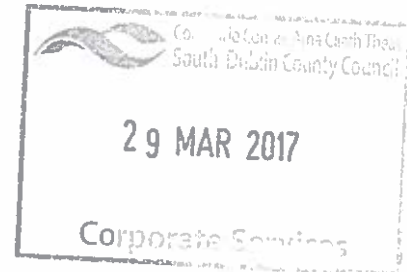




AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNAIS
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE & EQUALITY

Ref: 0719125802

Mr Colm Murphy
Meeting Administrator
Corporate Services Department
South Dublin County Council
County Hall
Tallaght
Dublin 24



29 March 2017

Dear Mr Murphy

The Tánaiste, Ms Frances Fitzgerald, has asked me to contact you with regard to your correspondence (with which you forwarded documentation from Tom O'Neill, Meeting Administrator) relating to the recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group.

As you may know, the Taoiseach announced State recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group in Ireland on 02 March 2017. This event was historic and memorable; it was particularly noteworthy as there was an all-party consensus on the issue.

The key argument for recognition of Traveller ethnicity was that recognition of the distinct heritage, culture and identity of Travellers and their special place in Irish society will be hugely and symbolically important to their pride and self-esteem and overcoming the legacy of economic marginalisation, discrimination and low self-esteem with which the Traveller community struggles. This is not to ignore the real problems that Travellers face but this symbolic gesture will create a new platform for positive engagement by the Traveller community and the Government in together seeking sustainable solutions based on respect and an honest dialogue on these issues and challenges. As pointed out by the Taoiseach, it is hoped that recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group will have a transformative effect on relations between Travellers and wider society. Such ethnic recognition will create no new individual, constitutional or financial rights because Travellers already enjoy all the human rights and responsibilities that are afforded to all people in Ireland under this country's Constitution and laws.

The statement by the Taoiseach announcing State recognition of Traveller ethnicity was the culmination of a long-standing campaign by Travellers to have their identity, culture and unique position valued by their formal recognition as a distinct ethnic

group. As the Taoiseach stressed, this is without prejudice to Travellers being part of, and self-identifying as part of, the Irish nation. The Taoiseach's statement is also the start of a considerable amount of the work that we need to do as a society, in partnership with Travellers, to address the real and stark issues that face the Traveller community in areas such as health, employment, education and accommodation. Minister of State Stanton will present plans to address these issues in the new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy which, in consultation with other Departments and Traveller representatives, will be finalised shortly.

Yours sincerely


Niall Colgan
Private Secretary