

## Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision

Appendix C to this report is exempt from publication under the provisions of paragraph 3 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules set out in the Constitution pursuant to Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972, as amended. The documents are exempt because they refer to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	External matched funding award for a Local Authority Research Practitioner (LARP)
<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Mark Ansell, Director of Public Health
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Gillian Ford, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Care Services
<b>ELT Lead:</b>	Mark Ansell, Director of Public Health
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	<p>Sedina Lewis, Public Health Principal 01708431188 <a href="mailto:sedina.lewis@havering.gov.uk">sedina.lewis@havering.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Sandy Hamberger, Assistant Director Insight, Policy, Strategy &amp; Climate 01708434506 <a href="mailto:sandy.hamberger@havering.gov.uk">sandy.hamberger@havering.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Policy context:</b>	The LARP role supports all of London Borough of Havering (LBH)'s corporate objectives – (1) supporting our residents to stay safe and well, (2) a great place to live, work and enjoy and (3) enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council. The LARP will support the council with its ambition to be data-driven and use evidence-based approaches to shape

**Non-key Executive Decision**

	the delivery of cost-effective services for residents.
<b>Financial summary:</b>	LARP post will be 1.0 FTE, appropriately graded, 2-years fixed term contract starting in 2025/26, salary funded by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. £50,000 external matched funding from the National Institute for Health and Care Research's (NIHR) Specialist Centre for Public Health (SCPH) over the 2 years.</li><li>2. Approximately £76,000 from the Public Health Grant.</li></ol>
<b>Relevant Overview &amp; Scrutiny Sub Committee:</b>	Resources
<b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b>	The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision

## Non-key Executive Decision

### **The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well  
**X**

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy **X**

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council **X**

### **Part A – Report seeking decision**

#### **DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION**

For reasons set out in this report, the Director of Public Health is recommended to:

1. Accept external matched funding from the NIHR SCPH of £50,000 to fund the salary cost of the LARP post; and
2. Contribute approximately £76,000 from the Public Health Grant to provide remaining funding required for salary cost. This will be offset in part by utilising funding from a 0.4 FTE vacancy (approximately £23,000) in the Insights Team also charged to the Public Health Grant.
3. Create and insert the LARP role within the Public Health, Insight and Strategy Directorate structure; and
4. Commence the recruitment of a LARP role on a 1.0 FTE, appropriately graded, 2 years fixed-term contract upon the approval of the recommendations 1-3 above.

#### **AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE**

Part 3 of the Council's Constitution

Scheme 3.3.3 - Powers common to all Strategic Directors

1. General

1.1 To take any steps, and take any decisions, necessary for the proper management and administration of their allocated directorate, in accordance with applicable Council policies and procedures.

5. Grants

5.1 To apply for, accept, and thereafter spend/allocate any grant funding connected with their directorate provided that any match funding or residual liabilities can be met from the existing budget of the directorate. For the avoidance of doubt this delegation shall allow the acceptance of any grant offered/ allocated to the Council without any application.

## Non-key Executive Decision

### 7. Human resources (general)

7.2 To restructure their directorates (including the power to create, delete and amend posts) within existing service budgets and/or if budgetary provision is already made in the budget subject to compliance with all applicable Council policies and procedures (including any organisational change process in place from time to time).

#### Scheme 3.3.4c

Specific powers of the Director of Public Health. The Director of Public Health shall be entitled to exercise those powers detailed at 3.3.3 above but provided that such functions shall only be exercised in respect of areas directly affecting Public Health.

