

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Parish Council held in the Community Hall on Tuesday 17th January 2012

Present: Mr. John Meischke (Vice-Chairman) Mrs. Christine Dinnin
 Mr. Denis Filer Mr. Iain Harris
 Mr. Ian Knight Mr. David Stock
 Ms. Emma Waltham Mrs. Helen McCash
 The Clerk (Mrs. Jane Allsop)
 Press: Catherine Lofthouse

In the absence of Mr. Smith, Mr. Meischke took the chair.

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence from Mr. Michael Smith (Chairman), and Mr. Nigel Poulton.

2 Public Participation

Mr. Meischke asked Catherine Lofthouse (Hertfordshire Mercury) if she had items to raise.

Catherine Lofthouse said she wanted to bring to the Parish Council's attention her current campaign to encourage donors to come forward to help Cystic Fibrosis victims. This was following the death of a young cystic fibrosis victim in this area.

She asked Parish Councillors if they knew of anyone who had had a donor transplant or who would be willing to donate an organ, to contact her. She said her campaign would be running for approximately three months.

3 Chairman's/Clerk's Report

Mr. Meischke reported on the following items.

Item 5 d 9, Action points resolved – Contact applicants willing to design a website banner - this item to be deleted and taken as the final item under 5 b, Review of actions.

Additional items under Environment Sub-Committee.

- Minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on Tuesday 13th December 2011.
- Adam Welch – Tree survey

4 Declaration of Interests

None.

5 Minutes of the last meeting

a) Acceptance

- **Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Tuesday 13th December 2011**
 Parish Councillors accepted the minutes, which were then signed by the Vice-Chairman as a true record.

b) Review of actions

- **Sort out the locks and signage for the outside toilets**
 Refer to item 8 a, Community Hall Trustees.
- **Compare the new Allotment lease with the previous lease**
 Mr. Harris said he had been waiting for Rumball Sedgwick to confirm the legal fees for drawing up the new lease, before he proceeded with comparing the old lease with the new one. He will now deal with this and report to the next meeting. **Action: I. Harris**
- **Contact parishes re interest in resurrecting the Inter Parish Conference**
 East Herts Council intend to hold another East Herts Rural Parish Conference in early autumn 2012. Parish Councillors agreed that there is no point in holding an inter parish conference at the same time of year as the East Herts Council meeting and that this item should be deferred to January 2013. **Agenda: 01/2013**
- **Contact Groundwork Trust re regeneration of the bike ramp area**
 The Clerk said that she had e-mailed Gill Taylor and Groundwork Trust to ask if they can help with the regeneration of the bike ramp area. This item to remain on the agenda under Environment Sub-Committee. **Agenda: 02/12**
- **Contact East Herts Council and Herts Tree Care**
 The Clerk has submitted a 'Tree Preservation Order application form for work' to Malcolm Amey at East Herts Council. Herts Tree Care has been notified that, subject to permission from East Herts Council, their quotation for work to the Oak tree has been accepted.

- **Draft a response to the draft Drought Management Plan**

Mr. Knight said that he had e-mailed DEFRA the response he had written to the Veolia draft Drought Management Plan.

A copy of the response to be sent to all Parish Councillors.

Action: I. Knight

- **Draft a response to the 2012 policing plan**

Mr. Meischke said that Mr. Smith had completed the Policing plan response form.

The Police Authority recognises that burglary and antisocial behaviour are of the highest concern to the rural public. Mr. Smith has answered the questionnaire with some emphasis on petty vandalism, high visibility policing and reporting issues.

It was agreed to e-mail Mr. Smith's response to Hertfordshire Police Authority.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Write Parish News article re change of use of Community Hall external toilets**

The Clerk said that Mr. Poulton had asked her not to insert an article in the Parish News because it was unlikely that work to the external toilets would be completed by the beginning of February.

The Clerk to draft an article about the toilet change of use and e-mail it to Parish Councillors for their comments.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Contact applicants willing to design a website banner**

Mr. Stock said that he had e-mailed the two people who had expressed an interest in designing the banner, but had not received a response from either of them. However, within the last few days, while out in the village, he was approached by one of the two who then introduced himself. To-date, there has been no further progress so this item is to remain on the agenda under Specific items and Mr. Stock will report back accordingly.

