MINUTES

Meeting: PARISH COUNCIL Date: 9th January 2025 Time: 5.30pm

Toot Hill Village Hall, Toot Hill Road, Toot Hill, Essex

PRESENT:

Councillors (6) Cllr Glover (Chairman), Cllr Jackson, Cllr Mrs Jackman, Cllr Adams, Cllr Hollington Cllr Tallon

Also in Attendance (1) - Adriana Jones - Clerk

Members of the Public (0) Members of the Press (1)

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC None.

P14.1279 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Saridja.

P14.1280 OTHER ABSENCES None.

P14.1281 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Tallon declared a non pecuniary interest in EPF/0786/24 confirming he would be leaving the meeting for the duration of the discussion, and would not be voting on the matter.

P14.1282 MINUTES

Councillors APPROVED the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 14th November 2024.

P14.1283 MEMBERS REPORTS

- Chairman's Report The Chairman thanked the Clerk for her support and continued work. He advised that following the previous meeting, and as a result of notification of a number of issues regarding the Toot Hill Village Hall, he had made arrangements for the necessary works to be completed. He stated that changes were needed to the Village Hall sign at the entrance in terms of contact details, and he would make arrangements to do this, asking if the Clerk could confirm what details to put on the new board.
- Vice Chairman's Report Cllr Jackson advised that following the recent unusual weather incident where we had a large snowfall which melted very quickly shortly after, the usual areas around Stanford Rivers flooded, including the A113 by Traceys Farm. Cllr Jackson advised that the areas that continually flood were the worst hit (the A414 by the Vojan, the A113 Traceys Farm), and that in reality the A113 should have been closed. It was noted there was a sign up to say closed but people were still going through as it wasn't physically blocked. People were using Berwick Lane, which ended up with its own problems. Cllr Jackson stated that ECC should be advised of the pinch points where flash flooding occurs and where there would be regular problems, which for this Parish is it Traceys Farm, Berwick Lane and Bridge Farm. Cllr Hollington advised that Drapers Corner was also flooded because the drains are blocked, to which Cllr Jackson stated that this was the point to have regular maintenance at all the flash points to help alleviate the possibility of flooding. Cllr Jackson advised that Abridge was also a pinch point. Cllr Hollington advised that dredging the rivers would help. The issue of the pipe being not being large enough under the A113 by Tracey's Farm was discussed, with Cllr Jackson suggesting that ECC should therefore consider works to install a wider pipe. The Clerk suggested that this council should write to ECC asking them what their plans are to address this issue. This was agreed.
- District and County Councillor reports No reports
- Parish Councillor reports Cllr Adams advised that a local resident had expressed her disappointment at the Christmas Lights on Jubilee Green.

P14.1284 BUDGET / PRECEPT 2025/2026

Councillors considered the budget, and subsequently the precept, for 2025/2026, which was completed on a live basis during the meeting. Councillors noted that for the current year (2024/2025) the Parish Council element of the Precept for a band D property is £58.45 (£1.12 a week). The calculation to get to this is the amount the Council request in precept divided by the tax base (no. of houses EFDC is expecting to collect council tax from), which for this current year was as follows: £22,345 / 382.30 = £58.45. The tax base for 2025/2026 has increased to 387.30. If the Parish Council wishes to show a NIL increase in the parish council element of Council tax for next year, the maximum amount the Council can demand of EFDC in terms of precept would be £22,637.68 (£22,637.68 / 387.30 = £58.45).

Councillors specifically considered the following matters:

