SGTCF Chair’s Report 2016

* I can’t imagine that when David Smith (then CEO of Epsom & Ewell BC) linked up with Hilda Brazil, Ann Wilson & others to form Surrey Gypsy Traveller Communities Relations Forum that anyone would have thought it would still be around 20 years later...yet here we are, wow (there is a cake!) Despite some turbulence along the way, Hilda & Ann are still here holding key positions on the management committee, and, had David not suffered serious ill health in 2007, I feel sure he would still be here too.
* For the past 8 years I have thoroughly enjoyed the role of joint chair but recognise that the time is now right for a change to bring new ideas and impetus at a particularly exciting time, there will be much more about this later from Mark Haythorne
* Despite austerity, the Forum continues to thrive and the treasurers report will reflect that we are in our healthiest position for many a year...funding from projects and training are providing not just a sustainable income, but real opportunities to develop employment opportunities and achieve our long term goal of providing a real voice for the community
* The management committee has some dynamic, bright young people and this will be key to delivering the much needed work to get justice for a community that continues even today to be subject to quite blatant racism & discrimination
* **Highlights** the past year (and there have been many) include:

An invitation from the Effingham Residents Association to deliver GRT TRG to the public – over 50 people attended and unusually it resulted in a positive story in the papers, particularly the Surrey Advertiser

Hilda Brazil representing the interests of GRT communities in Surrey regarding lack of sufficient accommodation at a high level video recorded meeting with Councillors in Guildford last month – truly inspiring

Premiere of the award winning film “People Uncounted” with powerful accounts from Roma victims of the Holocaust. The Forum felt so strongly about showing this as widely as possible, we paid for the public performing rights and hired the excellent Leatherhead Theatre to show it. Other showings will continue throughout the year across the County.

Surrey County Council has appointed a Councillor to champion the Brighter Futures Project (who is it?)

Training has become so sort after by agencies prepared to pay for our services, that we are actively increasing our team of presenters

Fantastic work by Mark, Genty, Hilda & Ann have strengthened our partnerships with National & London GRT organisations

Late last year our revamped website went live [www.sgtcf.uk](http://www.sgtcf.uk) it is stuffed with information and all future meeting minutes will be uploaded to it

We are working with new Health commissions to help them develop better access, support and understanding of GRT Communities (for example, 50 CAMHS staff were recently provided training), we also have a leads for education, health & domestic abuse increasing important network opportunities

GRT Voice based around social media has been a revelation more about that later

The Forum has been confirmed by the Peoples Health Trust as the receiver of a £50K grant to establish small groups within GRT communities to increase peoples access to a wide range of activities & information creating a greater community cohesion & a stronger voice within Surrey – (this is a massive opportunity, more later)

What else...Oh yes, An advice line for GRT in Surrey called GRATIS (Gypsy Roma And Traveller Information Surrey), new e-learning training (on line), GRT input added to Equality & Diversity training, plus a banner pen – much more later...

* **So, as I step down as joint Chair, I remain fully committed to the Forum and hope to be able to continue to contribute to this wonderful group as we seek to be a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.**

***Finally, I want to extend my very grateful thanks to all those on the management committee who have continued to support the forum at a time when family pressures have probably never been greater and to the rest of you here for supporting us – you all deserve a big round of applause...***

**Now to business...**