Agenda: 02/12

c) Action points outstanding for more than two months

- **Type up the new Standing Orders as amended and e-mail it to all Parish Councillors**

The Clerk to type up the new Standing Orders as amended and e-mail it to all Parish Councillors prior to the March 2012 Parish Council meeting. This item to be placed on the March agenda.

Agenda: 03/12

d) Action points resolved

1. Contact Kath Sexton (CDA for Herts) requesting a press release re digital switchover
2. Inform Sports and Social Club of hire charge increase
3. Write to all contractors who quoted for work in 2012/13
4. Renew Community Hall advert in Parish News
5. Renew SLCC membership
6. Upload planning application file onto the Watton-at-Stone website
7. E-mail Jonathan Hart re Great Innings play area
8. Erin Keenan (Rumball Sedgwick) re legal costs and the disbursement fees
9. **Deleted**
Refer to last bullet-point under item 5 b, Review of actions - Contact applicants willing to design a website banner.
10. Contact East Herts Council re payment of New Homes Bonus for 2010 and 2011
11. Obtain quotation for tree roundel and metal supports
12. Check to see if the Oak tree overhanging the MPPA has been pruned
13. Write parish new article re Diamond Jubilee celebrations
14. Write parish new article re planting on Lammas

6 Planning

a) Planning Protocol

Mr. Stock said that, together with Mr. Harris, he had updated the Planning Protocol to include the involvement of the Planning Co-ordinator and the Deputy Planning Co-ordinator, and also to make certain parts of the document generic.

Prior to the meeting, all Parish Councillors were provided with a copy of the revised document and the changes made. There were no subsequent comments so the Parish Council agreed to adopt the revised Planning Protocol, which is now at Edition 3, January 2012.

Mr. Stock said that both the Planning Protocol and the newly-created (by the Clerk) Planning Applications file should be uploaded, under separate headings, to the Parish Council section of our website. The Planning Applications file is in tabular format and each entry comprises the application number, location, description, East Herts Council's decision and the Parish Council's response to the application. It was agreed that this would be a useful record for reference purposes. Mr. Harris said that the Planning Applications file would also back-up the Parish Council's concerns that the planning authority often appears to take no notice of what we say as a Parish Council.

b) Applications

None.

c) Decisions**i) 3, White House Close, 3/11/1647/FP**

Two storey side and single storey rear extensions -East Herts Council permission granted

ii) 46 Great Innings North (3/11/1898/FP)

Conversion of garage to habitable accommodation -East Herts Council permission granted

7 Specific items**a) Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations - meeting held on 9th January 2012**

Mr. Knight has produced a set of minutes for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebration meeting held on 9th January, which was chaired by Mr. Meischke. A copy of these minutes have been e-mailed to all Parish Councillors. The next meeting will be held on Thursday 16th February in the Community Hall.

Mr. Meischke said that things are now marching along at quite a pace. It has been agreed that the main event will be a village picnic on the sportsfield on Sunday 3rd June starting at 1300 until mid-evening (times to be confirmed). People attending the event will bring their own food and drinks, chairs/tables/gazebos. For safety reasons no barbecues will be allowed.

The layout of the sportsfield is still to be decided, but there will be marked out areas for music events and dancing.

Mr. Meischke said that the main urgency has been to sort out the music and entertainment for the event.

Mr. Smith has booked three strolling acts, namely: one Union Jack themed stilt walker, one magician and a three-piece strolling band (which include a clarinet, banjo, sousaphone or bass sax player). The booking of these events was approved by Parish Councillors via e-mail.

The Parish Council will organise additional music and entertainment for the event including building a stage and making sure the event runs smoothly. They will also be responsible for advertising.

Other people who have committed to the event are:

- Georgie Pay – ballet display
- Alan Grant – music
- Elliot Mannering – music
- Allan Rattue- card display in the Community Hall
- Nicki Smith - Face painting

Lyn Oakman has spoken to Eileen King (Head teacher, Watton-at-Stone School, who will be contacting Mrs. Dinnin about a contribution from the school.

