



MINUTES OF LONDON FOOD CO-ORDINATING GROUP MEETING

Tuesday April 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
Gemma Cantelo	(GC)	LACORS	
Aleyne Fontenelle	(AF)	LB Newham	
Jackie Jewett	(JJ)	FSA	
Tay Potier	(TP)	CIEH	London Region Policy Officer
Carol Zelenka	(CZ)	LB Greenwich	For SE Sector
Chris Carabine	(CJC)	LB Barnet	For NW Sector
Nigel Whiteley	(NW)	LB Hackney	LFCG Approvals Group Joint Coordinator
Brian Griffiths	(BG)	LB Croydon	For SW Sector
Peter Kemp	(PK)		Minutes Taker

Apologies for absence / Introductions

Apologies were received from David Lock (LACORS), Robin Catchlove (Port Health), Sharon Smith (CIEH), Mark Stanbury (Approvals Group) and Susanne Surman-Lee (HPA)

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

Action Points not covered elsewhere on the Agenda

Page 2 (Item 2 – Food Champions Award) – TP announced that the LFCG was successful and has been awarded Food Champion status. LB's of Westminster and Islington were also successful with their individual applications

Page 3 (Item 2 – Out of Hours Cover) – AF asked what progress had been made investigating the levels of out of hours cover operating and was it intended to carry out any benchmarking? CJC reported that when asked about half of the LA's in his Sector responded and it was generally believed that there was no comprehensive, paid service across London. It was understood that only LB Camden in the NE Sector might have full out of hours cover but most LB's did have a 24 hr telephone contact point. It was important that the out of hours cover being provided be established as problems could arise if an incident arose out of normal work hours and organisations such as the HPA assumed that an out of hours service was in place at all LA's. An issue had arisen previously when Susanne Surman-Lee at the FSA believed this was the case. The meeting discussed issues around varying degrees of out of hours cover and considered that these needed to be thought through

Sectors to email PS and confirm what level of out of hours cover is operated by their local authority. PS to prepare a Briefing Paper based on this information

Page 4 (Item 3 – Terms of Reference / Workplan) – CZ mentioned that historically she understood that a representative of Port Health attended the SE Sector meetings.

The proposal to draft a LFCG Workplan was accepted in principle as good practice but some concern was expressed that this might lead to much longer meetings. BG commented that the SW Sector meetings usually last all day and he wondered if this was the norm in the other Sectors

PS to contact Robin Catchlove and ask him if he would prefer to attend meeting of the LFCG or a Sector meeting

Page 7 (Item 4 – HPA Update and Consultation) – BG reported that one authority in the SW Sector might be interested in acting as a host collection point. CZ said that the HPA Consultation Papers had been discussed at length at her Sector meeting and it was considered that the inner London authorities required something very different with respect to the collection service than that of the outer boroughs and the Sector has notified Susanne Surman-Lee of their views. AF said that her authority used courier service but PS thought that he understood that the HPA has expressed concerns in this direction if official samples were being transported. The exact reason for their concerns was not known. It was also believed that they were less than happy if samples were carried on public transport as well but in this case the reason could be connected with the fact that bio hazards were being carried

HPA to be asked to confirm the exact reasons why they are unhappy about samples being transported to them using couriers or public transport

Page 9 (Item 5 – Public Analyst Update) – GC said that with reference to the item in the Minutes concerning the Food Examination Focus Group, this operates via email only. The next meeting is June

Page 9 (Item 7 – LACORS Food Hygiene Focus Group) – CZ reported that no volunteers had come forward to replace Beryl Morgan as the London rep.