- The Solar Panel project for the Toot Hill Village Hall agreed to budget a contingency of an additional £5,000 for these works, given it had been over 12 months since the quote (additional items)
- Toot Hill Village Hall income and expenditure noted
- Increase Clerk's salary by 5% as of 1st April 2025
- Noted Employers NI to be payable from 1st April 2025
- May need to obtain up to date rebuild value of the Hall, especially if solar panels go ahead.
- Christmas Tree Jubilee Green and potential alternative Christmas celebration at the Toot Hill Village Hall – agreed to no longer hold event on Jubilee Green, albeit we will purchase a tree and new lights. An event for the community in the Toot Hill Village Hall will take place instead. Look at sourcing a different Farther Christmas for the event.
- Agreed give £600 grant funding awarded to the church
- Grounds maintenance contract Agreed to award to Thornwood Grounds Maintenance for 2025/2026, excluding areas that are not owned by the Parish Council
- Tree Works following Risk Assessment / inc Toot Hill Village Hall Budgeted £1,500 for the works
- First Aid / Defib training 2025 Agreed to possibly run another session in 25/26, based on success
 of this years event.
- Toot Hill Village Fete budgeted £1,000 towards support for this event
- Jubilee Green Village Sign / Planting / Tree removal budgeted £1,500 works to be agreed
- VE Day Celebratory Event agreed would like to do something, with funds coming out of the Jubilee EMR. Taking place over a four day weekend, and noted it should not take place on the same day as the Ongar Community event.

Councillors reviewed the expected levels of both General Reserves and Earmarked reserve, noting the General Reserves were slightly higher than was required, but no changes were proposed.

After discussion, Councillor Adams **PROPOSED** a 5% increase in the precept bringing it to £23,462, which was **SECONDED** by Cllr Glover. A vote was taken, the results of which were unanimous. Therefore, the precept for 2025/2026 was set at £23,462, meaning the Parish Council element of the precept for a band D property is £60.58 (roughly £1.16 a week).

P14.1285 CLERKS COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Members *RECEIVED* a verbal report from the Clerk as follows:

- Local resident borrowed one table from the village hall over the Christmas period, and this has now been returned.
- Thursday 8th May 2025 80th Anniversary of VE Day
- Clerk attended an EFDC Corporate Communications Team Peer Review on 4th December 2024 to provide feedback on EFDCs communications, however this was more about EFDC wanting to how good their external communications were, not the other way around.
- The salt / grit bins have been purchased and arrangements made by the Chairman to put these in the agreed locations. Cllr Tallon confirmed he was happy with the Toot Hill location.
- Request sent to EFDC to replace the damaged notice board in Toot Hill
- Martyns Law briefing suggest position will be that only halls over 200 capacity will be included.
- Clerk completed Gigaclear Community review (completed each year). Cllr Jackson stated that for the future we may want to consider budgeting for these costs as they were not guaranteed to be free each year. The Clerk confirmed that for the coming year it would be free as she has to renew the agreement each year, and if this changed she would advise Councillors.
- Complaint from local resident about HGVs using School Road, and vehicles dumping slurry at the back of Old House, Epping Road. With regard to Stewarts Farm the Clerk had witnessed this herself, and there is a clear intensification of this site. This will be reported to EFDC enforcement to look into.
- The Clerk has been unable to ascertain if there are any operational restrictions in terms of timings from Stewarts Farm.

P14.1286 FIRST AID COURSE

Councillors were reminded that the First Aid course being run by the Parish Council would be taking place on 18th January 2024 9am to 12pm, with 12 attendees as agreed. Cllr Tallon advised he would liaise with the attendee from the Green Man. Invites had been sent to all those who had signed up to attend the course.

P14.1287 NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Cllr Adam advised latest police report showed nothing for our area, and very little in the surrounding areas. This was surprising as over the Christmas period there is normally a spike, but thankfully nothing this year. There had been some reports of odd people walking around.

P14.1288 CHRISTMAS EVENTS IN THE PARISH

At the November Parish Council meeting it was agreed to hold the Jubilee Christmas Tree event on Sunday 8th December, however on 19th November the Clerk was advised that Father Christmas had been retired for the foreseeable future. Some discussion took place as to whether or not to offer mulled wine and mince pies at the Toot Hill Christmas event as an alternative, however after liaison with Cllr Tallon who had spoken with the committee, it was felt this was not needed. Councillors were asked to consider if this should mark the end of the annual event on Jubilee Green, and that instead perhaps a community Christmas event could be held in the Toot Hill Village, offering mulled wine and mince pies to the whole community. This had been briefly discussed under the budget agenda item, however it was formally **AGREED** under this agenda item that the Jubilee Green event would no longer take place, and a community event held in the Toot Hill Village Hall would take place instead. It was also **AGREED** the Council should try and source another Farther Christmas.

