

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 26 MAY 2020.

The Mayor welcomed members to the first Zoom meeting and read a list of directions and advice.

PRESENT

The Mayor - Councillor Davies
The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Jones
Councillor Baddeley
Councillor Barlow - delayed
Councillor Brady
Councillor Hall
Councillor Harper
Councillor Hart
Councillor Hawley
Councillor Jackson
Councillor McLoughlin
Councillor Perkin
Councillor Redfern
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rushton
Councillor Salt
Councillor Sheldon
Councillor Smith
Councillor Yates

93.19 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive written representations from:

- *Staffordshire County Council representative(s)*
- *Staffordshire Police*
- *Others*

Statements to be received in advance to ensure these can be circulated to Town Councillors and made available on the website.

The meeting to adjourn for up to 20 minutes (Standing Order 1d-f) to allow for public participation. Residents are invited to give their views and question the Town Council on issues on this agenda or raise issues for future consideration at the discretion of the Mayor.

Members of the public wishing to raise issues which are not on the Agenda should notify the Chief Officer five working days before the meeting. Members of the public may not take part in the Council meeting itself.

a) Staffordshire County Council representatives

The Chief Officer read from the following report from County Councillors Flunder and Lawson:

Subjects and issues I've been dealing with since the last Town Council meeting I attended, not necessarily in the right order:-

Supporting many of the local neighbourhood groups who are looking after many local residents around my division, through grants from the County Council emergency Covid-19 fund. I have also had quite a few phone calls and issues outside the immediate Biddulph area, which have mostly been resolved.

I have passed on some emergency requests, which have come through the Counties emergency 'food parcel' process. Biddulph community zone is one of the three district-based community centres. While picking up a 'food bag' for Brown Edge as requested, I did thank all the volunteers and other key workers managing the whole local network. (I also felt that it was important that while I'm chair of SMDC I did support all the voluntary work being carried out around the whole district).

Can I please just say thank you on behalf of the County Council to all the volunteers and key workers who are working and protecting the whole community during this emergency crisis.

I lobbied for the re-opening of the recycling centre, after being asked by several councillors. They have now been re-opened and I have taken the issues of the queueing system forward for comment at a 'meeting' next week.

I have taken forward concerns regarding the three tier schools system and received an email this afternoon (please read this out if you have time), or Sarah can circulate it after the meeting.

I have also received concerns regarding speeding traffic and to look at installing extra signs in Grange Road, I will take these requests forward to future meetings.

I've been in touch with Jill Norman from Support Staffordshire, who are looking after the three main community centres in the Moorlands district and talked to the three managers.

They are also 'supplying' training video's on 'you tube' for volunteers etc.

An example of the list of subjects being reported to SCC members some on a daily basis, some weekly and others as required:-

Report on the deaths and cases. There were 2,155 confirmed covid cases in Staffordshire up to last Friday.

Nationally, any travellers will need to self-isolate for 14 days when they arrive in England.

Tracing and Testing is to be supported by additional funds (£300m) for local councils in England to support the test and trace service.

Britannia stadium is this regions testing centre (most people should know this already).

Work is being carried out to draw up plans that focus on identifying and containing potential outbreaks in workplaces such as care homes, schools and housing complexes.

The SCC are / have set up some Family Hub virtual sites (8), to help people find out information, answer questions and to share ideas.

The cabinet are looking at producing a report outlining the approach to recovery and renewal stages of the Covid-19 crisis. This work will be on-going.

Some offices in Stafford are being 're-opened'.

The successful of operation of home to School transport is being looked at.

Re-enforcing and communicating all the messages during recovery and renewal.

A list of the funds being made available to each of the 8 districts from the ERDF High Street fund has also been sent to members. This will affect Biddulph.

There are a further 31 bullet points on this week's report from the Staffordshire Resilience Forum.

The Queens Honours list applications have been extended to include those hero's from the current covid-19 crisis.

Issues I will report on for the next meeting:-

*My DHP details and a list of current issues agreed with the Highways team.
Update on the Covid-19 / community fund.
Current recovery issues.*

Many of the above issues I have worked and discussed with Ian Lawson and we are looking forward to committee meetings which we hope will be starting again shortly.

4 of the 5 Parish Councils I work with are now running regular 'on-line' meetings.

b) Staffordshire Police

The Chief Officer read the following report from Sgt Machin

Council Meeting Update.

Statistics are up to the end of April.

Hi, I am Sgt Jamie Machin and have recently taken over from Sgt Anthony Baddeley. Hopefully you already have my details, but my email address is jamie.machin@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk.

