



MINUTES OF LONDON FOOD CO-ORDINATING GROUP MEETING

Wednesday June 2008 at 10.00 am

Walbrook Wharf Offices – Corporation of London

Present			
Peter Scott	(PS)	LB Havering	Chair / For NE Sector
Duncan Arthur	(DA)	Public Analyst	Eurofins
Susanne Surman-Lee	(SSL)	(HPA)	
Robin Catchlove	(RC)	London Port HA	
Tay Potier	(TP)	CIEH	London Region Policy Officer
Carole Zelenka	(CZ)	LB Greenwich	For SE Sector
Chris Carabine	(CJC)	LB Barnet	For NW Sector
Brian Griffiths	(BG)	LB Croydon	For SW Sector
Peter Kemp	(PK)		Minutes Taker

1. Apologies for absence / Introductions

Apologies were received from David Lock (LACORS), Gemma Cantelo (LACORS), Nigel Whiteley (Approvals Group), Mark Stanbury (Approvals Group) and the FSA

3. Port Health

This item taken at the beginning of the meeting to allow RC to be released early. PS welcomed RC to the meeting of the LFCG.

RC described and summarised the work he carried out within the London PHA for which he was responsible. This covered Thamesport and the Lower Thames part of the river. He was also responsible for Sheerness. RC said that by the end of the year the port would have dealt with the equivalent of 1 million 20 ft containers and more that 800,000 tons of food was imported via Sheerness last year.

The ports handled different products from different parts of the world dependant on the shipping routes used, For example, Tilbury port dealt with the majority of imported meat.

Changes of shipping line used ie to Maersk has resulted in meat imports being re-routed to other ports, however customers have been unhappy with the changes and have found ways of ensuring that Tilbury is again the port of entry.

Thamesport dealt predominately with imports from the Far East, China etc, imported chicken in particular, composite and ethnic goods. Composite products containing above 50% meat or dairy content are required to pass through a Border Inspection Post and be accompanied by a CVED. Thamesport is a designated Border Inspection Post (BIP). Charges can be made for carrying out the required checks and these must be paid before the goods are released for free circulation.

Recent changes in EU Regulations mean that POAO with less than 50% meat or dairy content now fall outside the requirement that a CVED has been issued and this has caused some enforcement problems. RC said it was important to remember that the POAO Regulations dealt with both animal health and public health issues.

PS asked if the ports are notified of composite products being imported. RC replied that they were not always informed and the examination of samples involved complex procedures. RC said that if any LA discovered illegal POAO being imported, the PHA would like to be told of the port they came into the UK through. Further guidance could be found in the LA Resource Pack.

RC mentioned the recent problems with Chinese GM rice coming into the country and the decision to impose a total ban using Emergency Control provisions. The EU use Combined Nomenclature codes ("CN" codes) to classify products including foodstuffs but these cover broad categories of product and do not provide an indication of the country of origin. The misuse of CN codes can be employed to circumvent the official controls and it can be difficult to identify what products are covered by which code.

RC also highlighted particular problems that had been identified in nuts originating from Egypt and Iran but which were being imported into the UK via Germany and Spain. There were also high aflatoxin levels in almonds imported from the USA. The US government had initiated a testing programme which had been accepted by the EU provided documentation and traceability were satisfactory but this was only a voluntary scheme and there had been problems with certificate numbers not tying up with the number shown on the consignment.

All London PHA work was risk based and from time to time they needed to call on assistance from local authorities. There were particular resource problems at Thamesport currently. Continuing problems with the UK port infrastructure can result in cargo being diverted and occasionally the Port Inspectors may see unusual consignments.

RC drew the LFCG's attention to the Guidance and Regulatory Advice on Import Legislation (GRAIL) database recently launched by the FSA to help local authority officers enforce controls on food being commercially imported into the UK from non-EU countries. This is a useful resource for local authorities.

The database provides up-to-date imported food legislation and guidance on products of non-animal origin, fish and fishery products from non-EU countries. The FSA has lead policy responsibility for the import of these products. RC also referred to the Illegal Animal Products Seizures (ILAPS) database.

