

ISHA FOUNDATION – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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| Executive Summary |
| <p>An application for revenue funding has been received from the Isha Foundation, an organisation that spans Europe, providing yoga and meditation programmes. The London based branch of the Foundation has applied for funding to cover the costs of providing 24 free sessions of yoga in the Borough to promote the health and wellbeing of residents. The applicant estimates that around 1,000 individuals will benefit from the programme.</p> <p>It is not considered that the application has provided sufficient justification for the need for such a programme in the Borough nor any need for the Foundation, which anticipates a surplus of over £250,000 this year, to receive funding. In view of this, it is recommended that the application is not supported and that no funding is awarded.</p> |

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| Recommendations | |
| The Executive is requested to: | RESOLVE That no grant be awarded. |
| Reason for Decision | It is not considered that the application presents sufficient justification for the Council to provide funding for the proposed programme. |

The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendation.

Background Papers:

2020/21 Application Form.

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| 1.0 Summary of Application | |
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| 1.1 Status and Aims | <p>The Isha Foundation was established in 1992 with the aim of spreading tools of transformation for inner well being in the south of India. The UK arm began its operations in 2006, and was incorporated in 2013.</p> <p>The Isha Foundation is a volunteer-based, non-profit organisation aiming to contribute to global harmony through yoga. Isha's yoga and meditation programmes and social outreach projects are provided worldwide. Isha distils the ancient science of yoga into practical systems to achieve physical, mental and emotional wellbeing for individuals.</p> <p>The primary objective of the charitable company is to advance the education of the public in the art and practise of yoga and meditation, in particular but not exclusively in Kriya Yoga, Pranayama (breathing practises) and Hatha Yoga.</p> <p>The Charity aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Offer holistic tools for individual growth and wellbeing, through Yoga. ○ Promote social and environmental wellbeing by raising human consciousness and awareness. ○ Contribute to the harmony and progress of the wider community. |
| 1.2 Employees | <p>13, comprising the Manager of the Isha Yoga Centre London, Hatha Yoga Programmes Coordinator (HYPC), Administrative Assistant, Isha Shoppe Manager, Sales Assistant, Accountant, and a Receptionist.</p> <p>The applicant has advised that these are provisional job titles which are currently being reviewed with the support of a legal consultancy. The applicant has also advised that the working hours are in line with working time regulation and on average an employee works 40 hours a week.</p> |
| 1.3 Volunteers | <p>The applicant has advised that Isha Foundation's volunteers are the pillars of its activities, with over 9 million supporting the Foundation worldwide. The Foundation sees volunteering as a powerful tool for inner growth and an opportunity to create a culture of care, ensuring a quality in delivery.</p> <p>In the UK, the Foundation's activities are almost entirely supported by a team of volunteers. Their support includes programme registration, setting up programme spaces, assisting teachers during programmes, social media support, event coordination, preparing and serving meals to participants, maintaining financial and other records and all follow up procedures. The UK volunteer team is currently around 1,500 individuals.</p> |
| 1.4 Clients/Users | <p>60,000, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30,000 male 30,000 female 100 disabled |

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| | <p>60,000 ethnic minority 200 resident in Woking 0 aged 0-5 100 aged 6-10 500 aged 11-18 Majority aged 19-65 12,000 aged 65+</p> <p>The Foundation seeks to spread Isha's tools for wellbeing to as many people as possible, and has rolled out over 2,000 free 'Yoga and Wellbeing Workshops' in the last 18 months. The Foundation also offers paid programmes for those who wish to go deeper into learning yoga. The fees of paid programmes vary according to the type of programme and the number of hours required to teach.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|--------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|----|------|-----|------|----|-----|------|-----|------|----|-----|------|-----|------|----|-----|------|-----|------|----|
| 1.5 Members | None. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.6 Sum Requested | £10,200 (Revenue) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.7 Project | <p>The Foundation has applied for funding to establish a system in the Woking community, whereby individuals have access to the benefits of Isha Yoga. The tools offered in our programmes promote physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing. The applicant has advised that, easy to practice and with no prior experience of Yoga necessary, Isha Yoga is ideal for those looking for a holistic answer to health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The funding would allow the Foundation to expand its reach of free and subsidised yoga and wellbeing workshops into the Woking area; providing greater opportunities for personal growth. This will be actioned by offering 24 sessions targeting 40 community members per session; thereby intending to reach around 1,000 Woking residents.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.8 Cost breakdown: | <p>Tentative cost structure :</p> <p>No of sessions per year = 24</p> <p>Each Session is of 1 hour duration; Resources involved - 1 Teacher, 2 Volunteers</p> <p>Labour costs: Teacher Costs = £65/hour Volunteer costs = nil</p> <p>Logistic Costs: Transport Cost = 25*3 = £75/session (for 3 people) Hall Booking Cost = £35/hour</p> <p>Admin Cost =£50/session</p> <p>Promotion Costs = £200/session (details below)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Budget</th> <th>Cost/Click</th> <th>Clicks</th> <th>Conversion Rate</th> <th>Registrations/Session</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>50</td> <td>0.24</td> <td>208</td> <td>0.05</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>100</td> <td>0.24</td> <td>416</td> <td>0.05</td> <td>21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>150</td> <td>0.24</td> <td>625</td> <td>0.05</td> <td>31</td> </tr> <tr> <td>200</td> <td>0.24</td> <td>833</td> <td>0.05</td> <td>40</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Budget | Cost/Click | Clicks | Conversion Rate | Registrations/Session | 50 | 0.24 | 208 | 0.05 | 10 | 100 | 0.24 | 416 | 0.05 | 21 | 150 | 0.24 | 625 | 0.05 | 31 | 200 | 0.24 | 833 | 0.05 | 40 |
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| 200 | 0.24 | 833 | 0.05 | 40 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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| | <p>Each one hour yoga session would therefore cost £425.</p> <p>Total Cost = £10,200</p> |
| 1.9 Community Benefit | <p>The applicant estimates that around 1000 people in a year will benefit by learning tools to reduce stress, alleviate anxiety and depression, improve focus, memory and concentration, and overall vitality and vigour. The work will lead to a positive impact on community life and raise awareness on pressing social and environmental issues.</p> |