My apologies for not been able to attend this meeting but it has landed when I am not at work and unable to join the meeting.

It has been an interesting introduction to neighbourhood policing at Biddulph with COVID-19 making its way to the forefront of policing, whilst still managing traditional policing activities.

As such the main issues after my taking over from Sgt Baddeley have been COVID related. COVID saw a reduction in the usual demands on police including traditional ASB. COVID breaches are recorded under the ASB banner for reporting purposes and so we saw a spike in ASB for March and April; but for your typical ASB there has been a significant drop especially around Sainsbury's/town centre.

As a force our overall, incidents reported, are currently below average and are down 7% over the 12-month period compared to the previous 12 months

For the Moorlands area in general we are currently below average for reported incidents and we are 9% down over the 12-month period compared to the previous 12 months.

In Biddulph area we are currently on the average for reported incidents and we are 12% down over the 12-month period compared to the previous 12 months. Looking at the figures weekly this is currently on a downwards trend having had a spike after COVID started.

For ASB in Biddulph we're looking at an 8% reduction on a comparison with the previous 12 months.

For all crime we are looking at a 13% reduction compared with the previous 12 months; compared to the Moorlands as a whole which is a 6% reduction.

In general, a positive picture for the Biddulph are with reduced incidents for Biddulph.

I am also aware and been learning about since starting at Biddulph that there is a problem around drugs, which links into other areas in Stoke-on-Trent. We are currently engaging in activity around drugs which is a top priority for Biddulph, myself and my team. This is supported by the wider Moorlands team and specialist teams.

We have had proactive work done already and there is more in the pipeline. There has been some recent violence associated with this problem which CID are assisting with as well as partnership work to problem solve.

There isn't a quick fix for this and unfortunately the drug scene will be present in society in general, as well as locally, but we are doing our utmost to reduce this to minimum levels, minimise the impact on our community and reducing victims.

Can I ask if each Wednesday/Thursday you could please feed back to me via Sarah Haydon (Who will collate) any information you have gained from the local residents in relation to the following areas please. We are looking to see if the reported picture to police is reflected the true picture in our area.

The information been:

- *Changes in community tensions*
- *Information or intelligence that may impact upon community tensions*
- *Increases or changes in crime: seen/experienced or received information/intelligence about*
- *Issues around breaches of government regulations around COVID which may impact on community tensions*
- *Increases in domestic abuse, mental health exploitation of vulnerable individuals or groups*
- *Increase in neighbour dispute*

Your assistance would be greatly appreciated in this.

The local PCSO's should be in regular contact to discuss anything else you need our help with, but let me know if there is anything you wish to discuss with me.

Hopefully things will change where I will be able to meet you soon and I will look to be on the next meeting when this is arranged.

Kind Regards

Jamie

Sgt 5235 Machin Moorlands NPT Shift 2

94. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:

Councillor Adams – dispensation

Councillor Garvey

Councillor Swift

Councillor Barlow – delayed, arriving just before discussion on Minute 102.

95. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations:
Councillor Sheldon anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom. All
Councillors with Covid 19 expenses in the accounts.

b) To declare any Other Disclosable Interests: none were declared.

96. TO APPROVE THE VIRTUAL MEETINGS POLICY AND GUIDANCE (ATTACHED)

The Chief Officer gave a brief overview of the document. Legislation had changed very quickly; this policy was to agree the format going forwards and how Town Council decisions would be made.

Councillor Jackson queried the legality of not holding an Annual Meeting; he formally moved a resolution to have an Annual Meeting in the next couple of months.

The Chief Officer noted that the Annual Meeting was at the discretion of the Council, it could be deferred for a whole year.

Councillor Davies noted that he would prefer to hold the Annual Meeting in the following month; he was not keen to remain in post for another year, even though his had been a wonderful Mayoral year.

Councillor Jones added that he would be to be guided by the majority, as he had held the office of Mayor previously.

Councillor Jackson proposed that a date is set in early June 2020 for the Annual Meeting

Councillor Rogers added that consideration should be given to the post of Deputy Mayor and agreed that an Annual Meeting should be held soon.

Councillor Hall proposed that the policy and guidance that was the agenda item should be accepted. This was seconded by Councillor Hart; a vote was taken, and this was agreed.

Councillor Jones agreed that there should be an Annual Meeting in June 2020. Councillor Davies asked for a vote, it was unanimously agreed to hold the Annual Meeting in June.

The Chief Officer noted that a Finance Strategy and Management Committee should be held too as grant applications had been received. She suggested that the FSM Committee is held on Tuesday 9 June 2020 and the Annual Meeting the following week - 16 June 2020.

