
Report of Chief Officer Culture and Sport

Report to Director of City Development

Date: September 2015

Subject: Deputation to Council by RadhaRaman Society

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. The RadhaRaman Society was given permission for a deputation to Full Council on 16 September 2015. The RadhaRaman Festival is a festival of Bengali secular folk music and folk dance taking place in Leeds. The deputation highlighted the work of the society including its cultural activities and how this contributes the prevention of radicalisation.
2. The Council has previously supported the artistic work of the organisation through Leeds Inspired grants and continues to be grateful for its commitment to the city and its diverse cultures, and the difference it is helping to make in our communities.

Recommendations

3. The Director of City Development is recommended to note the content of this report and to ensure that appropriate levels of support continue to be offered to assist the Society as appropriate.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To note the deputation of the RadhaRaman Society at Full Council and, following the conclusion of that meeting, to enact any appropriate response on behalf of the Council.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The RadhaRaman Society will be 5 years old in December 2015 and will be celebrating this achievement through cultural activities. Starting in Harehills the group continues to develop and has achieved excellent press coverage for its events and attracted audiences from as far afield as London, Birmingham and Manchester. The society has been proactive in including both male and female performers and participants in its work.
- 2.2 The society has a significant difference to understanding between cultures in Leeds, for instance by collaborating with Irish and Ukrainian groups.
- 2.3 The society also has a commitment to combatting radicalisation through its work.
- 2.4 The Society has already benefitted from two grants to support its work from the Leeds Inspired grants programme. In 2013 it celebrated its third year with an all day festival held at the Bangladesh Centre in Leeds. Leeds Inspired supported the festival with a £1,000 grant. Renowned singers from all over the UK including Himangsu Goswami, Gouri Chowdhury, Amir Muhammed, Ripa Raquib, Anuradha Nandi, Tarique Hossain, Syeda Nasim, Amith Dey sang from RadhaRaman's beautiful compositions and Dhamail - a traditional dance linked to RadhaRaman's lyrics - was performed by groups of Dhamail Dancers from Bradford and Birmingham. Experimental theatre director Dr. Mukid Choudhury delivered the key-note speech on RadhaRaman and his philosophy in relation to post-modern discourse.
- 2.5 RadhaRaman was also given a grant of £1,000 in 2014 for a two day festival of traditional Bengali folk music held at the Bangladeshi Community Centre in Leeds on 6-7 September 2014. The 2014 event hosted a series of live open-air performances with Dhamali dancers ~ a traditional artform that engages Bengali women of different ages. Groups of female dancers from the Harehills, Chapeltown and Burmantofts area participated in the main performances during the festival. Twenty of the UK's leading Bengali singers and instrumentalists (many of them from the Harehills area) performed at this popular celebration of Bengali culture and heritage. RadhaRaman is a celebration of the music of RadhaRaman Dutta, an influential Bangladeshi folk composer. Himangsu Goswami, one of the most acclaimed Bengali musicians who worked with George Harrison and Ravi Shankar, was included in the line-up. The festival also featured a series of leading Bengali cultural figures including Anwar Choudhury, one of the first British Ambassadors from ethnic minority backgrounds to be appointed to the role. Leeds Inspired funding went towards the inclusion of the dance element of the day, and general marketing.
- 2.6 The RadhaRaman Society are also a partner in a successful Leeds Inspired grant application from Saudha and they work together to produce a showcase event

that will take place in the next month or so (I'm pretty sure that this is the event referred to in the latter half of the speech). Jane (Earnshaw) will be able to provide details of our involvement in this when she's in the office next week.

- 2.7 RadhaRaman has links with another organisation called Saudha in terms of working together on events and they share some common personnel. They are working together on a poetry and music festival at the Bangladeshi Centre in September 2015 and this is being supported with a Leeds inspired small grant of £1000.
- 2.8 Leeds Inspired grants are one off project funding and not annual funding and so there is no guarantee that any annual festival will receive funding year after year.
- 2.9 Furthermore, the Arts Development Manager met with the society for general advice. The Chief Officer Culture and Sport has also spoken on behalf of the Council at a performance by the Saudha.
- 2.10 Ahmed Kaysher, who gave the deputation at Full Council, is also a library assistant at Oakwood Library, an excellent example of the commitment Leeds City Council staff often have to the communities in which they work.
- 2.11 With regard to the Societies commitment to combatting radicalisation, Leeds City Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure we give due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism through the Prevent Duty. Our work on Prevent continues to evolve and is firmly embedded within our approach to safeguarding. This includes engaging with both statutory and community partners to ensure that individuals that are vulnerable to becoming involved in extremist or terrorist related activity are supported away from such activities. Our work involves tackling all forms of extremist activity in line with the national Prevent strategy, and we have worked with communities to tackle issues that cause tensions within communities. Although there has been no direct engagement from the Prevent Team with the society, the significance of cultural activity is widely recognised as a positive influence in this regard.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 There are no significant issues arising from this matter.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The report is a response to a deputation by the Society to Full Council and as such this is the limit of any consultation.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Equality and cohesion impacts are referred to in the main body of the report. Leeds Inspired grants are subject to a full equalities impact assessment.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 The work of the society makes a contribution to overall Council plans and ambitions in relation to community cohesion, and our bid to be European Capital of Culture in 2023.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The society has received two Leeds Inspired grants totalling £2,000. The overall value of the Societies work far exceeds this amount and the grants can therefore be considered to be exceptional value for money.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 The report is not subject to call in and no legal issues arise.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 None.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The RadhaRaman Society makes a positive contribution to Leeds and its people.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Director of City Development is recommended to note the content of this report and to ensure that appropriate levels of support continue to be offered to assist the Society as appropriate.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.