**Surrey Gypsy Traveller Communities Forum**

**Minutes of a committee meeting**

**held by Zoom, 23rd February 2023**

**1. Welcome from John Hockley (host)**

Present: John Hockley, Lisa Gavin(later), Lalage Grundy, Jack Ayres, Dee Cooper, Jean Howey, Jeremy Harte, Andy Hill

Apologies: Nikki Parkhill, Chris Raymer, Cheryl Wood

**2. Minutes**

Action points from the Forum meeting of 19th January were agreed. Matters arising were covered by the updates sent out with the agenda.

**3. Media Strategy**

Following the school incident at Ashford, Lisa and Lalage had given a statement to a journalist generally deploring racial violence. The journalist wanted to run pieces on issues such as the problems of coming off the road and the lack of plots. He wanted contributions from the community. He was at least at a more senior level and his copy wasn’t likely to get edited by someone else. Lalage had contacted Media That Moves who were supportive.

Lisa said that Genty had been involved helping the girl’s mother and said there was trouble with copycat crime happening at other schools in Kent. Lisa went to the Child Protection Conference, where Alison Hulmes spoke from the Gypsy Social Workers network. It was unanimous that the family were at risk if they came back to Stanwell. Negative media coverage meant that they will be moving.

Lalage had been approached by a more senior journalist, and didn’t dismiss the idea of working with him the future, but we felt now was not the time. We could meet with him in the future to find out more about him and what sort of stories he would like to work on with us. It would be useful to put out some positive stories in the future – general articles like the gardening competition or Romany Day. Jack suggested that Lalage should contact him again to arrange a meeting which some of committee members could attend.

Lalage and Dee had attended training with Media that Moves training and had been learning ways to work with the media in a more positive and balanced light.

Jean said that in her experience of dealing with social media, it just wasn’t possible to follow up stories like Ashford with a positive balance. Instead, we should concentrate on the nice things.

Lalage felt that this journalist had slightly more weight. The next Media That Moves was celebrating History Month. Could we put an article out to people in advance of Romany Day? Dee and Jack thought it better to contact him after the day, so we could share the positive story that Romany Day brought and the engagement and working together with other communities.

Dee suggested we invite the journalist to a meeting. If he was from London – did he know about this Sutton site that was being extended, that was controversial, and wanted to know more? We needed to know more about his intentions.

Dee said it was possible to work with some journalists for positive media. Whilst doing GRT work at Merton she had contacts with Clive Burdett who delivered positive reports with integrity – Ambition, funerals, everything. Lalage agreed to send the journalist a holding message and invite him to a meeting.

**4. Learning and Training**

This was held over till the next meeting as it needed Nikki’s input.

**5. Oak Project**

Jean and Lalage went to a meeting with Barry Winchester from Friends Families and Travellers. This was a big project, but we were one of the groups they’d like to work with (Kushti Bok was another). It was a big commitment.

Dee said she’d help, and Lalage would get back to Barry and say so.

**6. Transit Site**

We had attended the first meeting about the transit site at Merstham. It looked as if there was a bias to the people opposing it. The instructions to register to speak were extremely complicated. It seemed the transit site had not been referred to Nikki in her Surrey Equalities position. There was some doubt at the meeting about whether she needed to be consulted.

Lalage said that we would go back to the second meeting and make sure that we got to speak again this time. We were still awaiting the links to register for this. Lisa, Jean and Jack would be there, and that left space for two others. People could only appear in a personal capacity, not representing groups.

**7. Community Champion**

Diane Roberts of Surrey Community Action had asked if we could put forward a Community Champion. Jack had mentioned it to Jackie Boyd, but he had too much on to find the time. Lalage said that the post was not too onerous, it involved receiving an email and passing it on, although that as Dee pointed out depended on what they were sending. She and Jean might be able to do it so we could say there were two potential champions without committing ourselves.

**8. AGM Date and Venue**

John felt that after Dorking we had learnt how to run a blended conference, with people stepping up to one mike and one projector to talk: so now it was a matter of finding a place with better wi-fi. Lalage reminded us that she was planning to stand down as chair, and we should have plans for a replacement.

It would be good to have Nikki at the meeting, but she was busy. Lisa would be in touch with her.

Lalage suggested Woking, Thursday 18th May.

**9. History Month**

Dee and Jeremy had gone to Tilford for a meeting with Ed, who wasn’t there, but Madeleine the publicity manager talked to them and seemed on message. Jeremy would contact Ed and get him to underwrite the costs of the event. Funding streams were being looked at as discussed before. Dee needed to be able to confirm the people she had provisionally booked.

**10. Women’s Group**

Dee reported that this was going strong, they were doing menopause this time, but when looking for information to present to the group, there was little that represented our communities. So Dee worked with five other ladies who lent their voices to a short film that was now made for the GRT communities by the GRT community. Lisa had invited her to talk at a meeting of the Queen’s Nurses Group about the work the women’s group were doing.

**11. Any Other Business**

**Mental Health Drama**

Dee said that she had contact Megan Aspel as Jo Packman was interested in commissioning the mental health drama. She hadn’t heard back from Megan, so she would email again to chase that up.

**Women’s history month**.

Dee was working with Rosa on a Women’s Day piece and said it was lovely to work with her on a piece that involved women from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities, in this wonderful celebration of women.

**The Police Act**

Andy updated us on the effect of the new legislation on encampments. There have been no additional uses in Surrey or Kent, and just the one in Hampshire. But Thames Valley had used it thirty times.

**Media**

Jean had been monitoring stories on Facebook. Surrey Live were much better now at doing what we asked, offensive comments were still posted but they were taken down immediately.

**The Wardley Street Project**

Geoff had copied Dee and two other organisations into an email where a young student photographer wanted to take pictures of youth culture in the community. Dee emailed her and then later had a phone conversation to find out more as this raised alarm bells initially. The young lady was quite knowledgeable about the community and understood she couldn’t just go around taking pictures. Rather than send her elsewhere, Dee suggested that we invite her to Romany Day, not to take photos but to learn more about the culture and how to build trust with families. Her project was to shine a light on the community in a positive way and about family and it was for her uni. Geoff had already invited her to come and learn more about the Wardley Street project. Dee felt that she would benefit from more cultural learning before undertaking such a project.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

Lalage felt that we would need a meeting before the AGM to sort things out.