A notification to the ILAPS database must be made whenever products of animal origin imported from third countries are seized or suspected of being illegally imported by evasion of declaration and correct entry procedures at Border Inspection Posts (BIPs). This information is particularly important for seizures made inland. RC said that this database was also used by HM Revenue and Customs.

PS asked RC if he would agree to attend meetings of the LFCG occasionally, perhaps every 6 months. PS said he would also welcome any input from RC dealing with any particular issues or matters of concern that RC would like circulated via the LFCG.

RC said that the London PHA was always open to visitors who are interested in the work being carried out and it would also give a good idea of the volumes of products being imported. CZ suggested that some photographs could also give an indication of the magnitude of the workload the port was expected to deal with.

RC concluded his presentation to the LFCG with comments on the sampling work that was carried out. The London PHA had a reasonable budget for sampling with £55,000 allocated for examination of POAO and the same amount for Non-POAO. He said that Defra expected all the POAO budget to be spent however some of the examinations for typical contaminants for example to look for dioxins, were expensive. The Port was however also able to tap into additional sampling funding available from the FSA. RC thought that further co-ordination of sampling with local authorities would be very useful and the FSA were looking to align their sampling bidding process with local authorities financial year, ie money allocated to be available at the beginning of the financial year in April so that projects could be commenced earlier.

RC provided copies of the Association of Port Health Authorities Handbook – 2008 for attendees at the meeting

PS thanked RC for his informative presentation to the meeting.

Agreed RC to attend meetings of the LFCG at perhaps 6-month intervals to discuss in particular more coordination of the Port HA and LA's respective sampling programmes

TP to discuss with RC arrangements for a possible visit to the London PHA and to contact LB Hillingdon so that a visit to Heathrow could also be arranged

Sector Co-ordinators to advise their Sector LA's of the advantages to be gained in signing up to the GRAIL database

Sector Co-ordinators to email PS regarding any particular Port Health / imported food issues raised by their sector LA's

2. Minutes of the previous LFCG Meeting Tuesday April 2008 accuracy and matters arising

On matters of accuracy:

Page 2 (Paragraph) – Reference to Susanne Surman-Lee at the FSA should read “at the HPA”

Page 4 (Penultimate Paragraph) – Should read “removed from the Work Plan”

Page 9 (Item 7 Public Analyst (Eurofins) Report) – Kebab sampling project to commence end of June

Page 10 (Item 13 LACORS Report Paragraph) – Reference to the FSA / Hampton compliance exercise relates to the FSA's Hampton compliance audit, undertaken by the Better Regulation Executive and National Audit Office. The audit report is available from the BERR website – see LACORS website for further details and links ([://www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/ViewDocument.aspx?docID=19172&docType=](http://www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/ViewDocument.aspx?docID=19172&docType=)).

Matters Arising & Action Points not covered elsewhere on the Agenda

To Note: Next ALEHM meeting – July 2008

Enforcement Liaison Group meeting at the FSA today – June 2008

Looking at the Agenda CJC queried if the Approvals Group or Education representatives needed to be full-time members of the LFCG. Representatives from the training establishments did not attend meetings of the LFCG very often.

PS said that the Agenda item followed historical precedent but there was no reason why it could not be altered. CZ suggested that the Approvals Group and Education input could be treated in the same way as had just been agreed in relation to Port Health, ie a representative could attend every six-months. BG thought they could attend every other meeting. PS said if this was the case the circulation of the Agenda would need to be restricted and the emailing list used for circulation amended.

Agreed: Approvals Group representative to attend when it is considered necessary

Education / University / Training Establishment representative to attend meetings of the LFCG at six-monthly intervals

Minutes of Approval Group meetings to be circulated to all members of the LFCG

Agenda's of future meetings of the LFCG to be amended to incorporate the agreed changes

Email circulation list to be amended

Page 2 (Page 7 Item 4 HPA Update and Consultation) – In response to the Action Point and the use of couriers / public transport to deliver samples, SSL said the objection to the use of couriers related to outbreak investigations and the problems of ensuring continuity of evidence. There were similar problems in using public transport in outbreak investigation where samples might contain biological agents the carriage of which was prohibited on public transport.