P14.1289 WORKING GROUPS

1. Solar Panels at Village Hall Working Group

- a) Whilst no meeting of the working group had taken place, Councillors noted the following update:
 - Investigative works to ascertain the structure of the Village Hall had now taken place, with full
 details having been provided to the Solar Panel contractor just before Christmas in order for a
 structural engineer to establish if the structure is able to take the loading of the proposed new
 roof and solar panels. The Clerk is waiting to hear back. The cost of the investigative works,
 including scaffolding, is £471.60 plus VAT.
 - An updated quote to complete the works has been requested, however has not arrived yet. This is expected in January.
 - The public consultation on the planning application for the solar panels has now ended, however at the time of printing the agenda no decision had been made by EFDC. There is one published response to the application from the EFDC Conservation Team who consider the application to be acceptable in terms of impact on adjacent heritage assets, and are happy to support the scheme.
 - Cllr Hollington advised that if the works do take place, it should be made clear to the contractor that the new covering does not make the hall 'sweat' inside, causing condensation.

2. CCTV at Village Hall

At the November meeting it was agreed to move forward with the installation of CCTV. Following this meeting, it was discussed that it made sense to actually include a third camera at the entrance to the hall, which was also completed. The total cost of these works was £1,329.50, which was for three cameras, including upgrade to colour cameras. Councillors formally agreed this additional camera. In addition, Councillors also formally agreed the installation of a security system for the hall at a reduced cost of £770.50, which included a full security system which can be monitored and set from an agreed remote access point. It was agreed that both the Chairman and Clerk will have access to the CCTV and security system once this Council has agreed its CCTV policy, which will be on the next agenda to agree. Cllr Jackson suggested that Cllr Tallon should also have access to the apps.

P14.1290 INTERNAL AUDIT

- Councillors *NOTED* the interim 2024/2025 report completed on 5th December 2024 which was attached to the agenda. The final audit will take place in May 2025, after which time the councils current appointed auditor will retire. One of the recommendations is that the business interruption should be increased. It is currently listed at £4,500, however the income is perhaps slightly more. £6,000. It was *AGREED* to alter the insurance to be £6,000.
- 2. Council formally appointed Heelis and Lodge as this Councils Internal Auditor for 2025/2026, the cost of the audit being £220 (with one audit per year being undertaken).

P14.1291 OPEN SPACES AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

a) Work on land the PC does not own – As agreed the Clerk has contacted this Councils insurance with a view to ascertaining if it would be possible to pay a premium to cover the Parish Council completing some works on Essex County Council owned land. The Clerk advised that the matter was with the insurance legal department, and a response is awaited.

b) Tree Risk Assessment

The Clerk has requested quotes for the tree works as detailed in the tree risk assessment, however the information had not been received in time to be reported to the meeting,

P14.1292 LOVE YOUR BUS GRANT FUND INITIATIVE

ECC has launched a 'Love Your Bus' Grant Fund initiative which provides Parish and Town Councils with the opportunity to secure grants of up to £50,000 for projects aimed at increasing bus patronage and enhancing local services. The fund will support innovative projects that:

- Increase passenger numbers.
- Improve service frequency and coverage.
- Attract new users through community engagement and marketing.

This will allow Parish and Town Councils to propose initiatives such as increasing service frequency, running early morning or late-night services, and extending routes to connect underserved areas to key destinations such as hospitals or schools. Collaborative applications between neighbouring councils will be encouraged to maximise impact across communities. The deadline for applications is 14th of February 2025 at 5pm.

The Clerk explained the process of making an applicant for grant funding, and Councillors felt that it simply did now allow enough time to put together an application. It was noted that despite being told by EFDC Community Transport that the Toot Hill Service would be stopped unless this Council funded it, it continued to run and seemed to be fairly well used. It was noted that the extension of the 375 service into Ongar would not qualify as 80% of the bus journey needed to take place within Essex, which was not the case for the 375. It was considered that possibly an extension of the bus service from Ongar to the Passingford Bridge would be viable. It was agreed the Clerk would place something of the Councils Facebook page to see if there was interest, and to try and obtain some evidence of community need which would be required for any application.

P14.1293 PLANTERS FOR THE VILLAGE GATEWAY SIGNS, STANFORD RIVERS

The Clerk has purchased 4 planters for the gateway signs for Stanford Rivers at a cost of £217.95 (including delivery and VAT). Further material will be needed for the planting, which will be purchased shortly. It was agreed to ask Thornwood Grounds Maintenance to install.