Beryl Morgan (LB Southwark) to continue as the London Representative on the LACORS Food Hygiene Focus Group

With the corrections already made to the draft minutes and the additions and updates identified above, the Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record

2. Terms of Reference

PS spoke to this item and referred to the amended Terms of Reference circulated with the Agenda. He said these had been updated to deal with the references to Port Health. CJC queried if sufficient weight was being given to food standards and he suggested that the penultimate bullet point in the document under the heading "Objectives" be amended to read "Engage with key stakeholders to improve food safety and food standards policy across London"

The section dealing with Membership will be further updated when the position relating to Port Health involvement is clarified. BG also suggested that the North East Surry College of Technology (NESCOT) should be added to the two academic institutions already listed in the Membership section as they were now offering the Environmental Health Foundation Course

The section on Minutes / Minutes Secretary was then discussed. It was considered that the minutes were too long and detailed and should be restricted to noting the main discussions on an item and any subsequent action points.

PK said that he realised that the minutes of the meetings tended to be long; this was partly due to the detailed nature of the discussions that took place, the numbers of persons who contributed to the discussion which frequently included specific information and figures, for example in dealing with sampling projects.

PK noted that when certain of the standing agenda items were discussed, for example, updates from the HPA, Public Analyst, LACORS, etc the attendees often had a note which detailed the information they were going to give. It would greatly assist him in ensuring the accuracy of the minutes if he could either be sent or given a copy of the notes used which he could then incorporate.

PS asked the meeting to comment on the frequency of LFCG meetings and where they were held. He asked if there were any problems in attending the August meeting of the LFCG as he appreciated that this was at a time when many people took their holidays. He mentioned that the summer meeting of the NE Sector was often cancelled due to holidays and he wondered if a date in early September for summer meeting of the LFCG might be preferred

PS to further amend Terms of Reference of the LFCG and re-circulate

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed from time to time

The LFCG will hold a meeting on the August as set out in the original timetable of meetings

3. Work Plans

Draft LFCG Work Plan 2008 / 9 circulated at the meeting and PS invited comments. CJC thought the Plan needed to contain more objectives as the current draft seemed to identify predominately the on-going role of the LFCG. The sampling Plan also ought to be identified as a key objective as should developing links with Port Health

AF asked if the LFCG needed to outreach more to other organisations and what would be the implications if the LFCG failed to do this. She also thought that the LFCG should be more specific as to what it gains from its relationships with other organisations. It was useful to establish two-way communication mechanisms with organisations like Port Health and the Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) for information transfer

Looking at various subject areas, the LFCG considered it didn't have access to current information concerning food adulteration and it thought that this subject might be a periodic agenda item

PS commented that at a recent FSA meeting he had attended he was surprised at the extent of the current information concerning adulterated food of which he was unaware. He thought it was important to know what was happening in London and sources of information would include Port Health and the MHS. PS said the LFCG Work Plan should occasionally be an agenda item of future meetings of the LFCG

JJ remarked that the FSA tended to use LA's as a means of gathering information. She also said that the FSA had an existing Authenticity Working Group (AWG) but that most of the contributors to it were Trading Standards Officers rather than EHO's

JJ to speak with Mark Wolf at the FSA to discover who is responsible for this area of work and how information is disseminated from the AWG

In further discussion of the LFCG Workplan PS said he had included "Review of the Sector Work Plans (If any)" to identify and prevent duplication of effort.

It was considered that Benchmarking ought to be included as it was a key objective as should, monitoring the consistency of implementation of the revised FSA Code of Practice, with the Sectors monitoring implementation and with any particular problems being notified to the LFCG for review

CJC believed the activity "To liaise with the FSA and Scores on the Doors Implementation Group for regular training in risk rating" was rather limited and it should be amended to read "**To liaise with the Group**". AF asked where the minutes of the Implementation Group meetings could be found and TP confirmed that these should be accessible via the London Region web site. BG said that comments that he had placed on the site often appeared to be wiped off when an upload occurred

Looking at the reference to the Olympics it was agreed that this was an important key objective and the Work Plan should indicate what we expect to happen. This activity may be redrafted after consideration of Olympic issues which appear as an agenda item for discussion later in the meeting

TP thought that the activity relating to the discussion of **food emergency scenarios** could involve a considerable volume of work and it was **agreed that this should be removed for the Work Plan**