Mr. Meischke said that the stage would most likely be facing the sportsfield and in front of the stage will be an area for displays.

Mr. Filer said that he was sorry that there would be no hog roast. Mr. Meischke explained that the safety guidelines for the Queen's jubilee are for village picnics and no barbecues.

Mr. Knight will be placing a notice in each edition of the Parish News between now and the Queen's Jubilee give updates on the planned events.

b) Great Innings play area

As instructed at the December Parish Council meeting, the Clerk e-mailed Jonathan Hart (East Herts Council) requesting that a member of the Parish Council meet with him and Ian Sharratt to discuss issues at the play area. Jonathan Hart e-mailed on 14th December as follows

As no meeting date has been arranged, it was agreed to e-mail Jonathan Hart again, to ask when we can expect a site meeting at the Great Innings play area.

Action: J. Allsop

c) Website banner

Refer to item 5 b, Review of actions - Contact applicants willing to design a website banner.

d) Inter parish conference

Refer to item 5b, Review of Actions - Contact parishes re interest in resurrecting the Inter Parish Conference.

8 Reports

a) Sub-Committees

Budget & Finance

Mr. Filer reported on the following items.

- **Monthly accounts**

Watton-at-Stone Parish Council

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty cash - Payments
None		None
 Cheques issued		
SLCC	Annual subscription	123.00
HCC	10 reams of A4 paper	36.71
St. Albans Diocesan Board	1/2 year Allotment rent	300.00
HCC	Lighting	729.40
Adam Welch	Work to Willow on Lammas	420.00
Adam Welch	Trim branches blocking tennis court floodlight	210.00
Wages and salaries	January 2012	983.95
Virgin Media	Phone charges to 03/01/2012	<u>21.90</u>
		<u>2824.96</u>
 Cheques received		
Sports and Social Club	1/4 rent	331.25
		<u>331.25</u>

Watton-at-Stone Community Hall

Petty Cash – Receipts		Petty Cash -Payments
Barbara Smart – Pavilion	12.00	None
Sharon Ling –Pavilion	64.00	
Floodlighting to 15.01.12	508.00	
Jim Keen – November 2011	60.00	
Mrs. Bamforth - Hall & Pavilion	40.00	
Mrs. Stuart - Hall & Pavilion	45.50	
Mrs. Herrick - Hall & Pavilion	39.00	
Mrs. Faulkner - Hall & Pavilion	<u>48.00</u>	
	<u>816.50</u>	
 Cheques issued		
Veolia Water	Water supply	108.23
Wages	January 2012	382.30
East Herts Council	Rates - 10th payment	<u>113.00</u>
		<u>603.53</u>
 Cheques received		
Watton Youth Drop Inn	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	367.20
Watton Ramblers	Pavilion hire	7.00
Badminton Club	Main Hall hire	162.00
Sports and Social Club	Hire of Community Hall facilities	331.25
Mrs. Gleane	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	52.00
Dave Boddy	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	397.80
Mr. and Mrs. Webb	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	64.00
Mr. and Mrs. Phypers	Main Hall and Pavilion hire	<u>56.00</u>
		<u>1437.25</u>

Parish Councillors approved the above payments.

- **9-monthly statement of accounts for the Parish Council and Community Hall**

Community Hall

Expenditure

Council tax	Represents 9 out of 10 payments due for the year.
Gas	Currently under 50% of the budgeted figure. Mr. Filer said he remained concerned about the annual gas charge, although the provider has been changed from Npower to British Gas.
Electricity	Close to the budgeted figure for the time of year.
MPPA maintenance	Over budget. In addition to the budgeted moss-kill and pressure wash, the fence needed repairing and two dog signs were purchased.
Equipment	104% of budget (£1832.32) and represents the purchase of new blinds for the Pavilion. A grant of £1562.87 has been received from East Herts Council, to

cover the net cost of the blinds. The VAT element on this purchase has been claimed back from H M Customs and Excise

Decoration There is an under-spend on this item. The main corridor was painted by the Glaxo teams and therefore only paints and brushes needed to be purchased. Mr. Meischke is arranging for Bob Adams to paint the kitchen in this financial year and not in 2012/13.