P14.1294 WEBSITE AND EMAIL HOSTING

With regard to the website, the Clerk is currently working on the required 'back of house' actions to get the new PC website up and running on a live basis. However as reported at the November meeting, the Clerk has now attended a Government run Parish Helper event which talks about the obligations on parish and town councils who own a .GOV email address. The Clerk has contacted 5 of the Approved Registrars for a quote to host the .GOV domain, host emails, and provide office 365. With regard to the Parish Council hosting their own emails (as mentioned by Cllr Adams), the Parish Helper team had never received this question before, and following the meeting contacted the Clerk advising that '*It is our understanding that we think it could be possible to host your own emails if you have the technical skills and infrastructure (e.g. backups) to set up your emails and host them. We do not think it would be possible to get an Approved Registrar to host the emails on the council's computers though, if that was more your question.'*

Councillors noted that the current cost host our domain was £95.00 every two years, the next renewal due in 2026. Concern had previously been expressed as to the very basic set up of emails provided by the current supplier, and as such the Clerk had obtained quotes for different suppliers to provide an improved service. It was noted that the Clerk currently pays £59.99 per year for Office 365. After discussion, it was **AGREED** to move to Cloudnext for email hosting, with the domain hosting remaining as until August 2026, and the Clerk continuing to purchase her own office 365 and reclaiming the cost.

P14.1295 VEHICULAR SPEEDING AND SAFETY MATTERS IN THE PARISH

a) Community Speedwatch

Cllr Jackson advised that the Essex Police speeding unit consisted of two police officers, covering the whole of Essex. He had liaised with one of them, who advised that there had been 4 visits the Stanford Rivers in 2024 with the speed gun which automatically sends out tickets. 30 tickets had been issued,

and they are normally located by the Hoist business on the A113. They have not been to Toot Hill as yet, but Cllr Jackson would push them to attend.

b) Speederbot

Cllr Adams advised that the speederbot went off air for a period of time, however it was understood to be back up and running without any financial support from the Parish Council. The A113speedberbot.org was up and running, with data being collated. This is still useful data for the Parish Council. Cllr Adams advised that he had also heard that that somebody was trying to obtain an ANPR for number plate recognition, and that there may be an opportunity to do this on a DIY basis, albeit the technicalities would need to be thought through. If the ANPR was available, this could help identify the prolific 6.30am speeder, albeit the police won't act upon it. Cllr Adams stated he was happy to obtain further information regarding this and report back to Council. The Clerk advised she would need to check the legality of the Parish Council holding vehicle number plates in terms of GDPR, however it was confirmed that this was not a project that the Parish Council would facilitate, but something that would be looked into by the Community Speedwatch Team. Cllr Jackson reminded those present that the Extra Eyes campaign was also extremely useful.

Cllr Adams also advised he was liaising with the community speedwatch team about escalating issues of speeding, traffic calming, verges, etc, as tidying up the area would help. Cllr Adams advised he had received a report from a consultancy that suggested where there are long stretches of road with houses only on one side, typically people ignore the speed limit. Cllr Adams suggested that over the course of this next year, these issues should be escalated to the MP, Police and Crime Commissioner, ECC, Essex Roads Policing, to try and address some of these areas. Cllr Jackson advised that traffic calming measures could certainly be pursued.

P14.1296 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

1. To CONSIDER any planning applications submitted to the Parish Council for comment as detailed below		
EPF/0786/24 FULL	6 Barn Mead, Toot Hill Road, Ongar, CM5 9SE	Change of use of Green Belt land to permeable access / turning area. *Cllr Tallon left the meeting for the duration of this specific item, and only returned once a vote had been taken.

The Parish Council OBJECTS to this application. It is not clear what the change of use is. The application states it is for a change of use of green belt to permeable access / turning area, suggesting the land would no longer be classed as green belt? In addition, permeable access / turning area is not a land use in of itself.