The wording used in reference to the working of the Approvals Group was considered not to be totally accurate and the following was agreed "**To support and review the working of the Approvals Group**" but PS said he was open to alternative suggestions for the form of words to be used

All To Note

PS to prepare amended Work Plan incorporating the changes and revised wording as agreed above

16. Approvals Group Report (if any)

This item taken next on the agenda to allow NW to be released to attend another meeting. NW said he wished to raise two matters: guidance on approvals, who was issuing it and training on approvals. NW said he had met Catherine Bowles of the FSA and had seen the guidance they were producing but he thought that this was not what was wanted. He also queried if the FSA had identified the right groups for whom the guidance should be written. The FSA could not afford to wait for EU guidance to be published so had decided to produce its own

NW has produced his own guideline covering (1) simple operations and (2) complex operations. He also suggested that Catherine Bowles be invited to attend an Approvals Group meeting as he believed this would help her get a clear idea of what is required

GC reported that Catherine Bowles had attended a recent LACORS Food Hygiene Focus Group meeting but the guidance she had prepared dealt more with “policy” rather than advice on specific issues. GC will be writing to the Food Liaison Groups (and the Food Hygiene Focus Group) to ask them what issues concerning Approvals food officers want the FSA to resolve and write further guidance on.

GC will then inform Catherine Bowles at the FSA

NW reported good attendance at Approval group meeting with up to fifteen authorities represented. AF said that from feedback she had received there were concerns that the group was now too big and the “focus” that the NE Approvals Group was able to bring to look as issues had been somewhat lost. It was important that problems be fully aired but was the result of the discussions being fully shared as effectively as in the original group?

NW said that information was shared and circulated by email and telephone. PS thought that it would be useful to review the size and any issues arising from the increased number of participants in the larger Approvals Group. It was obvious that the FSA considered the LFCG Approvals Group an important forum but it would be wrong for them to base national policy just on what happened in London

PS and AF to attend a meeting of the LFCG Approvals Group at a suitable point to observe how it is operating and review progress

GC to put together a list of other county-wide “Approval Groups” that the FSA can call upon for opinions

NG then mentioned that he had been approached by a consultant / training company with a request to co-author practical guidance on approvals for publication on the specific company’s website. NG said that the Approvals Group do not currently possess the capacity to respond to all the requests for guidance made of it. Any guidance produced and the timeframe for producing it has to be agreed by the group and at times this slows the response.

He also was uncomfortable in offering advice / guidance to just one company. There were also problems in finding a sufficient number of knowledgeable authors as he

couldn't just use the usual volunteers. Chief officers also need to be made aware that their officers were at times working on matters that had London wide implications

PS to speak with Keith Hill at ALEHM to discuss the possibility of an Approvals “themed” meeting

NW then turned to matters relating to training on Approvals and asked for suggestions on how the Training on Approvals which he had given to officers in LB Hackney could be developed. NG said he had about six hours of training material prepared. PS asked for expressions of interest from the four London Food Liaison Groups and said that speaking for the NE Sector he would like NW to arrange training for officers in his sector authorities. BG said the same for officers in the SW Sector and AF said she was prepared to buy in this training for LB Newham

NG also mentioned interest from the London Food Study Group. He has spoken with the Chair Sandra Edmeade-Walters and she had suggested that he could speak at a London Region Food Study Group CPD training day in early June. NG confirmed that he was willing to do this but cautioned against trying to accommodate too large a group as it would be more difficult to prompt discussion. He thought about 30 people was the maximum

Sectors to consider organising Approvals training

PS thanked NW for his contribution to the LFCG meeting

4. Olympics 2012

AF spoke to this item and said that the “5 Boroughs” group (comprising LB's Waltham Forest, Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Newham, and Greenwich) had held two meetings in July and September 2007. A further meeting was due to be held in January 2008 but this had not occurred

Other persons who attend the 5 Boroughs meetings are, John Barnes (FSA), Viv Lund (Nutritionist), Sharon Smith (Project Officer – CIEH), Susanne Surman-Lee and Alan Johnson (HPA) and Steve Miller (Head of Service - LB Newham). AF thought that it was important to decide where the group was going. Food safety was a London-wide issue but others were specific to the 5 host Borough's in particular

The September meeting of the group had part reserved to look at outer London locations for event and the associated issues, but only two outer London borough's sent representatives

The meeting thought that there was a need to think about what was specifically different about the Olympics with regard to food issues. AF had prepared terms of reference for the group but these were not well received. There were various tiers of activity surrounding food and they needed to relate to each other

Issues had been identified in using the new National Indicator of “broadly compliant” to judge the safety of premises.