Income

Main Hall Just below 75% of the annual budget

Pavilion Just over 75% of the annual budget

The income for both the Main Hall and Pavilion seemed to have recovered, however concern over future income from Beane Valley remains, which is why the 2012/13 budget figures have been reduced.

Parish Council Accounts

Expenditure

• **Parks and Open Spaces**

The sportsfield grass cut shows an over-spend for the year. This is due to the weather conditions during the 2011 summer. If the weather is very dry we have an under-spend on grass cutting but if it is wetter the grass grows more and needs cutting more often. The sportsfield grass-cutting budget for 2012/13 has been increased.

Sportsfield Hedges, Sportsfield Maintenance, Lammass & Watton Green and Parish Paths and Land all appear to be overspent but these are payments for the full year so there is no cause for concern.

• **Highways/Footpaths/Rights of Way etc**

Lighting energy and maintenance only show payment for one quarter. However, an additional two quarters has been paid in January 2012.

• **Income**

The total income of 95.1% includes Rubbish Collection, Allotment rents (including water charges) and Precept, which are all full year receipts. Unfortunately, there is no P3 grant for 2011/12, although a budget provision of £1,000 was made.

• **9-monthly inspection of accounts**

Mrs. McCash said that she carried-out the 9-month inspection of the Parish Council and Community Hall accounts on the 16th January and the accounts were in good order.

A copy of Mrs. McCash's report to be included in the Community Hall and Parish Council accounts for 2011/12.

Action: J. Allsop

• **Budget 2012/13**

Mr. Filer said that he had been tempted to reduce the 2012/13 budget for gas from £3,200 to £3,000, however he felt it was best to leave it at its current level.

Parish Councillors agreed to accept the Parish Council and Community Hall draft 2012/13 budget figures, as amended at the December 2012 meeting.

• **Precept 2012/13**

The Parish Council agreed a Precept of £30,095; the Precept forms were duly signed by Mr. Meischke, Mr. Filer and Mrs. McCash and countersigned by the Clerk.

The completed precept form to be returned to East Herts Council.

Action: J. Allsop

Community Hall Trustees

Mr. Meischke reported on the following item.

• **Minutes and report on Trustees meeting held on 10th January 2012**

The Trustees accepted the minutes, which were then signed by the Vice-Chairman as a true record.

Mr. Meischke said that Hannah Brownlow has agreed to put together a presentation for the February Parish Council meeting.

Hannah Brownlow has provided the Parish Council with an agreement titled 'Terms of reference of the Watton-at-Stone Playground Working Group', which in principal Mr. Poulton and Mr. Smith could see no problems. However, it was agreed to ask Mr. Harris to look over the document before the Parish Council approves that it be signed. Mr. Harris agreed to look at the document.

Action: I. Harris

The Clerk to copy this agreement to all Parish Councillors.

Action: J. Allsop

This item to be discussed at the February Parish Council meeting under Community Hall Trustees.

Agenda: 02/11

• **Annual playground inspection and Damage to spring see-saw**

As reported at the December 2011 Parish Council meeting, the Play Inspection Company have apologised in writing (letter dated 11th December) for their error in missing the extensive rot to the wooden plank on the spring see-saw.

Mr. Smith has now replaced the rotten beam with a new one.

Ms. Waltham asked if the Parish Council would take this matter further with the Play Inspection Company. Mr. Meischke said that it was quite a forceful apology and that he thought there was no reason to overreact. East Herts Council, who arranged for the work to be done, are fully aware of the situation.

- **Outside toilets**

Adrian Thompson has been instructed to remove the existing toilet signs, put up the unisex sign on the Ladies toilet door and purchase and fit a new internal lock to the ladies toilet door.

- **Graffiti on wall outside, Missing bricks in Community Hall wall and kitchen door closure**

Adrian Thompson has been instructed to try to remove the graffiti from the wall, replace the five missing bricks in the Community Hall wall, buy, and fit a replacement door closure for the kitchen door.

- **Roof vent**

City Roofing has been asked to re-fit one of the Community Hall roof vents. The Clerk said that they have not charged for repairing the guttering on the Community Hall in November last year.