All To Note

Page 5 (Item 16 – Approvals Group) – General consensus is that the extended Approvals Group is working well and there was no longer a need for PS and AF to attend a meeting or monitor its performance

Agreed: PS / AF will not now attend a meeting of the Approvals Group

PS to speak with Nigel Whiteley to ascertain to whom the Minutes of the Approvals Group Meetings are circulated

Page 6 (Item 4 – Olympics) – PS contacted by Sharon Smith (Projects Officer – CIEH) with a view to organising a meeting with Sector Co-ordinator representatives, suggested dates, mid august. PS will also notify ALEHM and representatives from the HPA and Duncan Arthur to also attend.

CZ asked if the Olympics needed to be a standard agenda item for every meeting. TP thought it should be included every few months to ensure focus was maintained.

SSL mentioned a recently published WHO report on the Athens Olympics which covered sampling issues, the sampling programmes conducted and water provision etc.

All To Note

SSL to email link to WHO report to members of the LFCG

The meeting then briefly discussed the organisation relating to the provision of food at the Olympic sites and it was thought that the bulk of enforcement would be concentrated on the peripheral food outlets as no food would be allowed to be taken into the venues. Within the venues food could only be obtained from the designated food (sponsored) outlets.

TP then mentioned the HPA / EHO appointment jointly funded by ALEHM. The main role to be undertaken was improving the coordination of infectious disease investigations carried out by the HAS / LA's. The post originally just covered the SW Sector but the role was now London wide. Partnership working with the HPA was being discussed at the next meeting of ALEHM on the 10th July.

The discussion then moved onto question as to exactly how the HPA and HPU's were organised and SSL gave a brief presentation explaining how they worked together. An organisational diagram can be viewed on the HPA website at

<://www.hpa.org.uk/webw/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListDate/Page/1153846674304?pe>

SSL confirmed that she now has a permanent EHO post on her establishment.

All To Note

4. Approvals Group Feedback

Deferred – No representative of the Approval Group at the meeting but PS noted that Nigel Whiteley had circulated an email giving a brief update from the Group.

All To Note

5. Pan London Sampling

SSL said that she had recently met with Rob Bartlett to discuss a sampling programme. It was proposed that the programme be split into two parts commencing with a pilot carried out by 3 LA's before rolling out the programme across London. She was concerned that the initial thought on a suitable programme was trying to answer too many questions.

She had suggested in an email to PS that the following topics form the basis of the pan London sampling programme

- Water quality for food preparation in temporary mobile premises
- Sesame Seed Products
- Seeds for Sprouting

PS said that the rest of the programme needed to be thought through.

He also suggested that a proportion of the microbiological sampling programmes be reserved for dealing with emergencies. CJC remarked that the NW Sector preferred advanced notice of the samples they would be required to take as part of the programme.

PS commented that if we didn't agree something now we would not have anything to contribute to the overall plan and we also needed to begin to think about the programme for next year as well.

SSL then spoke in more detail about the three sampling topics she had suggested which had been based on public health risk. Water in temporary mobile premises included boats where previously some real public health issues had been identified; Sesame Seed products had previously yielded Salmonella positives as had Seeds for Sprouting.

SSL suggested that the programme be completed over a 12 month period rolling over into next year; say 10 samples per LA as this would allow the spreading of resources throughout the year. She would prefer it if LA's attempted all of the three suggested sampling topics.

CZ said that at Greenwich she only had the resources to actually tackle the sampling and could also undertake a large scale information gathering exercise which was often required as well. SSL assured her that there would only be limited questionnaires to be completed, for example in connection with the water sampling project.

