charity (number 1053381) with the City Corporation acting as sole trustee.
2. As a registered charity it is required to submit an annual report and financial statement, detailing its activities and to ensure compliance with the Charities Act 2011. The draft full year report will be prepared and presented for comment and approval to Keats House Consultative Committee and Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee in spring / summer 2025. This paper updates Members on activities at Keats House between April and September 2024 only.
3. Keats House continues to focus on delivering its core services of opening to the public, delivering school sessions, and devising and promoting a year-round exhibition and events programme. The staff based at the house (currently 2.4fte), supported by the Heritage Team (2fte), are also prioritising a number of key initiatives and longer-term projects to enhance physical access to its premises and virtual access to its collections, as identified in its Activities Plan 2024/25 (included at Appendix 1) and outlined below.
4. Through these it aims to rebuild its core services by increasing audience numbers and engagement, supporting a growth in income and increased contribution to a range of Corporate, Departmental and sector outcomes. It continues to work with internal and external partners to deliver creative and engaging programmes which contribute to a range of priorities, including access to culture, creative learning, wellbeing and community cohesion.
5. Keats House continues to reposition itself to better support the objectives of the Environment Department, the City Corporation and wider cultural sector. The development of a five-year business plan and retention of Museum Accreditation are seen as key to underlining the role Keats House plays in the cultural life of London and the nation, and beyond.

Current Position

6. Keats House is open to the public on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, 11am–1pm and 2–5pm.
7. The Hidden Histories of Keats House exhibition, which opened on 15 May 2024, tells the stories of the people who lived at the house after Keats's departure and before it opened to the public. The exhibition bridges the period and themes of our programming during Keats200 with those for the upcoming Keats House 100 celebrations in 2025. The exhibition will run until March next year and provides the overarching theme for our programming in 2024/25.
8. To date, over 4,200 people have visited the house and Hidden Histories of Keats House exhibition in the first six-months of the year. This is similar to the number of visitors in the same period 2023/24 and remains below pre-pandemic levels.
9. From April to September 2024, a total of 17 different public events have been delivered to date, including poetry readings, talks and literary workshops. In recent months, Keats House have initiated a number of special events for young families, including exclusive opening for parents with children under 5 years old. Over 430 people have attended our 2024/25 events programme to date, with the usual high levels of audience satisfaction shown in feedback forms.
10. The annual Keats Foundation conference was hosted in May and the Shelley Conference 2024 in June. These multi-day conferences are attended by delegates from academic institutions around the world, helping promote Keats House and our collections to specialist audiences and researchers. The organisers of the Shelley Conference co-curated a special display of Shelley related items from our collections for the summer programme.
11. Keats House continues to offer a broad range of learning sessions to teachers and students of all ages (particularly KS4 & 5) visiting in formal education, home-schooled and community groups. Our involvement in delivering three special projects, funded by the City Corporation's Education Strategy Unit (ESU) through their Cultural & Creative Learning Fund, has helped broaden our learning offer, partnership working and learning outcomes (see Appendix 2), and our annual Summer School enables students to immerse themselves in creative writing during four days at Keats House.
12. Between April and September 2024, a total of 26 sessions have been delivered to 566 students from 24 different schools. This includes four sessions delivered for Culturally Speaking at Keats House, which engaged over 100 students from high pupil premium schools in a cultural visit and oracy workshop delivered by Speakers Trust. Summer School 2024, on the theme of 'The Outer Limits' engaged a further 36 students from five schools, three of which were high pupil premium schools which had not visited Keats House in the current year. This four-day programme resulted in 133 instances of engagement with the arts, including two days of workshops with published writers.

13. From April 2024, Keats House increased charges for its core learning offer to bring it in line with the Natural Environment Learning Team's charging structure. We are monitoring the impact of this and mitigating any potential negative impact by offering free sessions funded through the Creative & Cultural Learning Fund and School Visits Fund.
14. Ongoing collections research projects are preparing our catalogue records for online access, informing temporary displays and exhibition development for Hidden Histories of Keats House and Keats House 100 in 2025/26. Updating policies and processes to ensure we are ready for our Museum Accreditation submission, now expected in 2025/26, is also a key focus of our non-public work throughout the year.
15. Volunteers help deliver the outcomes of the team through a variety of roles, including visitor tours, poetry readings and collections care. In summer 2024, Keats House supported a Natural Environment student work experience placement and an under-graduate who supported our front of house offer.
16. Keats House was again able to support local community partner events for Hampstead Summer Festival, which benefits two local charities: Keats Community Library and Hampstead School of Art. The annual Art Fair and Family Garden Party in particular see hundreds of people enjoying their local cultural and community offer, with a knock-on impact on the number of people visiting the house seen on those days. Keats House again took part in Open House Festival 2024, with 387 people visiting the house for free on Sunday 15 September.
17. The garden continues to be maintained by a dedicated group of Heath Hands volunteers, with whom a new agreement has been reached for the ongoing care of this much-admired, small green space. Our involvement in 'Green Changemakers' – an ESU funded project to create a more climate resilient garden – along with planned access improvements to the grounds will also help enhance the heritage of the house and its story and maintain this much-loved, tranquil space for our visitors and local people to enjoy long into the future.
18. We are actively working with City Surveyors to schedule reactive, cyclical and planned preventative maintenance projects for both the Grade I listed house and garden and the Grade II listed Ten Keats Grove (library building). Works to improve the security of Keats House were completed in June, with the house closing to the public for three days, and work to improve safety around entrances and exits to Ten Keats Grove has also been undertaken. Further works to improve security and safety within Ten Keats Grove, which will require a short closure of the buildings to the public, have now been scheduled for January 2025.
19. The new, five-year agreement for Keats Community Library (KCL) to continue to operate their local library service from Ten Keats Grove, as approved by Members of the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee on 29 January 2024 has now been finalised for the period until 31 March 2029.