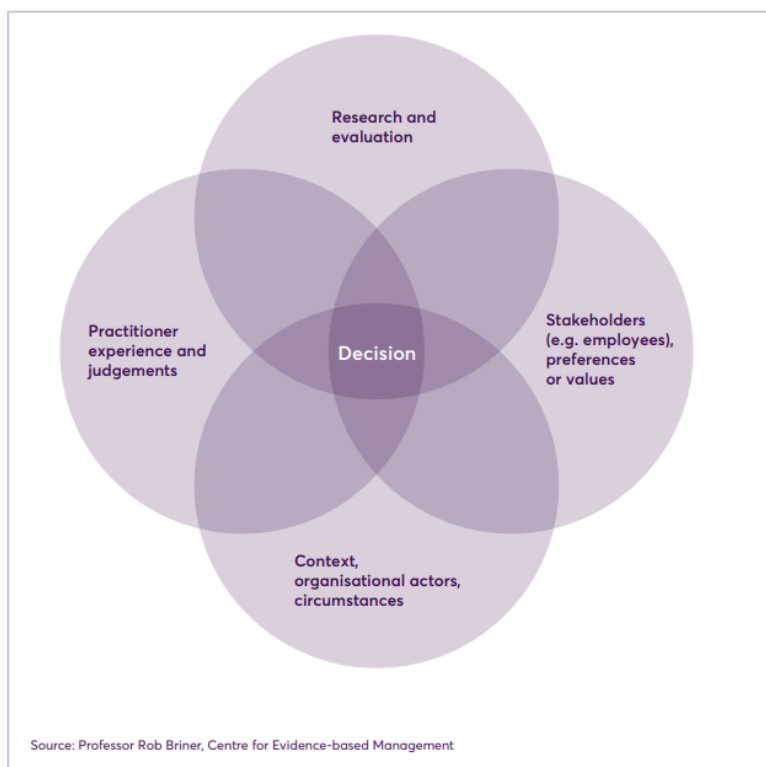
## STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

### 1 Background

#### 1.1 Research in Local Authorities

Local authorities across England are under significant financial pressure with increases in demand and costs for services. Using evidence-based approaches is crucial for identifying cost-effective models to deliver services and improve population outcomes. Research and evaluation-generated evidence can significantly aid in understanding residents' needs, guiding policy decisions and prioritising investments (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: The four elements of evidence-based decision-making <sup>(1)</sup>**



## **Non-key Executive Decision**

The Department of Health and Social Care defines research as “the attempt to derive generalisable new knowledge by addressing clearly defined questions with systematic and rigorous methods”. Research may involve a wide range of methods including <sup>(2)</sup>:

- Surveys
- Qualitative methods, e.g. focus groups
- Analysis of existing datasets
- Review, interpretation and application of the existing research findings
- Production of statistical estimates, projections and forecasts

While the benefits of using research evidence within local authorities have been widely recognised, it is often underutilised. Some of the reasons for this include accessibility of research findings, staff capacity and staff expertise to produce, interpret and apply research findings <sup>(3-6)</sup>.

### **1.2 NIHR’s Specialist Centre for Public Health (SCPH) and Funding for Local Authority Research Practitioners (LARPs)**

The NIHR SCPH aims to support the generation of high-quality research evidence needed to inform decisions about which interventions have the greatest likelihood of improving population health and reducing health inequalities <sup>(7)</sup>. The SCPH facilitates this by providing local authorities with resources, training and development opportunities. The SCPH encourages local authorities to consider their research activity and position in their research journey using a 3-stage model (see Appendix A for further information):

1. Research Launch (R-LAUNCH): Low level of research experience/engagement
2. Research Build (R-BUILD): Moderate level of research experience/engagement
3. Research Enhance (R-ENHANCE): Higher level of research experience/engagement

The SCPH has several schemes to support local authorities with building research capacity and research capability, including funding opportunities to recruit LARPs. LARPs have dedicated roles within local authorities, supporting a move towards a culture of decision-making routinely informed by research <sup>(8)</sup>. A LARP will have different responsibilities in local authorities, tailored to local needs, and depending on the extent to which a local authority is currently involved in research activity.

The SCPH has awarded 53 local authorities with funding for a LARP role. This funding is covering 56 local authorities across England, including joint applications.

In January 2025, LBH successfully applied for SCPH funding, securing £50,000 in matched funding across two years (financial years 2025/26 and 2026/27) for a LARP post.

## **2 LARP post in London Borough of Havering**

### **2.1 Context**

## Non-key Executive Decision

### 2.1.1 Why now?

Using the NIHR SCPH's 3-stage model, the LBH can be described as an R-LAUNCH local authority, where we have a low level of research experience. The financial challenges, combined with Havering's growing population and changing demographics, have placed unprecedented pressure on local health and care services. It is therefore imperative that LBH works towards an ambition of being a more research active organisation (R-ENHANCE) which applies proactive evidence-based approaches to shape service delivery and improve outcomes for residents. LBH would like to ensure that we deliver high-quality financially sustainable services, engaging residents as key partners in the design, implementation and evaluation of services.