After obtaining local information, it is understood that the site has <u>never</u> been used for stabling or housing of horses. Google Earth images suggest that in 2020 this was not a paddock, and the hard surfacing was not present at this time. As such, the Council is not confident that the suggested use of the land for a turning area to support the delivery of hay, etc, and to secure the future use as an equestrian yard and paddock is correct, and thus is not justified.

The Parish Council has been advised that the land which is the subject of this application is possibly used for a car transportation business and the associated storage of cars. The applicant makes reference to the storage of classic cars, but suggests this is for personal use for sport and recreation.

The Parish Council is unclear about whether or not there is a legal right of access to the land beyond the access which goes to the garages.

Thus, this application is contrary to Local Plan Policy DM4 Green Belt, the Council believing that the proposed use as specified within the application does not fulfil the criteria of section C(ii).

2. To NOTE any p	planning applications that have b	een responded to via the Clerks delegated powers
EPF/2414/24	Blackberry House, Toot Hill	Removal of conditions 3 and 5 on planning permission
	Road, Ongar, CM5 9QP	EPF/1742/24 (A detached stable building and use of
		land for horse keeping for personal use (Revised
		scheme to EPF/143/17).
		The Parish Council has no objection to removal of
		condition 3, however fully supports the inclusion
		and retention of condition 5, the reason being to
		ensure the protection of the green belt. Stables
		are indeed a reasonable and permitted use in the
		green belt, and the retention of condition 5 not
		only protects the green belt, but at same time does

			not prohibit the future permiss	e land owner from applying for any	
EPF/2270/24	Toot Hill Village				
,,	Hill Road, Toot H	Hill Hall.		ponded as it is its own application	
EPF/2378/24		wood, 12 London Road,		6m high vehicle gate. 7	
EPF/2377/24	Surrywood, 12 L Stanford Rivers, 9PH		To erect a new o London Road. No objection	carport on the adjacent land of 12	
EPF/2121/24	5, Toot Hill Road, Ongar, CM5 9QW		and side porch.	le and part rear extension, rear dormer n. Alterations to landscaping to improve the street scene	
3. To NOTE any p	lanning application	ns upon which		ept comments	
NIL		•			
4. To NOTE any o					
APPEAL APP13417 EPF/1092/24 3350742	Tawney Common Theydon Mount Epping CM167PX	Appeal against refusal of Certificate of lawful development for a proposed use of a residential outbuilding as an annexe		Clerk responded to the appeal, via the Planning Inspectorate, advising they support EFDC in that the building is too small.	
APPEAL APP13418 EPF/0355/24 PINS3350572 & APP13448 ENF/0223/23 PINS3350190	London Hoist Ltd 43 London Road, Stanford Rivers ONGAR Essex CM59PH	Appeal against refusal of the erection of tower crane, and subsequent enforcement notice for its removal		Clerk responded to the appeal, via the Planning Inspectorate, advising they stand by the original position in terms of removal of the crane, and supports EFDC position.	
APPEAL APP13442 EPF/1775/24 PINS3355160 & APP13441 EPF/0998/24 PINS3355134	Surrywood, 12 London Road, Stanford Rivers, Ongar, CM5 9PH	Appeal against application for demolition of the existing bungalow and construction of a new Chalet bungalow.		No response as the PC had no objection to these applications	
APPLICATION EPF/2457/24	Coalfields Farm, Epping Road, Colliers Hatch, Epping CM16 7PX	Two extensions - one to agricultural machinery and chemical store and one to agricultural workshop.		As this is an agricultural determination, the PC is not notified due the 28 day timeframe for a response, however the Clerk was notified by a local resident of this application and has contact the planning officer and all three district Councillors advising that this application does not meet the permitted development requirements, Also liaised with Clerk of Stapleford Tawney PC This application had now been Withdrawn.	