20. As a condition of the premises licence for 10 Keats Grove, Keats House Consultative Committee receive a twice-yearly report of licensable events held at the House, to ensure that the operating schedule and conditions are being upheld. To report that no activities involving the sale of alcohol have taken place to date in 2024/25 under the terms of Keats House's premises licence. Hampstead Summer Festival events which involved the sale of alcohol and other licensable activities were covered by TENS obtained by the organisers. Complimentary alcoholic drinks were served at three of the Keats House events referred to above and, at no cost to Keats House charity, at the Keats Foundation and Shelley Conferences, which also made use of the garden in the early evening. One Keats House events which included live music took place in the Nightingale Room within the conditions of the licence. Although these did not involve the sale of alcohol they are reported here for completeness. The Premises Licence for 10 Keats Grove was recently renewed until September 2025 at a cost of £180.00.

Risk Management

21. The Charity Commission requires Trustees to confirm in a charity's annual report that any major risks to which the charity is exposed have been identified and reviewed and that systems are established to mitigate those risks. Your Committee is presented with the Keats House Risk Register every six months. This reporting frequency aligns with the City of London's Risk Management Strategy and the requirements of the Charity Commission.

22. The Executive Director assures your Committee that all risks held by the Keats House charity, which is part of the Natural Environment Division of the Environment Department, continue to be managed in compliance with the Corporate Risk Management Framework and the Charities Act 2011.

23. All risks are regularly reviewed by the Head of Heritage and Museums, with the updates recorded in the corporate risk management information system. Risks are assessed on a likelihood-impact basis, and the resultant score is associated with a traffic light colour. For reference, the City of London's Risk Matrix is provided at Appendix 3.

24. The Keats House Risk Register contains no RED risks, three AMBER and three GREEN risks which are owned and managed by the Head of Heritage and Museums. For each risk, appropriate mitigating actions are being undertaken, as shown in the detailed register at Appendix 4.

Proposals

25. Members are asked to note the achievements of Keats House between April and September 2024 and approve the risk register at Appendix 4.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – The activities, projects and works outlined in this report contribute towards the achievement of Corporate Plan 2024–29 outcomes as shown in Keats House Activities Plan, 2024/25 (Appendix 1).

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 Natural Environment Division’s strategic framework.

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, which are currently being reviewed and revised.

Financial implications – None

Resource implications – None

Legal implications – None

Risk implications - Effective management of risk is at the heart of the City Corporation's approach to delivering cost effective and valued services to the public as well as being an important element within the corporate governance of the organisation.

The risk management processes in place in the Environment Department support the delivery of the Corporate Plan, our Departmental and Divisional Business Plans and relevant Corporate Strategies, such as the Climate Action; Cultural; Sport and Physical Activity; and Volunteering Strategies. Risks are also being considered as part of the Natural Environment Divisions’ strategies.

Risks which could have a serious impact on the achievement of business and strategic objectives are proactively identified, assessed and managed in order to minimise their likelihood and/or impact.

Equalities implications – None

Equality Impact Assessment – None

Climate implications – None

Security implications – None

Conclusion

Keats House is open to the public and has delivered its major exhibition for 2024/25. It continues to devise, develop and deliver a programme of public events, formal learning sessions, special projects, and volunteer opportunities which provide for life-long learning and engagement with arts and culture.

Once developed and approved, the five-year Business Plan and other policies required for Museum Accreditation will allow for a sustainable future for the charity, particularly in the lead up to the 100th anniversary of the house opening to the public, which we will celebrate in May 2025 and is a major opportunity to engage with our current and potential audiences.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 –Keats House Activities Plan, 2024/25
- Appendix 2 – Culturally Speaking Impact Report 2023/24
- Appendix 3 – City of London’s Risk Matrix
- Appendix 4 – Keats House Risk Register, updated November 2024

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