

KEATS HOUSE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Friday, 2 May 2025

Minutes of the meeting of the Keats House Consultative Committee held at Committee Room 1 - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Friday, 2 May 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present

Members:

Wendy Mead OBE
Stephen Ainger

Steven Bobasch
Alexandra Lavery

In Attendance

Officers:

Rob Shakespeare	- Environment
Jayne Moore	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Munsur Ali who was unable to attend in person but observed some of the meeting online.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED, That the minutes of the meeting of 11 October 2024 be approved as an accurate record of the proceedings.

4. ACHIEVEMENTS AT KEATS HOUSE 2024/25, INCLUDING RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Committee noted the report of the Executive Director Environment updating Members of the Keats House Consultative Committee on achievements at Keats House for the period April 2024 – March 2025 and viewed a presentation on current activities and plans.

The Committee also reviewed the 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 (as set out in the appended risk register) and recommended its approval to the Culture Heritage and Libraries Committee.

On this risk: 'ENV-NE-KH 003 Insufficient maintenance' a Member commented that there appeared to be no sign of significant maintenance initiatives to arrest

any deterioration of the house's fabric notwithstanding repeated consideration of the matter, noting also the security and fire safety improvements completed in early 2025. The meeting also noted that a conservation architect has been appointed by the Corporation and that both buildings have been comprehensively assessed with detailed recommendations submitted, some of which have now been scheduled by the Corporation's City Surveyors with more urgent works (ivy ingress, and roof) top of the list and remedial action expected to take place during 2025 as soon as the costs are obtained and the funds released.

In response to questions on the timeline on costings information provision and the timing of the urgent works, the meeting heard that the costs are expected to be received and a schedule of works drawn up within the next few months, noting that the budget is already earmarked.

A Member asked whether the Keats-Shelley Association of America and/or the UK-based Keats-Shelley Memorial Association were involved in conversations about the house's upkeep. The meeting heard that these organisations were not directly involved in those conversations and that the 100th anniversary celebrations are expected to generate fundraising opportunities and seek out a high-profile champion.

On this risk: 'ENV-NE-KH 006 Delivery of priority projects' a Member commented that a vacant post remains unfilled, impacting on opening hours particularly given that the house does not open on Saturdays (noting also the expected resolution date of that risk of September 2025). The meeting heard that a recruitment process is expected to begin shortly. Some Members commented that it was likely to be beneficial to open the house on Saturdays, noting also that the weekday openings are busy with school visits and tour groups which generate significant income.

A Member asked for more information on what research has been done on the original colour of the house's exterior, suggesting that the current outside colour should match its original colour. The meeting heard that in 2009, when the house was under the care of the then London Metropolitan Archives, research was undertaken on the original colours and interior decoration that is documented. Some 19th century paintings of the house indicate that the outside was a sandy colour. Members noted that a major reinterpretation of the house is expected from 2028. A Member asked for clarification on whether any reinterpretation would focus on presenting the house as Keats lived in it. The meeting heard that any consultation would determine its interpretation, noting also that the charity's formation and the story of the museum is a significant story in its own right. The Committee also noted the community value of Keats House that is less easily measured in statistics, including the visits of schoolchildren to the Keats Community Library and income generation to nearby businesses.

On museum accreditation, a Member asked for further information on the progress of the accreditation renewal application and its implications. The meeting noted that Arts Council England is inviting accredited museums to re-

apply in tranches, noting that Keats House was last accredited in 2018 for a five-year period. Taking into account the pandemic's impact on the process, Members heard that Keats House is hoping to be invited in June 2025 to submit for re-accreditation by January 2026.

A Member asked about catering provision, commenting that it might generate additional footfall. The meeting noted that catering provision has been considered in the past, and that a large number of high-quality catering outlets exist nearby.

Members noted the progress in the learning and education programme, particularly around schools, and the role of the City of London Corporation's Education Strategy Unit grants in that, especially the Culturally Speaking and Green Changemakers projects.

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

There were no questions.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

Two matters were raised:

1. The notice board on the fence should be replaced as it is not fit for purpose, and is unusable in the winter season due to condensation.

2. The cleaner's hours merit re-examination as the cleaning disrupts the library's operation, and the cleaner does not appear to have suitable equipment.

The meeting heard that the cleaner is contracted to work 9am-midday on four days / week, and that regular audits take place with the cleaning contract manager, when these points can be raised.

7. DATE AND LOCATION OF THE NEXT MEETING

Upcoming meetings during 2025 and 2026 are as follows:

31 October 2025 at 2pm at Keats House

30 April 2026 at 2pm at Keats House

30 October 2026 at 2pm at Guildhall

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm

Chairman

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