It was thought that probably only about 50% of premises in London might fall into this category and this posed a huge resourcing problem. There would be a need to determine how to improve the broadly compliant % figure with the resources available

and perhaps by in-filling these with additional staff resources bought-in or from a pool of available officers

PS asked if anybody had brainstormed what might happen or drawn on the experiences from previous Games? Commenting on resources AF said that the funding available from the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) was about £5m but this was reserved for the undertaking of regulatory functions in respect of the stadium and immediate vicinity. Although raised with the ODA, funding for regulatory work outside of this area had not been agreed. AF said that Sharon Smith was due to carry out a scoping exercise with John Barnes to investigate potential needs by looking at the experiences at previous Olympic cities and particularly Sydney which is mostly likely to have similarities with London

BG asked what was the objective to be achieved? He was confused; was it to get all premises broadly compliant or some other objective? AF thought that the goal was for all premises to reach at least a 3-star rating and she thought this had been based on an idea put forward at some time by Rick Mason. AF said that she believed it was hoped to raise the standards of all premises across London to meet the broadly compliant indicator and there was a need to look for initiatives that could deliver this

BG asked that LB Merton be invited to attend any future meetings of the 5 Boroughs group of similar as the Olympic tennis tournament was due to be held at Wimbledon and they would need to be involved if food issues related to the main event locations were being discussed

PS thought that the Sector Representatives should be invited to attend a meeting to discuss and review what exactly is happening regarding the Olympics and TP offered to host this at the CIEH

It appeared that each regulatory service involved in the Olympics will have its own regulatory group to co-ordinate activities and AF saw the need to ensure consistent protocols and consistent enforcement. PS said a meeting to kick-start the thinking on this was required as we would need to meet the challenge of trying to ensure increased resources at a time when many local authorities may be scaling back

TP mentioned the London Local Authorities Bill which included clauses requiring the compulsory display of food hygiene information. Four objections to this clause had been tabled during its passage through the Lords and the Bill was now at its Committee stage. She believed that compulsory display of information was key issue in trying to achieve the best possible standards in food premises but it was not helpful that the FSA did not appear to support compulsory display

CZ asked where were the decisions on food related Olympic issues being made as to what needs to happen and at what level? She believed that a lot was being discussed in the background but this did not appear to be getting through to everybody and the FSA seemed to be concentrating just on "legacy" issues

**AF to arrange a meeting to speak initially with the 5 host Boroughs Group to discover what progress needs to be made in looking at Olympic issues
AF to then advise TP what form a further meeting should take, who should attend, Sector Group representatives, a wider representation?**

**Possible EHN article on the Olympics to be considered
Consideration also to be given to holding a special meeting of the LFCG to
discuss Olympic related matters**

5. Remit of the Local Authority Liaison Division of the FSA

JJ spoke to this item and circulated a structure diagram showing the organisation of the FSA's Local Authority Liaison Division and the Enforcement Support Division together with details of the principle post-holders and their contact telephone numbers

JJ said the Enforcement Group had been reduced from five divisions to four and these included the Meat Hygiene Service. JJ then described the work of the Regional Unit Liaison branch where she was working and said that the FSA were hoping to develop a central "help point"

JJ informed the meeting that the revised Code of Practice was due to go to Minister tomorrow (April 2008) for signature and it then would possibly be issued next week