A vote was taken, and this was agreed.

97. MINUTES

- a) The Minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on 10 March 2020 were **approved** (to be signed when measures on social distancing had been clarified).
- b) The Minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held on 10 March 2020 were **received**. Councillor Salt was present at the meeting.

98. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

To **receive** the resignation of the Officer to the Council and **note** that the Finance Strategy and Management Committee will undertake a review of current and future staffing requirements.

Councillor Davies reported that a letter of resignation had been received from an Officer of the Council. Councillor Davies noted that he was very sorry to hear that Jean Gaunt was leaving. She had been with the Council for over 20

years; and had been a very dedicated Officer, her great knowledge was a tremendous and valuable asset. Councillor Davies had admired her fastidiousness, especially at the burial grounds; he wished Jean well in the future. Other Councillors added their best wishes.

The Mayor also expressed his gratitude to Councillors who have given their time and energy since the lockdown began, supporting the people of Biddulph and beyond, they had delivered over 2000 prescriptions to those self-isolating and food. Councillor Davies thanked Sarah and Jodie for their organisation and to the many other volunteers in the town who have helped.

This had been a hugely valuable effort, Councillor Davies thanked everyone on behalf of the community.

Councillor Davies thanked Staffordshire County Council for its grant of £1000 to help with travel and other Covid-19 expenses.

99. INSTALLATION AND ONGOING COSTS OF WIFI

At the Finance Strategy and Management Committee meeting in January 2020, three quotations were considered in relation to the installation and ongoing charge for WIFI in Biddulph Town Hall. At this time, two quotations were fairly similar, and it was agreed that the Town Council would seek approval from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) to commence the installation of WIFI in Biddulph Town Hall.

SMDC has confirmed that they will pay for the installation of WIFI; this can commence as soon as practicable. The work would be commissioned by the Town Council, who will have the ongoing relationship with the provider.

It is proposed that the Town Council will pay for the ongoing cost of the WIFI. SMDC's preferred provider is Fifteen, which means the Town Council will pay £47.50 per month. Please note that the current 'dongle' WIFI provision is £25 per month, which will be ended when the new service commences.

*To **approve** that WIFI will be installed in Biddulph Town Hall; Biddulph Town Council will be responsible for the ongoing cost.*

Councillor Yates felt that the monthly charge could be cost neutral if account was taken of the reduction in paper and printing; this would also facilitate remote attendance at meetings

Councillor Hall proposed to accept commitment, this was seconded by Councillor Yates and agreed.

100. SAINSBURY'S LAND PURCHASE

At the Town Council meeting in September 2019, Councillors approved that land at Station Road would be purchased from Sainsburys. Sainsbury's has recently confirmed that they wish to proceed with this sale.

*To **approve** that the Town Council will transfer £6000 (inc. VAT) to Charlton's Solicitors to enable them to confirm that they are holding the funds on account in respect of Sainsburys' solicitor's fees. The legal process will commence when this formal undertaking has been given. Further purchase costs will be released at a later date.*

Councillor Davies noted that this Council had been negotiating with Sainsbury's for ages to gain this extra bit of land on Station Road; Sainsbury's now wished to proceed with the sale and had requested that monies for their legal fees be lodged with the Town Council's solicitor - Charlton's. The amount to be £6000 including VAT as a maximum. The Chief Officer noted that the cost of purchasing the land would be in addition to this.

Councillor Davies proposed to approve the transfer, this was seconded by Councillor Hall a vote was taken and this was agreed.

Councillor Jackson had agreed, but added that this was a lot of money to get a tiny piece of land that was no good to Sainsbury's whatsoever.

101. MANAGEMENT OF BIDDULPH TOWN HALL

At the Special Town Council meeting in February 2020, Councillors voted to accept the draft Management Agreement for Biddulph Town Hall. This document contained information about the financial contribution that would be paid by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) and the transfer of

caretaking staff to Biddulph Town Council. The latter issue had been discussed at the January 2020 Town Council meeting and within the Asset Transfer Working Group.

*To **approve** the Management Agreement for Biddulph Town Hall, effective 1 June 2020. This will include the transfer of caretaking staff to Biddulph Town Council.*

Please note, this document will be sent separately as it is commercially sensitive and contains information about the TUPE transfer of staff.

Ongoing support with this process has been provided by Charlton's Solicitors. The lease document for the Town Hall will be considered at a later meeting, when received.

Councillor Hawley queried the discrepancy in the cost of reception service. The Chief Officer confirmed that the figure would be £8000 received from the District Council and noted that other tenants would also pay into this reception service.