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| 2.0 Financial Background | |
| 2.1 Budget | <p>At the time of the application, the Group held £700,000 in the bank.</p> <p>The applicant has advised that the Foundation runs around 50 paid programmes per month across UK and Europe.</p> <p>Reserves are held to fund the Charity's future growth plans and to ensure that the programmes would run for a minimum of six months without any financial challenges. The Foundation runs one or two large scale programmes a year for thousands of attendees. The reserve serves as the basis for the Foundation to be able to organise and deliver those programmes.</p> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for the current year to 31 May 2020 which shows an anticipated income of £2,338,000 against an anticipated expenditure of £2,073,250, resulting in an anticipated surplus of £264,750.</p> <p>Anticipated income includes inner engineering programmes (£594,000), Hatha programmes (£360,000), Advance Programmes (£504,000), Shoppe income (£220,000), IEO income (£250,000), IYC operations (£360,000) and donations (£50,000). Items of expenditure include promotions (£85,000), salaries (£680,000), Isha Yoga Centre London costs (£240,000), London Centre's programme support costs (£30,000), IET, Hatha and Advance Programme support costs (£779,250), Shoppe purchases (£120,000), online streaming costs (£15,000), website (£24,000), insurance (£20,000) and other costs (£60,000).</p> <p>*The Shoppe is an online shop through which a variety of products can be purchased, including books, cd's, fitness clothing, jewellery, and utensils.</p> |
| 2.2 Accounts | <p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2017/18 (the applicant has advised that the accounts for 2018/19 are not yet available) which show an income of £1,417,624 (£1,328,538 in 2016/17) against expenditure of £1,160,693 (£1,012,291 in 2016/17), resulting in a surplus of £256,931 (a surplus of £316,247 in 2016/17). The sum of £964,088 was carried forward at the end of the 2017/18 year.</p> |
| 2.3 Support over the past five years | <p>New application.</p> |

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| 3.0 Assessment of Application | | |
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| 3.1 Key Information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Constitution ○ Registered Charity ○ VAT Registered ○ Equal Opportunities Policy ○ Safeguarding Policy ○ Reserves Policy ○ Quality Mark ○ Other funding sources pursued ○ Other support by the Council ○ Fundraising ○ Two quotes ○ Regular monitoring provided previously | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes Yes No Yes Yes Yes No No No No N/A N/A |
| 3.2 Consultee Comments | <p><u>Jade Buckingham, Health and Wellbeing Manager</u></p> <p>I recommend that we do not support this grant. We already support several Yoga initiatives across the borough all of which that are well attended and the instructors work closely with WBC on several of the sessions. session costs are also much lower than predicted in this application. I also disagree with the suggestion of having 40 people attend each class as this would require very large premises and such a large class would lose the community feel which so many of our residence like/want from attending similar sessions.</p> | |
| 3.3 Assessment | <p>Isha Foundation is a volunteer-based, non-profit organisation founded by Sadhguru (Sadhguru is a yogi), to create an inclusive culture towards global harmony and progress. The Foundation provides yoga programmes across Europe and has a base in London.</p> <p>The Foundation has applied for funding of £10,200 to cover the costs of 24 yoga sessions in Woking. The application is based on a cost of £425 for each 1 hour session. An estimated 1,000 residents will benefit from the project which will provide them with a free yoga session. If the application is not successful, the Foundation has advised that it would be necessary to subsidise the programme with a small fee. The Isha Foundation is a charity organisation, and its funding source is primarily programme fees and donations given by the people who have benefited from the programmes offered. The Foundation has not applied elsewhere for grant funding and does not undertake any fundraising activities.</p> <p>The applicant has indicated that the work of the Foundation supports the Council's aims and objectives around personal health and wellbeing. The applicant states that the Foundation intends to engage with local organisations and businesses to offer the science of yoga to individuals from all corners of the community. Moving forwards, the Foundation would look to offer subsidised yoga sessions in the following year, reducing the support from Woking Borough Council. This would be possible by building on the Foundation's relationship with the Woking community established through the free session</p> | |

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period. The subsidised costs would be designed with the view of minimising the cost per session for participants.

To-date, the Foundation has been working with volunteers from the Surrey Hindu Cultural Association to offer free Yoga courses in the community centres and in Woking Town Centre.

Yoga classes are available across the Borough, including through the Leisure Centre and, whilst charges apply, it is not considered that these are such that residents are excluded from the opportunity of participating. The costs quoted by the Foundation for the classes are high and the Foundation itself is in a very healthy financial position, anticipating a surplus of £264,750 this year, adding to its reserves of just under £1m.

The applicant has explained that, whilst the Foundation's balance sheet reflects a healthy position, this should be viewed in light of future commitments and expansion plans of the Foundation across Europe. A substantial level of reserves is considered to be a prerequisite, to ensure that the current programmes and free sessions can run for a minimum of six months without any financial challenges. Moreover, the Foundation runs one or two large scale programmes per year; attracting several thousand attendees. The reserve funds serve as an essential basis to organise and deliver these large-scale events.

However, the finances of this Europe-wide organisation are such that it is not considered that the application demonstrates a sufficient need for the funding. Furthermore, the application does not demonstrate a clear need for the yoga sessions in the Borough. In view of this, it is recommended that the application is not supported.

REPORT ENDS