Short discussion followed on the use of "unqualified" staff undertaking sampling

All To Note

Three sampling topics suggested by SSL accepted. Programme to be completed over a 12 month period rolling into next year

SSL will produce sampling protocols. These will identify smaller shops as one of the target groups from which samples to be obtained as will samples from products being stored in sacks

The meeting then moved on to discuss the chemical sampling programme and DA said that in relation to the FSA bids he had found that only about half of the London Boroughs were interested. He thought that a chemical survey could be linked with the Sesame Seed Products looking for contaminants. With regard to last years joint survey with the HPA particular problems with Polish products, were that they often had misleading names that did not accurately reflect the composition and what was contained in it.

All To Note

LFCG to start to think now and suggest what areas can be used to put together a chemical sampling programme.

Robin Catchlove to be asked to identify any particular problems noted by the Port that could be incorporated

DA to give an indication at the next meeting of the LFCG of any other suggested sampling topics

Sesame Seed Products to be included in the sampling programme

6. Hammersmith & Fulham request to move from the SW Sector to the NW Sector

This item was introduced by BG who said that he didn't know a great deal about the origin of this request and was only first alerted when he saw it on the agenda.

He thought however that he could understand why it was being made. LB H & F claim that it is difficult to get to some of the locations of the SW Sector meetings for example, LB of Croydon. Meetings of the SW Sector are usually held at the offices of the LB of Merton and these are located very near an Underground station. On occasions the venue rotates between the LB's in the Sector. BG pointed out however that the next SW Sector meeting was due to be held at the offices of the LB of H & F on the July.

LB H & F also believe they have more in common with LB's such as the RB of K & C and LB of Ealing. If H & F move to the NW Sector this will then comprise 9 LA's.

PS said he had raised this request with Rick Mason and also LACORS to see if the move, if agreed created any problems for these organisations. LACORS had indicated that as far as it was concerned, it didn't. The meeting was concerned that if this move was allowed it would create a precedent and it recalled a previous request to form a central London Sector which was not supported.

All To Note

LFCG to request further information from the LB of H & F so that the full implications of the move between Sectors can be considered

BG to speak with LB Representative, Stephanie Needham at H & F to obtain further information

Any transfer of a LB between Sectors will need the agreement of ALEHM

7. Sector Feedback

- **NW Sector** – CJC said there was little to report. The last meeting of the Sector had been relatively short with Scores on the Doors, the new code of Practice and interventions being the main matters discussed.
- **SW Sector** – BG reported that the last Sector meeting had been well attended with a very full agenda. Score on the Doors had featured, the new Sector representative on the SF-BB implementation panel was Helen Clark from LB of Wandsworth. A work plan had been produced and this will be emailed to the LFCG. A Food and Faith course will be run in September and Nigel Whiteley has also agreed to conduct his Approvals training course. The draft FSA Booklet "The Food Safety Act 1990 and Your Business" was also discussed and generally not liked. The Sector is also about to publish the results of a food survey carried out in conjunction with Eurofins looking at levels of trans fats, salt etc found in take-away foods such as chicken and fish and chips. BG said the results were horrendous and these had been released to the local press and had attracted some publicity. All the outlets were first contacted for their comments on the results but none were received.
- **SE Sector** – CZ reported that at the last Sector meeting, Scores on the Doors featured, a work plan for the Sector and the plan for a further benchmarking exercise. There was some resistance to this from a number of the Sector LA's and they questioned why this exercise was being carried out.

A visit to the Olympics site had been made and this had identified access problems. The intention to offer separate provision of food and drink in each area of the site was noted.

Westminster had queried why it had not been identified as a host borough. It was hosting a number of the Olympic events and was one of the main arrival and accommodation centres.

Westminster believed that for these reasons they should be included in the discussions as a host borough. They had also raised the poor standard of some of the proposed accommodation.

Westminster also raised a recent television programme featuring undercover filming at a Radisson SAS hotel chain which revealed that chambermaids were using the same sponges and clothes for cleaning the toilets in rooms and then using them for wiping drinking glasses. When challenged the manager of the hotel said that his staff were following current industry standards and he was not prepared to change these practices unless the industry as a whole changed them. Westminster was asking if this type of activity could be controlled by incorporating it into the food safety management system?