### 2.1.2 Research Strategy

As outlined in LBH's Research Governance Policy, the Council considers research a valuable tool for learning, user engagement and service improvement <sup>(9)</sup>. The appreciation of the principles of research and evidence-based decision-making needs to be embedded within all corporate strategies and policies and ultimately culture. This can be achieved by developing and implementing a Research Strategy. Aims of the strategy will include:

- Develop and embed an agreed understanding of what research is.
- Increase awareness and participation in research across the council.
- Encourage all council staff to use best existing evidence (including cost-effectiveness) and robust evaluation methods to inform decision-making.
- Build research capability by providing research training and development opportunities, linking with the Workforce Strategy.
- Review the use of tools such as artificial intelligence and Power BI to improve the use of research evidence and data.

The additional capacity provided by a LARP is crucial for ensuring the timely development of the Research Strategy, given the current limited staff capacity.

### 2.2 Benefits of the LARP post

The LARP post will be a 1.0 FTE fixed term contract for 2 years starting in the financial year 2025/26. The LARP will be based within the council's Insight Team, which sits in the Public Health, Insights, Policy & Strategy Directorate.

The LARP role in the Council offers several benefits:

- **Research Strategy Development:** The LARP will contribute to the development of a Research Strategy for the Council, which aims to embed the principles of research and evidence-based decision-making within all corporate strategies and policies.
- **Supports Corporate Objectives:** The LARP role aligns with the London Borough of Havering (LBH)'s corporate objectives, which include supporting residents to stay safe and well, making the borough a great place to live, work, and enjoy, and enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council.

## Non-key Executive Decision

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** The LARP will help the Council become more data-driven and use evidence-based approaches to shape the delivery of cost-effective services for residents.
- **Increased Research Awareness:** The LARP will develop internal communications to increase the understanding of research, the role of research evidence within local government, and share examples of good practice and training opportunities.
- **Implementation of Research Governance Policy:** The LARP will support the implementation of the Council's research governance policy.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The LARP will use approaches such as stakeholder engagement and communications to influence the Council's research culture.
- **Collaboration and Advocacy:** The LARP will build relationships with staff across the Council and wider local system, as well as national partners, to facilitate collaborative working, advocacy, and the dissemination of outputs.
- **Sustaining Research Culture:** The LARP will play a key role in sustaining a research culture within the Council, ensuring that services are both cost-effective and effective in improving outcomes for residents.

See Appendix B for further information about the aims and objectives submitted as part of the LARP funding application.

### **2.3 Collaborating to Drive Change**

To ensure that the LARP is supported in achieving the necessary buy-in from colleagues across the Council, the Director of Public Health (DPH) will sponsor the LARP as a member of the Executive Leadership Team. The DPH will champion the work of the LARP across the senior leadership structures, and support in addressing any barriers that might impede progress (if not otherwise resolved via normal escalation processes).

The LARP will be supported with building relationships with members of staff across the council and wider local system as well as national partners to facilitate collaborative working, advocacy and the dissemination of outputs. In addition to the DPH, key partners include:

- Chief Executive, LBH
- Deputy Leader of the Council, LBH
- Assistant Director of Insight, Policy and Strategy, LBH
- Head of Communications & Engagement, LBH
- Head of Communities, LBH
- Statutory Scrutiny Officer, LBH
- Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Cohesion (EDIC) Group, LBH
- Director of the Havering Integrated Team
- Strategy & Innovation Team, North East London Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Thames Freeport Board (Thames Freeport is a transformative initiative to improve lives in Havering and surrounding boroughs through economic growth and strategy, accelerated by shared research)
- NIHR LARP Network – the network provides LARPs with bespoke training and development and national networking activities.

## Non-key Executive Decision

- NIHR Applied Research Collaboration North Thames (NIHR ARC NT)- the NIHR ARC NT offers training for local authority staff and hosts the Local Authority Public Health Research Network, which aims to support and progress opportunities for generating research in local authority settings.

### **2.4 Sustaining the LARP post**

The ambition is to embed the LARP post within the Public Health, Insights, Policy & Strategy Directorate beyond the 2-years fixed term contract. The 2-year period will be valuable for establishing a baseline and vision for the future through the Research Strategy. However, it is expected that continued staff capacity will be needed to implement the strategy and maintain momentum across the organisation. There will be an evaluation of the LARP post towards the end of the 2-year period and a separate decision will be made about funding the post going forward.