The Chief Officer noted that this was the opportunity for Councillors to scrutinise the document fully, any queries and comments to the Chief Officer to pass to Charlton's.

Councillor Jackson was concerned that as County Council staff had been working from home, there was the possibility that the County Council may look to change the way it operated, and the Town Hall could lose a long-standing tenant and revenue stream in the future.

The Chief Officer had raised this issue with SMDC and the possible risk to the Town Council if major tenants left, and there was a clause in the Agreement to address this. The Management Agreement was for five years with a 6 months' notice period.

Councillor Salt proposed to accept the Agreement, this was seconded by Councillor Hall and agreed

Councillor Barlow re-joined the meeting

102. OFFICE AND STORAGE SPACE WITHIN THE TOWN HALL

- a) To **approve** the purchase of kitchen units, sink, worktop and fittings for the new office space (est. £500+VAT)
- b) To **approve** the purchase of a new desk and three new chairs for caretaking staff (est. £500+VAT)
- c) To **note** that a specification has been developed for electrical work in the new office space; quotations to be received at the next meeting.

The Chief Officer noted that the internal and covering walls in the previous Committee Room/Police locker room, had been removed and the windows uncovered.

Councillor Rushton proposed to accept the two purchases as listed above and to note the specification, this was seconded by Councillor Hall and agreed.

103.CONFIRMATION OF INTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS USUALLY CONSIDERED AT THE CLOSE OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR AND DELAYED DUE TO CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.

Internal Audit arrangements are approved annually. Within the November 2019 Finance Strategy and Management Committee Annual Finance Report, the Chief Officer undertook to carry out benchmarking of internal audit provision.

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioners' Guide notes that the following conditions in relation to the internal auditor must be considered annually. They shall:

- *be competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;*
- *report to council in writing with a minimum of one annual written report during each financial year;*
- *competence, objectivity and independence, be free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and*
- *have no involvement in the financial decision making, management or control of the council.*

The current internal auditor has provided the following statement: I worked in various local government roles, both audit and accountancy, since 1987. I qualified with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in 1997; and worked in a professional role finishing in 2009 as Deputy Head of Finance with High Peak Borough Council. I have provided some teaching on the Association of Accounting Technicians course for Buxton College up to 2014.

The Chief Officer can confirm that the internal auditor meets the above criteria, having an excellent understanding of the Town Council whilst ensuring a professional and objective relationship. It is not considered appropriate to consider alternative arrangements at this time.

*To **approve** that the current Internal Auditor should be confirmed for the 2019-20 audit.*

The Chief Officer had no concerns, The Internal Auditor was very thorough, professional and objective.

Councillor Hawley had carried out an internal monitoring review in January, ordinarily he would review the accounts prior to sending to the auditor; he asked if council was happy to send without that check this time.

Councillor Hall proposed to approve the Internal Audit and accept Councillor Hawley's concerns and to send the accounts straight to the Internal Auditor; this was the only way forward at the moment, the proposal was seconded by Councillor Perkin and agreed.

104. UPDATE ON BIDDULPH GRANGE COUNTRY PARK VISITOR CENTRE LEASE

Lease not received from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council as agenda were circulated. If received before meeting, this will be sent out to aid discussion. Expected to be in line with approved Heads of Terms (February 2020 Town Council).

The Chief Officer noted that the paperwork was received the day after agendas were sent out, it was circulated to members following receipt. The Chief Officer drew attention to the part about contracting out of the provision of the Landlord and Tenant Act, therefore giving up the security of tenure. There would be the risk that this Council would carry out a lot of work to bring the building up to scratch and after the 5 years it could lose the building. There

was also the risk that if the Town Council did not accept this clause the offer could be withdrawn.

Councillor Yates spoke about his laudable aims for the building and expressed concern that the lease was short compared with the amount of work needed, he would like Biddulph Town Council to take ownership of the Visitor Centre and do something really good with it.

Councillor Jones said that the amount of time this had taken was astounding. Councillor Jones was keen to get the document signed before the building fell into more decay.

Councillor Hall added that this Council did not have to negotiate if it didn't like the clause.

Councillor Smith echoed the many comments made; she would like discussion about this especially about the subletting.

Councillor Hawley added that the clause was to protect the interest of the District Council; our legal representative would make sure our interests were protected.

Councillor Salt noted that the same issues had been experienced with the Biddulph Youth and Community Zone; if the lease was shorter than five years, major grants could not be applied for.

Councillor Jones noted that there was time as the doors will not be open for a while due to Covid 19, we should use the time to get the agreement which we could all agree to.

The Chief Officer would make additional investigations.