- **NE Sector** – PS said the NE Sector meeting had been held some time ago. Subjects discussed included Score on the Doors, the new Code of Practice and Sushi which was still an issue. The discussions in the EU on possible changes to Article Five were also covered.

Main area of concern in the NE Sector currently is a significant rise in mouse infestations being found during inspections and LB of TH and WF were currently formally closing at least one premises a month due to infestation problems. The meeting generally agreed that it had seen similar increases in a number of Sector LA's.

PS mentioned that cockroach infestations were also increasing in number and he speculated that this might be because some pest control contractors were now using sprays instead on gels in treating premises. He suggested that it might be useful to ask a representative of the British Pest Control Association to address a meeting of the LFCG.

TP said that in connection with arrangements relating to the organisation of the Olympics, the National Rest Advisory Panel (NPAP) had been established. TP said she would make enquiries regarding a representative to speak to the LFCG

PS continued with his report and confirmed that LB of Islington had recently won a Food Champion Award. He also said that a query had been raised by the LB of Camden concerning the registration of food premises and in hospital premises was there a requirement to register each ward kitchen as separate premises. The general consensus was that this was not required.

PS said that the consignment of GM rice he mentioned at the last meeting of the LFCG which had arrived in the LB of Havering could not be re-exported and had been destroyed.

PS also told the meeting that in a similar incident a consignment of hydrolysed protein had been received at a remote transit shed located in Havering. A Section 24 Notice under the Imported Food Regulations had subsequently been served.

The last NE Sector meeting had also discussed inspection strategies and carried out an imported food exercise.

It had also considered an invitation from the FSA for LA's to apply for grants within the third tranche of funding to support implementation of SF-BB.

The time scale for the submission of bids was very short and PS had gathered that most LA's were not interested.

8. Benchmarking NI 184

ALEHM meeting to discuss this matter to be held on June 2008.

All To Note

9. HPA update

SSL reported on the current position relating to the HPA / LACORS sampling projects. Survey of speciality meats – ongoing, egg mixes and environmental sampling – ongoing, shell nuts – commences in October.

Antibiotic residues had been recently detected in samples of chicken being imported from South Africa and the Far East and the HPA were working with London PHA at Tilbury and LB of Hillingdon (Heathrow) in dealing with this problem. Also carrying out sampling of imported herbs in co-operation with Heathrow.

HPA is developing a rapid method of examination of samples to produce results of analysis more quickly.

SSL mentioned that staffing changes in the Reception section might result in a temporary delay in being able to obtain sampling supplies. SSL also asked the LFCG to pass on details to its Health and Safety colleagues of a HPA course being offered on July 2008 dealing with the microbiological water quality in pools, spa baths etc. Course fee £85 and numbers limited due to the need to accommodate the practical elements of the course.

With regard to the review of transport arrangements for samples, SSL said that a recent meeting with LA's had been positive. The general consensus was for a preferred day per LA for pick ups for each authority with additional "add-ons" for emergencies. Morning collections were preferred. The Royal London and Kings College Hospitals were the preferred "drop-off" points.

SSL said that a national tender covering the whole of the HPA's transport requirements will be produced with the intention that the revised arrangements will be in place by the end of the year.

SSL circulated to the meeting for information copies of an article published recently in the journal "Food Microbiology" entitled "Campylobacter and Salmonella in raw red meats in the United Kingdom: Prevalence, characterization and antimicrobial resistance pattern, 2003 – 2005"

All To Note

SSL to circulate note on current progress with the review of the HPA's transport arrangements

SSL to circulate details of Water Quality Course to LFCG

10. Public Analyst (Eurofins) Update

DA addressed the meeting. He reported that the Imported Food Sampling Programme had 1 month to run.

Problems had been identified in a “Jammy Dodger” type biscuit imported from Iran where pistachio nuts formed a topping. 150 ppb aflatoxins had been detected in the nut ingredient.

DA had also recently met with Carole Milligan (LB of Islington) to discuss the ongoing problems with rice being prepared / manufactured for use in sushi. A protocol for the preparation of the rice content had been produced by Chorleywood on behalf of one of the major sushi manufacturers.