### **3 Funding Award Requirements**

The recommendations set out in this report will follow the terms and conditions set out in the NIHR SCPH Award letter:

3.1 the officers will draft and finalise the LARP job description in consultation with the NIHR RSS Specialist Centre for Public Health and notify them of the position start date; and

3.2 The Council will commit to the matched funding support of £76,000, as set out in this report; and

3.3 The officers will undertake regular reporting to the NIHR RSS Specialist Centre for Public Health for the evaluation of the impact of the LARP role and evidence of its contribution to the growing research capacity and capability of local authorities; and

3.4 The carry out the work plan as detailed in the Council's application for LAPR funding; and

3.5 The terms and conditions set out in the NIHR contract 205426 –PH, as set out in Schedule 2 of the award letter.

### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

Considering the gravity of LBH's financial position, the development of a research culture across the organisation is important to ensure that services are both cost-effective and effective in improving outcomes for residents. The following options were considered and rejected:

1. **Do not accept funding** – staff capacity is currently very limited, not accepting the funding would result in minimal progress with building a research active organisation. The external funding opportunity from the NIHR SCPH is time limited. Failing to leverage this funding opportunity and postponing the increase in

**Non-key Executive Decision**

staff capacity will result in higher future costs for LBH, as salary expenses will have to be met solely through internal funding.

2. **0.6 or 0.8 FTE LARP post** – this would delay the timeline for the Research Strategy and other key activities due to lower staff time. This may inhibit critical changes required to improve services for residents and reduce the financial pressures on the council.

**PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

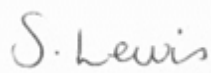
There has been no formal consultation with stakeholders or the public with regards to this decision.

**NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER**

Name: Sedina Lewis

Designation: Public Health Principal

Signature:



Date: 02/05/2025

## Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a general power of competence to do anything an individual can do. The recommendations in this report are in keeping with this power and the Council has the power to receive grant funding.

The use of the grant sums will need to be made pursuant to the sub-agreement (NIHR SCPH LARP award letter) including but not limited to the use of the funding, match funding amount, the agreed work plan, monitoring and reporting requirements. Further, Schedule 2 of the funding award letter sets out the main terms of the Funding Agreement including the circumstances for funding clawback (see Clause 4, 20, 21 and 30 Breach of conditions and recovery of grant).

The Grant is allowable under the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

For the reasons above, the Council may proceed to accept the externally matched funding award for a Local Authority Research Practitioner.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This report is seeking approval from the Director of Public Health to accept NIHR SCPH funding of £50,000 to contribution towards the cost of a LARP post over a period of two years.

The total costs for the LARP over the two period is estimated to be £126,000 (£63,000 per year), based on a mid-point Grade 8 post. The exact cost of the post will not be known until a job description has been completed and evaluated.

The remaining salary costs for the LARP will be match funded from the Public Health Grant, approximate £76,000 (£38,000 per year).

The £38,000 per year will be offset in part by utilising funding from a 0.4 FTE vacancy (approximately £23,000) in the Insights Team also charged to the Public Health Grant. The balance of £15,000 will be 'new' Public Health expenditure as summarised in the following table:

Sources of funding for LARP post	Year 1	Year 2	Total
0.4 FTE Insight Team vacant post	£23,000	£23,000	£46,000
New Public Health Grant spend	£15,000	£15,000	£30,000
NIHR SCPH Grant for LARP	£25,000	£25,000	£50,000
Total Cost/Funding	£63,000	£63,000	£126,000

### **Non-key Executive Decision**

If the grade is higher than the estimated £63,000 per year, the Director of Public Health has committed to funding the difference from the Public Health Grant. It is anticipated there will be sufficient funding within the Public Health Grant to fund this additional spend over the two-year period. If the overall public health spend exceeds the available funding in either of the years a drawdown can be made from the public health reserve.

Receipt of the grant funding will be subject to the conditions set out in the body of the report. There is a risk that if these are not adhered to the Council will not receive the funding.

Towards the end of the two-year period a review will be undertaken as to the effectiveness of the post and any future financing.

It is expected the work carried out by the post will help the Council to target its expenditure in ways to make the greatest impact to our residents by grounding decisions in evidence, research and data.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)**

A new LARP post will need to be created in the Insights Team for a fixed term of 2 years. The post will be created and recruited to in accordance with the Council's HR policies and procedures.