- **Main Hall flooring**

Mr. Meischke said that he is looking into options for a new floor covering for the Main Hall that would be suitable for sports usage but also would be robust enough to allow ordinary footwear across it as well as tables and chairs. Floor coverings have changed since the existing floor was installed approximately 17 years ago and it will soon be coming near to the end of its life. Springy flooring with tough surfaces are now available.

Another option is to purchase a removable surface, but this would need storing and could be a false economy if the Main Hall flooring then needs to be replaced, making the removable surface redundant.

Recreation & Amenities

Mr. Knight reported on the following item.

- **Leaf clearance**

The tennis court is suffering from the usual seasonal accumulation of fallen leaves. This is affecting the drainage along the edge of the MPPA near the Oak tree, as the aggregate trench is full of rotten leaves.

Ted Brown to be asked to clear the leaves.

Action: I. Knight

- **Floodlight**

The fitting on the floodlight nearest to Church Walk and the Community Hall has moved further out of alignment. It is currently not a safety problem, nor is the actual floodlight causing a problem with its direction of beam. Mr. Knight said he would continue to monitor the floodlight on a regular basis.

Action: I. Knight

- **Surface condition**

A small section of the MPPA surface was damaged in the summer when a fire was lit on its surface. The tarmac is now lifting in this area.

It was agreed that Mr. Knight ask Halcyon Courts to inspect the damaged surface and submit their quotation for its repair.

Action: I. Knight

Environment Sub-Committee

Mrs. Dinnin reported on the following items.

- **Lammas**

- **Roundel of Elm Trees**

Mr. Harris said whilst walking on the Lammas, he had noticed five Elm trees had been planted, with a space for a sixth tree. He decided to check through the minutes to see how many trees the Parish Council had agreed to plant and found that not only had we not agreed an amount, we had not approved their purchase. Mr. Harris said that it was important that the Parish Council was transparent in all issues and the trees should not have been purchased and planted without a formal resolution of the Parish Council.

Mrs. Dinnin said that Mr. Smith had been asked to obtain quotations for the trees. The original idea was to plant five Elm trees however, after discussions between Mrs. Dinnin, Mr. Smith, Mr. Meischke and Mr. Poulton, it was agreed that six trees should be purchased, to represent one tree for every decade that Queen Elizabeth II has reigned. Mrs. Dinnin said that the cost of the trees, tree guards and their installation, would be taken out of the £3,000 promised by Barratt Homes for the Golden Jubilee Celebrations. Mr. Harris asked if the Parish Council had received a letter from Barratt Homes agreeing to this donation and the Clerk said that she knew of no such letter. Mrs. McCash said that the Parish Council should not be spending money without written confirmation that the money is coming to us.

The Clerk confirmed that the iron tree guards have been ordered and a cheque to cover the cost had been taken out of the Parish Council account. She said that Mr. Smith had paid for the trees.

It was agreed that this item should be put on the February Parish Council agenda so that these payments can be approved. **Agenda: 02/12**

Mr. Harris said that the Elm trees planted on the Lammas look very nice and that he was not critical of any action other than the absence of an appropriate resolution.

- **Willow Tree**

Mrs. Dinnin said that Adam Welch had cut back the Willow tree on the Lammas more harshly than expected and the tree looks quite sad. Hopefully, as Willow trees grow fast it will soon look respectable again.

- **Groundwork Trust**

Refer to item 5 b, Review of Actions - Contact Groundwork Trust re regeneration of the bike ramp area.

- **Adam Welch – Tree survey**

A copy of Adam Welch's tree survey to be e-mailed to all Parish Councillors. **Action: J. Allsop**

This item to be discussed at the February Parish Council meeting. **Agenda: 02/12**

- **Trees on Sportsfield**

- **TPO application for Oak tree**

Refer to item 5 a, Review of Actions Contact East Herts Council and Herts Tree Care.

- **Pruning of Oak tree overhanging MPPA**

Mrs. Dinnin confirmed that Adam Welch has pruned the overhanging branches.

- **Allotments**

Mrs. Dinnin said that the new allotment holders are doing well with their plots. There are currently two people on the Allotment waiting list. There is one plot available, however it does not get much sunlight and currently nobody wants to rent it.