Because this protocol had been produced for a single company working to its own company parameters, the criteria would need to be redefined if a general guidance document was going to be drafted.

On progress relating to the on-going review of the PA service, DA said that there was little to report and there had been no update with regards to the impact assessments. Two more PA's were due to retire next month resulting in a further reduction in the number of active PA's (30) and a further laboratory had withdrawn from providing PA services since the last update.

The Impact Assessment document from the FSA was still outstanding.

DA mentioned that a number of northern LA's had collectively agreed to draft an open letter to the FSA regarding the current unsatisfactory situation regarding the lack of progress with the review of the PA service.

He brought this to the attention of the LFCG in the event that the member London Boroughs should wish to consider supporting similar action.

All To Note

DA to circulate to the LFCG a copy of the letter to the FSA written on behalf on the northern LA's

11. LACORS Update

Deferred – No representative present, but David Lock had circulated an email to the LFCG on the June 2008 updating the meeting on a number of issues. The topics covered in the email were:

- **Micro sampling for next year**
- **NI 182**
- **Sushi**
- **Structure of liaison (sector groups in London)**
- **New FSA Code of Practice**
- **Scores on the doors**
- **Wellbeing powers.**

In relation to the current Scores on the Doors consultation exercise, TP said that she recently visited Copenhagen with Rick Mason to see how the Danish authorities enforce the compulsory powers of display of their Scores on the Doors scheme that they operate. The Danes use a “Smiley Face” logo. During their visit TP and RM spoke with an English Michelin Starred chef working in a restaurant in the Tivoli Gardens. He was generally very happy with the scheme and the way it operated. TP said that the Danes have an interesting and different approach to the way their officer carry out inspections.

There is minimal paperwork and consequently inspectors can complete 600 / 700 inspections a year, by producing any documents and the smiley face certificates on site using a lap-top computer.

PS commented that the Danish equivalent of the FSA must be satisfied that this inspection procedure with minimal paperwork met the requirements of the EU guidance. Perhaps the FSA met be interested in looking at this approach for the future.

All To Note

12. Education Update (if any)

Deferred – No representative present

13. London Food Study Group Update (if any)

Deferred – No representative present. However TP was able to inform the meeting that a London Region Joint Food and Health and Safety Study Group CPD event was held at Chadwick Court on June. This was well attended with over 50 delegates and the food presentations covered a number of subjects including Shelf-Life Testing, LB of Islington's Food Champion Award submission and its Food Action Zone Initiative and Nigel Whiteley who conducted an Approved Premises Workshop.

14. Any Other Business

14.1 PS raised the subject of "emergency scenarios" which had been briefly discussed at the last LFCG meeting. He said he had discussed this matter with SSL and that she with assistance from PS was happy to host and organise a workshop session to examine out of hours service levels and emergency call-out issues.

It is suggested that one representative from each of the LB attend and that this person should be at relatively senior level in the organisation ie group Manager but they must be able to properly represent the staff who actually do the job on the ground!

Part of this exercise would be to compile a risk register to identify where some of the weaknesses and potential problems might be. This would be useful to build on for the Olympics as well.

SSL informed the meeting of a similar Legionella exercise carried out which involved cross-boundary working. This had really highlighted a number of significant problems.

All To Note

Dates and Timeframe for workshop to be organised

Emergency Scenarios to be written into the LFCG Work Plan

14.2 CJC and TP are meeting with the FSA later today to discuss the national Scores on the Doors Scheme. They will also take the opportunity to raise questions concerning the new Code of Practice as certain parts are not very clear as to what is required.

PS said that he had noted anomalies relating to the qualification of staff able to carry out inspections of high-risk premises where the additional 22 with respect to vulnerable groups applies. He had also noted some conflict with the proposed national Scores on the Doors scheme

The date of the next meeting of the LFCG will be Tuesday August 2008. This will be held at the Corporation of London's Walbrook Wharf Offices commencing at 10.00 am.

There being no other business the LFCG meeting closed at 13.20 hrs