### **EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- (i) the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are: age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

The LARP would have a key role in supporting officers with meaningful engagement with communities to inform the research culture of the LBH. The LARP would also be tasked with working closely with the council's Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and

## Non-key Executive Decision

Cohesion (EDIC) Group to influence internal corporate processes to embed the consideration of EDI and PICE when exploring research opportunities.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable environmental implications or risks.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Breckon J. (2016) *Using research evidence: A practice guide*. Available at [https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Using\\_Research\\_Evidence\\_for\\_Success\\_-\\_A\\_Practice\\_Guide.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Using_Research_Evidence_for_Success_-_A_Practice_Guide.pdf) [Accessed 20 March 2025]
2. Hall, B. (2005) *Managing Research in Local Government: A Good Practice Guide*. Available at: [https://laria.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/managing\\_research\\_in\\_local\\_government.pdf](https://laria.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/managing_research_in_local_government.pdf) [Accessed 20 March 2025]
3. Cheetham, M., Redgate, S., van der Graaf, P., Humble, C., Hunter, D., & Adamson, A. (2023). 'What I really want is academics who want to partner and who care about the outcome': findings from a mixed-methods study of evidence use in local government in England. *Evidence & Policy*, 19(1), 74-94., <https://doi.org/10.1332/174426421X16535820632215>
4. Fynn, J.F., Jones, J. & Jones, A. (2021) A systems approach to the exploration of research activity and relationships within a local authority. *Health Res Policy Sys* 19, 137. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-021-00792-0>
5. Homer, C., Woodall, J., Freeman, C., South, J., Cooke, J., Holliday, J., Hartley, A., & Mullen, S. (2022). Changing the culture: a qualitative study exploring research capacity in local government. *BMC public health*, 22(1), 1341. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-13758-w>
6. Percy-Smith, J., Burden, T., Darlow, A., Dowson, Hawtin, M., Ladi, S. (2002) *Promoting change through research: the impact of research on local government*. Available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/neighbourhoods-and-communities/promoting-change-through-research-the-impact-of-research-on-local#:~:text=A%20number%20of%20recent%20research,are%20relatively%20under%2Dresearched%20areas> [Accessed 20 March 2025]
7. National Institute for Health and Care Research (2024) *Research Support Service Specialist Centre for Public Health*. Available at: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/support-and-services/research-support-service/public-health-specialist-centre> [Accessed 20 March 2025]
8. NIHR Research Support Service Specialist Centre for Public Health (2025) *Local Authority Research Practitioners (LARP)*. Available at: <https://sites.google.com/view/nihrrssscph/local-authority-support-and-resources/local-authority-research-practitioners-larps> [Accessed 20 March 2025]
9. London Borough of Havering (2018) *Research Governance Policy and Procedure*. Available at:

<https://www.havering.gov.uk/downloads/file/2742/research-governance-policy>  
[Accessed 20 March 2025]

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A – NIHR SCPH's Local Authority Research Stages Model



## Local Authority Research Stages Model



\*for example, involvement as a co-applicant on an externally funded award led by a university or NHS organisation.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix B - Summary of the LARP's overall aims with associated objectives:

Aims	Objectives
<b>Aim 1: Contribute to the development of the Research Strategy for the council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilitate workshops with local stakeholders to inform the Research Strategy by June 2026, with the aim to understand how research evidence is perceived and utilised to inform council services.</li><li>• Produce a thematic summary of findings from workshops by August 2026.</li></ul>
<b>Aim 2: Develop internal communications to increase the understanding of research, the role of research evidence within local government, share examples of good practice and training opportunities.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Host an all-staff webinar to promote the new research governance policy by December 2025.</li><li>• Create plan for developing a suite of intranet pages by November 2025, pages may include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ What 'research' looks like in local government – using external resources and media (e.g. resources from the SCPH and examples from the council's Public Health service)</li><li>○ Guidance / FAQs for using the council's research governance policy</li><li>○ Record of previous and in-progress local research projects</li><li>○ Training and development opportunities related to research</li></ul></li><li>• Facilitate the launch of a community of practice for council staff interested in research by August 2027.</li></ul>
<b>Aim 3: Support the implementation of the council's research governance policy</b>	<p>Produce quarterly reports about the quantity and quality of research proposals submitted by internal colleagues and external partners throughout the 2-year contract.</p> <p>Produce annual summary reports by April 2026 and April 2027, including any appropriate data analysis to monitor activity and identify recommendations for increasing research activity.</p>

### Appendix C - NIHR SCPH LARP Award Contract, London Borough of Havering (Exempt)

Non-key Executive Decision

**Part C – Record of decision**

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

**Decision**

Proposal agreed

**Details of decision maker**



Signed

Name: Mark Ansell

CMT Member title: Director of Public Health

Date: 2/5/25

**Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Committee Services, in the Town Hall.

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_