

KEATS HOUSE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 5 February 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Keats House Consultative Committee held at Committee Room - 2ND Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Tuesday, 5 February 2013 at 1.45pm

Present

Members:

John Scott (Chairman)	Martin Humphery
Vivienne Littlechild (Deputy Chairman)	Marian Jolowicz
Deputy Dennis Cotgrove	Susan Kirby
Nigel Steward	

In Attendance

Steven Bobasch	Chief Executive, Keats Community Library
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Officers:

Matthew Pitt	- Town Clerk's Department
Ken Page	- Culture, Heritage and Libraries Department
Geoff Pick	- Culture, Heritage and Libraries Department
David Wight	- Culture, Heritage & Libraries Department

The Chairman welcomed the Chief Executive of Keats Community Library, the Visitor Development and Services Director at the City Corporation and the Interpretation Officer from the Culture, Heritage and Libraries department.

He also gave thanks to the outgoing Head of Public Engagement who had been recently promoted and would no longer be working directly on Keats House Matters.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Diana Gore, Dr Hillas Smith and Deputy Michael Welbank.

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September were approved.

Matters Arising:

John Keats Rose

The Director of Culture, Heritage and Libraries advised that his team would continue to explore the viability and availability of the rose with colleagues in the Open Spaces Department.

Merchandise

The Director advised that the merchandise stock had been reviewed and added that the new curator would continue to look at how the merchandise stock could be improved going forward.

National Trust Guide Listing

The Director advised that Keats House featured in the new National Trust guide.

In response to a Member's comment, the Director requested to see any relevant maps/guides that could be displayed at 10 Keats Grove.

Wedding Licences

The Director advised that this would be pursued by the new curator and added that she had good experience in bringing weddings and civil partnerships to similar sites through her work with the William Morris Gallery.

Mick Scott

The Director reported that Mr Scott had been most appreciative of the Committee's thanks for his work with Keats House.

Composition

The Director reported that a review of the Consultative Committee's composition would take place at the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee in the coming months following the dissolution of the Friends of Keats House and the Friends of Heath Library.

4. KEATS HOUSE EVENTS, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report of the Director of Culture, Heritage and Libraries summarising progress made on Objective 1 of the Keats House Business Plan 2012-13.

The Director advised that the Keats Festival would be launched on 23 May 2013 and that events would be listed on the Keats House section of the City of London website.

He further advised that like many London attractions, the House had suffered a dip in visitor numbers during the Olympic Games but added that overall visitor numbers were performing well.

The Director informed the Committee of an upcoming special event that would be held on Valentine's Day and stressed the importance that such events had in building upon the existing visitor base.

In response to a Member's question on educational outreach, the Director advised that the figures in the report on school visits did not include children who had visited the House on personal visits or family visits.

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5. 10 KEATS GROVE

The Committee received a report of the Director of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries updating Members on progress made on delivering Objective 2 of the Keats House Business Plan 2012-13.

The Director informed the Committee that managing 10 Keats Grove directly had meant the City Corporation had needed to address inherited problems with the on-site heating provision. He noted the particular problems experienced by the Keats Community Library. The Director also added that the City Corporation would continue to work with partners in developing ways to promote 10 Keats Grove for external use and Keats House events.

The Chief Executive of Keats Community Library added that the new venture was a learning experience for all and reported that the library was growing all the time with 40 new members having signed up within the previous month.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Culture, Heritage and Libraries responded that when the City Corporation took over running the property directly, one of the key aims was to ensure that it would cover its running costs. He assured Members that whilst the licence for the library was initially issued for 2 years, the City Corporation would look positively at a request for a renewal.

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6. KEATS FOUNDATION

The Committee received a report of the Director of Culture, Heritage and Libraries summarising progress made on delivery of Objective 3 of the Keats House Business Plan 2012-13.

The Director formally thanked the Friends of Keats House for their donation of £1000 for a commemorative bench for Jean Haynes, a former Member of the Committee and Chairman of the Friends of Keats House.

The Director advised that there has been a new sense of impetus to events for the New Year and stressed the aim was to increase the number of supporters and He reported that the annual Garden Party would return, with future plans including a Keats Conference. He added that the Keats Conference would be the first of its kind in the world and that it was hoped the event would generate some income for the House.

The Chairman informed Members that the Lord Mayor had expressed an interest in visiting the House and it was suggested that he could be invited to the annual garden party.

In response to a Member's question, the Director advised that the commemorative bench would be in place by the summer and whilst plaques were not permitted, a proper record of who donated the bench and its purpose would be kept.

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7. KEATS HOUSE BUSINESS PLAN 2013-14

The Committee received a report of the Director of Culture, Heritage and Libraries summarising the Keats House Business Plan for 2013-14.

The Director reported that Dr Vicky Carroll who had previously worked at the William Morris Gallery, the Science Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum had been appointed as the new curator of Keats House and 10 Keats Grove.

The Director advised that the Culture, Heritage and Libraries departmental business plan included one objective for Keats House which involved developing the educational offering and working in partnership with others to enhance the appeal of the House to the community.

He added that the target of 320,000 aggregate uses for the website gave the Keats House team a clear idea of what could be achieved and he expected that the Visitor Development and Services Director would bring good experience in adding value to the House.

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8. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

In response to a question on the governance of the Keats Foundation, the Committee were advised that as supporters of the Foundation grew, trustees would be appointed from their number. The Committee were also advised that because the Foundation was a registered Charity and not a company, the trustees of the Keats Foundation were liable.

In response to a question relating to City support for the Foundation, the Committee were advised that the City's financial support ran until April 2014 and that this would be reviewed at the end of the next financial year by the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee.

In response to a Member's question on signage for the Keats Community Library, the Director advised that he would progress the matter with colleagues.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

Fragment of Keats Manuscript for Sale

The Director advised the Committee of the upcoming auction of a fragment of hand written manuscript that formed a part of Keats's poem 'I stood tip-toe

upon a little hill'. He added that whilst a valuable item, the piece had no direct connection to the House, there was currently little prospect of reuniting the other fragments and for that reason the City would not bid for the item.

The Director further advised that his department would maintain a watchful eye on the auction catalogues for further Keats related items, particularly those that were related to his time spent at the House.

10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 17 September 2013 at Keats House.

The meeting ended at 2.28pm

Chairman

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