105. ACCOUNTS & FINANCE

To approve expenditure in April and May, sent out for consideration previously, and paid under powers within the Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation.

APRIL

Expenditure above £5000

There are two items that exceed £5000. These items of expenditure are incurred as a result of contracts which have previously been approved by the Town Council. As such, this expenditure is pre-approved and anticipated.

RGS- Burial Grounds' Maintenance contract

Six-monthly payment	7,100.00
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Urban Vision

Neighbourhood Plan

Regulation 14 consultation and preparation for Regulation 16 consultation	5,700.00
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Expenditure above £500 and below £5000

RGS- Burial Grounds' Maintenance contract

Removing soil from Woodhouse Burial Ground	554.00
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RGS- Lengthsman work

Installing dead hedge at Springfield Road and tidy up of area	962.00
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Raymond Gibson

Storage of Artisan Market equipment and other items (six months)	1300.00
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Salaries

5569.30

Pension contributions (Local Government Pension Scheme)

2380.75

HMRC

2086.25

D&G Bus

Provision of the 93 service	3383.60
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Urban Vision

Neighbourhood Development Order

Regulation 14 consultation and preparation for Regulation 16 consultation	3,000.00
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Urban Vision	
Local Plan Main Modification representations letter	1,269.36
ASH Waste Services	
Town Burial Ground bins	580.20
Expenditure below £500	
RGS- Lengthsman	
Removing and storing blue nose bricks for Gillow Heath project	72.00
Mileage and expenditure associated with Coronavirus volunteers support:	
Councillor Paul Barlow	27.90
Councillor Nigel Yates	48.15
Councillor Wayne Rogers	59.84
Jodie Hancock	2.52
Councillor Chris Perkin	5.85
Jodie Hancock	
Purchase of Dementia Cinema film	7.13
SMDC Non-Domestic Rates, Burial Ground	439.12
Councillor Jim Garvey	
Travel to Stafford for Councillor training	25.20
Fifteen Group	
Mobile phone contracts x2	37.00
Tidysite	
Provision of bins at Woodhouse Burial Ground	23.10
Countrywide	
Mowing at Springfield Road	61.40
Grenke	
Photocopier lease	439.67
SMDC- Lease of land at Congleton Road (allotments)	90.00

Business Products	46.74
Photocopier copies	

NABMA (National Association of British Market Authorities)	
Annual Membership	358.00

Brian Carter	
Opening/ closing Woodhouse Burial Ground gates	60.00

Credit Card

Facebook promotion- Dementia Cinema	2.00
Amazon- two water vessels for meetings	53.98
Giff Gaff- WIFI for office use	25.00
Shutterstock image licensing	19.00
Argos- purchase of two mobile phones	239.98
Amazon- two heavy duty storage boxes with wheels, mobile phone covers/ protectors	63.45
Monster Racking- office storage	126.97

MAY

Expenditure above £5000

None

Expenditure above £500 and below £5000

Salaries (in total)	5567.90
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Pension contributions (Local Government Pension Scheme)	2380.75
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HMRC	2086.65
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D&G Bus	
Provision of the 93 service	3076.00

Expenditure below £500

Mileage and expenditure associated with Coronavirus volunteers support:

Councillor Paul Barlow	39.60
Councillor Nigel Yates	169.20
Councillor Wayne Rogers	187.20

ASH Waste Services

Town Burial Ground bins	358.74
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AMENDED FIGURE

Fifteen Group

Mobile phone contracts x2

Figure shown in April accounts should have been for six-week period (start of contract) 66.48

Collected by Direct Debit on 30 April 2020

Tidysite

Provision of bins at Woodhouse Burial Ground	23.10
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Countrywide

Mowing at Springfield Road	61.40
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Npower

Energy Supply for Christmas Lights	28.01
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Administration cost for Christmas Lights account	31.69
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Npower

Energy supply at BT Kiosk, Biddulph Town Hall (full year, March 2019-April 2020)	306.52
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Business Products

Photocopier copies	11.44
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Brian Carter

Opening/ closing Woodhouse Burial Ground gates	40.00
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LCR Subscription

17.00

Moorside Memorials

Repair of graves that were damaged when lime tree fell at Burial Ground 240.00

Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM)

Annual membership 95.00

Petty Cash 46.89

Credit Card

Giff Gaff- WIFI for office use 25.00

Shutterstock image licensing 19.00

Open Spaces membership 45.00

Post Office- stamps 91.19

Microsoft Office 365 for laptop 79.99

Wickes- paint, filler, sealant for office and storage space 95.85

The meeting closed at 7.24 pm

Signed Date