JJ invited questions on the FSA's new organisational arrangements

GC asked if details of the new organisation of this Division of the FSA were available on the FSA website and JJ replied that much of it was. CJC asked why there was no regional office for London. JJ said that the FSA originally established four regional offices and the operation of these was currently being evaluated by Birmingham University who were seeking the views of local authorities and other stakeholders. The initial feedback had shown that the regional office structure was resulting in generally improved engagement and better partnership working. A report to the FSA Board to be considered at its July meeting would recommend that the regional structure be rolled out across England as there was now lots of evidence that this was the way to go, but how quickly this would be implemented would be dependant on resourcing issues being resolved. It would make sense for London to have the regional office, with the team based at the FSA's headquarters. Contact would most likely remain as John Barnes and JJ

Questions then moved to the Scores on the Doors (SotD) consultation exercise and JJ thought that a report might be available by the end of May. She thought that this would essentially mirror what was agreed by the FSA Board but this may allow some flexibility

There had been no response as far as was know to the CIEH's and LACORS submissions to the FSA that it also consult on the five-star scheme. CJC said that a SotD scheme needed to be thoroughly embedded by 2012 and the Olympics. The London pilot scheme was working and are we really going to have sufficient time to roll out an entirely new scheme?

All To Note

PS asked JJ to report back to the FSA that the LFCG would welcome a representative from the Agency to attend its meetings on a regular basis

6. HPA Report

Deferred – No representative of the HPA at the meeting

7. Public Analyst (Eurofins) Report

DA reported on current sampling projects, Allergen free products that claim to be allergen-free (June / July), Kebabs ([DUNCAN – didn't get the dates for this could you please advise, thanks](#)) Sushi (later during the year)

DA said that he had submitted imported food sampling bids to the FSA on behalf of fifteen local authorities. £50,000 had been allocated for this project with samples being taken from now until the end of August 2008. Sampling protocols had been circulated.

Update on the issues concerning Sushi, DA said that he was meeting with Carol Milligan LB Islington next month to discuss the problems that were being encountered. In relation to the need for test to determine if fish had undergone a freezing process, DA had made a search of the literature, and one or two recent papers were suggesting that the methodology used to determine if meat has undergone freezing might be used for fish also.

No further progress on the review of the Public Analyst service

The meeting then briefly discussed the continuing problems of sushi being manufactured / sold without the raw fish used being subjected to a freezing process as required by Regulations and it was agreed that any action that was taken should be uniform and consistent across all London Boroughs

CZ said that this matter was due to be discussed again at the SE Sector meeting next week as a matter of urgency as LB's of Westminster and City of London cannot delay taking further action in relation to particular manufacturers they are dealing with

GC will approach the FSA for further guidance when she is informed of the results of the discussions at the Sector meeting

8. Pan London Sampling

PS said a topic for pan-London sampling had been suggested by the NE Sector, speciality sliced cooked meats from traditional butchers and delicatessens looking in particular at cross-contamination and standards of cleaning. Did we want to take this project up across London subject to the agreement of the HPA? The HPA were aware that this project was being considered as a possible pan-London one.

The meeting expressed various views on London wide sampling projects and thought that Sectors generally preferred sampling programmes to be planned and decided early in the year. Problems were now occurring in some authorities who were now finding it difficult to identify sufficient funding to carry out sampling projects

The meeting believed that the pan-London sampling programme should identify particular issues based on risk and as a result of problems identified via the reactive sampling carried out within the Sectors

Comments on the suggested topic for a Pan-London sampling project to be forwarded to Rob Bartlett

Qualified acceptance of this project with some reservation as to the amount of detail that might be required. To be agreed by the LFCG and subject to the agreement of the HPA before protocols circulated to the Sectors

13. LACORS Report

This item taken next on the agenda. GC spoke on a number of matters. David Lock (DL) (LACORS) and Tay Potier (TP) (London Region Policy Officer) have been working on a joint report on the recruitment and retention of student EHO's and TSO's and this will be published in August