Road Road Road		Stewarts Farm, School Road	Possible erection of building without permission	Clerk has reported possible planning breach to EFDC for investigation
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P14.1297 TOOT HILL VILLAGE HALL

- a) Solar Panels for Roof reported earlier in the meeting.
- b) Chairman provided an update on the following works that had been completed following reports of issues from local residents:
 - Attending site with colleague to fault find various electrical issues including bollard lighting, internal wall lights, and external sensor lights, radiator and various grounds work.
 - Replaced bollard light and timer.
 - Replaced blown led bulbs on internal walls, also changed the light switch and bulbs as required.
 - Trimmed front hedges to tidy up and also to gain access to the lighting in this area.
 - Cut back overhanging branches and trimmed ivy on entrance to car park. Disposed of garden waste in skips provided.
 - Checked all cables in junction box above kitchen window, found that cable was disconnected, re wired and left working.
 - Placed three salt boxes and loaded with salt in the local area, one at the village hall, one outside 8 The Moat and the last outside Piggots in Stanford Rivers.
 - Fitted a shelf for new CCTV equipment in coat cupboard.
 - Changed tubes and starter on two ceiling lights.
 - Cut hanging branches that were putting weight on the main electric cables
 - Removed radiator as brackets had pulled away from wall, re fixed brackets and radiator and re
 pressured Heating system.
 - Replaced light in entrance.
 - Adjusted settings on outside sensor lights.
 - Three sets of keys cut, entrance door keys and coat/CCTV cupboard.
 - Adjusted door lock on main door.
 - 9 x keys cut
 - Skip & General rubbish removal from site

It was noted that the sign by the gate needed updating, and the Chairman would arrange with the Clerk regarding this.

c) Noted that the fire extinguishers have been serviced.

P14.1298 NEWS AND VIEWS

Items for next News and Views – Christmas Tree Toot Hill 2024, End of jubilee Green Christmas events, Toot Hill Village Show, changes to planning, Devolution, VE day event, Something in the hall for Christmas this year.

P14.1299 FINANCIAL REPORTS

The following payments were AGREED.

Reference	То	For	Amount
BACS	Adriana Jones	Clerks Salary Dec 2024 & Jan 2025	£1,109.26
BACS	HMRC	PAYE Dec 2024 & Jan 2025	£277.40
BACS	Seton	3 x Grit/Salt Bins	£439.10
			(£73.18 VAT)
BACS	D Wickham	THVH Cleaning and phone box tidy	£192.33
		Nov & Dec	
D/D	EDF	Toot Hill Electricity	£53.80
			(£2.56 VAT)
D/D	EDF	Toot Hill Electricity	£45.22
		(already previously signed)	(£2.15 VAT)
BACS	Calor	Gas replenish supply at Hall 11/11	£328.78
			(£15.66 VAT)
BACS	Gillard Building	Investigative works Toot Hill Village	£471.61
	Contractors	Hall – Solar Panels	(£94.32 VAT)
BACS	Auditing Solutions	Interim Internal Audit 24/25	£130.00
			(£26.00 VAT)

BACS	Knight Security Systems Ltd	Installation of CCTV and Intruder Alarm System	£2520.00 (£420.00 VAT)
BACS	Essex Fire Safety	Fire Extinguisher Service	£78.00 (£13.00 VAT)
BACS	North Weald Bassett Parish Council	2 x wreaths and luncheon for Remembrance Events	£88.00
BACS	Adriana Jones	Reimbursement 4 x planters	£217.95 (Vat £36.32)
BACS	John Glover	Works to village Hall (as per list)	£1,124.00

Bank Balances as at 31st December 2024

Unity Current Account 4775	£	16,008.70
Unity Deposit Account 4788	£	87,392.91

INCOME:	£ 91.00 – Pilates Sep & Oct
	£ 555.00 – M Tallon Folk Club and First Aid
	£ 30.25 – L Cass Yoga 6/11
	£ 154.00 – Essex Silk Painters Oct & Nov #058
	£ 195.00 – History Group Apr-Nov 2024 #058
	£ 50.00 – McGrady Dog Club Nov & Dec
	£ 425.00 – S Thomas Silk Group July-Nov
	£ 70.00 – Essex Silk Painters Hire 7 Dec
	£ 581.40 – Interest Deposit A/C

b. The bank reconciliation up to 31st December 2024 was reviewed alongside the bank statements.

P14.1300 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS/EVENTS

Councillors NOTED the date of the next meetings:

- 13th March 2025
- 8th May 2025
- 17th July 2025 (note third Thursday, not second)
- 11th September 2025
- 13th November 2025

P14.1301 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The following matters have been rolled forward to the next meetings:

- Review of Policies and Procedures
- Planters by village signs
- Risk Assessment

Meeting closed 19.33

Signed Date