- **War memorial**

Some of the plants in the War Memorial garden have died and need replacing.

Mrs. Dinnin will inspect the War Memorial garden and then talk to Watton Nurseries about the purchase of additional plants. **Action: C. Dinnin**

- **Minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on Tuesday 13th December 2011.**

It was agreed to defer the approval of the Environment Sub-Committee minutes to the February Parish Council meeting.

b) Routine reports

i) Emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests

Mr. Poulton and Mr. Meischke carried-out the emergency escape lighting tests and manual alarm call tests on Sunday 14th January.

ii) Monthly village-report

Mr. Harris completed the report on 15th January.

Generally, the village is looking good. Mr. Harris said that Ted Brown was litterpicking during his inspection of the sportsfield.

- **Litterbin on Abel Smith land near footpath to the Lammas – this bin is full of rubbish.**

Mr. Meischke agreed to inspect the bin. **Action: J. Meischke**

The Clerk to send Mr. Meischke the minute history re this litterbin. **Action: J. Allsop**

iii) Weekly sportsfield-report and action

None.

iv) Website

- **Website banner**

Refer to item 6 b, Review of actions - Contact applicants willing to design a website banner.

- **Notices**

Mr. Knight suggested that notices sent to the Parish Council could be placed on the website. For example, a notice recently received about the bulk purchase of heating oil. This was agreed by Parish Councillors.

Mr. Stock suggested that the 'Village Events' page should be renamed 'Village Events and Notices'.

This was agreed by Parish Councillors. The Clerk to act accordingly. **Action: J. Allsop**

v) Website diary

None.

9 Correspondence received

a) Hertfordshire County Council re Update on Rural Community Broadband Fund

Hertfordshire County Council e-mailed on 6th January about rural community broadband funding.

It was agreed that provided Virgin Media are able to supply an internet connection to the Community Hall, because the fibre optic cable was laid as far as the hall in the mid-1990s, there is no reason to pursue broadband funding.

The Clerk is waiting for Virgin Media to contact her to confirm that there is a connection in School Lane.

This item to remain on the agenda under Community Hall Trustees.

Agenda: 02/12

b) Independent examination of Hertfordshire Mineral Waste Development Framework

It was agreed to e-mail this document to all Parish Councillors and ask them if they want us to respond.

Action: J. Allsop

c) River Beane Restoration Association – request for donation from the Parish Council

Ian Knight (Secretary of the River Beane Restoration Association) wrote on 6th January to request a donation from the Parish Council towards the running costs of the association. It was agreed to donate £25.

Action: J. Allsop

- **Hole in the road surface at the entrance of Rivershill**

Mr. Meischke said that Hertfordshire Highways have been notified of a large hole in the middle of road at the entrance of Rivershill.

10 Village organisations

- **Wotton Youth Drop Inn:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone School Governors:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Neighbourhood Watch:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Allotment and Garden Association:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone War Memorial Hall Management Committee**

Mr. Stock said that he will attend the next meeting of the War Memorial Hall Committee on Friday 20th January.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Pre-School Playgroup:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Scout & Guide Group:** Nothing to report.

- **Wotton-at-Stone Sports & Social Club**

Ms. Waltham said that at the Sports and Social Club meeting held on 10th January, the Football Club had asked for two hard bristle brushes for the changing rooms. The Clerk said that two plastic hard brushes had recently been purchased. It was agreed to investigate and take action as required.

Action: J. Meischke/J. Allsop

Goal posts inserts to cover the holes when the posts are removed were requested by the Sports and Social Club to prevent anyone falling because of the holes. It was agreed that Mr. Knight should investigate the cost involved.

Action: I. Knight

It was noted that we have never had goal posts inserts before and no accidents have been reported concerning the goal post holes.

- **Police Authority:** Nothing to report.

- **River Beane Restoration Association:** Nothing to report.

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11 Items for Parish News

There was one item identified for inclusion in the March 2012 issue of the Parish News.

- Work to a Willow tree on the Lammas.

Action: J. Allsop

- **The meeting closed at 2105.**

- **The date for the next Parish Council meeting is Tuesday 21st February 2012.**