DL will be writing to the FSA following David Statham's remarks made at a recent conference that the Code of Practice was really "just guidance" to local authorities. It was understood that the CoP was to be further reviewed. LACORS views was that the status of the CoP was that it has statutory backing but it was permissible for authorities to adopt a "local" approach provided this could be justified

DL is drafting an interventions tool-kit based on the good work that resulted from the Food Champion Award applications

Developing a low-risk inspection strategy – ADAS has produced a low-risk inspection template / questionnaire which is to be circulated for consultation and comment

Article 5 of EU Regulation 852/2004. On April the Environment Committee of the EU proposed changes to Article 5 which would exempt businesses with less than 250 staff and a turnover not exceeding 50m Euros. The Presidency of the EU opposed this amendment and is currently working on a compromise text. TP believed that this should not change anything in the UK and it should clarify the position regarding flexibility. There was however an outside chance that the compromise text might not be accepted. GC will keep the LFCG informed of developments

National Indicator 184 – GC recommended that authorities begin to look at the level of broadly compliant premises currently within their areas. There are also links on the LACORS website to information relating to NI 182 (Satisfaction of businesses with local authority regulatory services)

Auditing – LACORS response to the FSA auditing scheme have been posted in the website. LACORS is suggesting a light touch approach

FSA / Hampton compliance exercise also posted on website ([Gemma – does this actually relate to the LACORS update on the Food Standards Agency's CLAE project?](#))

Central Register of Convictions – recent meeting with central government departments and the OFT appears to operate the best scheme and it was suggested that this should be expanded to cover all regulatory functions, however there could be various legal problems in doing this and the matter has been referred to the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO)

LACORS Councillors Handbook – this has been well received and an electronic version is now available via LACORS web site

11. ALEHM Benchmarking NI 184

Brief discussion only due to limited time available

PS to email ALEHM Benchmarking information to Sector Co-ordinators

PS to email JJ on training courses required

10. Sector Feedback

- **NW Sector** – CJC reported on a meeting held last week, which focused on NI 184, interventions and targets. Percentage of broadly compliant premises across the Sector authorities ranged from 60% to 80%. There were suggestions that the difference could be linked in part to the use of contractors. Will be targeting work on improving the % of broadly complaint premises. May be running a Faith and Food Forum and attending a LBRO Workshop on May being held in Birmingham
- **SW Sector** – BG said their last meeting was held at Eurofins' premises and include a tour of the laboratory facilities. Authorities have been sampling the quality of rotisserie cooked chickens with the worst samples being those from fish and chip shops also selling this product. Next meeting May at Croydon
- **SE Sector** – CZ said at the last Sector meeting they had looked at the HPA proposals on sample collection and transport and had responded to the HPA pointing out that inner and outer London Boroughs had different needs. There had been discussions on exactly when food businesses need to register and this is to be raised with LACORS for advice as significant differences between the boroughs had been noted. Next meeting on Thursday when the Sector will be considering its work plan, training and perhaps organising an "away-day". An imported food course was being held on May at the City of London, organised by ABC Food Safety. If any other Sectors would wish to send a delegate, please email James Smith at the City for security purposes with a copy to Sharon Bowles at ABC Food Safety
- **NW Sector** – PS reported that the Sector is considering the issues of inspecting primary production training and is also preparing a work plan. There had been an imported food issue involving collagen casings released by Southampton Port Health by mistake. Nothing wrong with the item but it had been released too soon. Section 24 Imported Food Regs action having to be considered. A consignment of rice-based noodles had also recently been detained due to GM contamination

14. Education Report

Deferred – No representative present

15. London Food Study Group Report (if any)

Deferred – No representative present

17. AOB

PS circulated an ALEHM Paper in connection with **Item 11** on the Agenda – ALEHM Benchmarking NI 184.

The meeting briefly considered this and expressed an opinion that a number of the formulae required qualification. The Paper didn't appear to include Food Standards
Any further comments to be notified to PS for forwarding by him to ALEHM

The date of the next meeting of the LFCG will be Wednesday June 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 meeting of the LFCG closed at 13.40 hrs