



**MINUTES OF LONDON FOOD CO-ORDINATING GROUP MEETING**

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008 at 10.00 am**

**Walbrook Wharf Offices – Corporation of London**

<b>Present</b>			
Peter Scott	(PS)	LB Havering	Chair / For NE Sector
Tony Bride (Part)	(TB)	City of London Corporation (HSE)	(London Partnership & External Relations Team)
Duncan Arthur	(DA)	Eurofins	Public Analyst
John Barnes	(JB)	FSA	
Tay Potier	(TP)	CIEH	London Region Policy Officer
Carole Zelenka	(CZ)	LB Greenwich	For SE Sector
Brian Griffiths	(BG)	LB Croydon	For SW Sector
Peter Kemp	(PK)		Minute Taker

**1. Apologies for absence / Introductions**

Apologies were received from Chris Carabine (NW Sector), Susanne Surman-Lee (HPA), and Dean Powell (Business Manager, LB Bromley)

**2. Pest Control (Dean Powell\*)**

This Item deferred – Mr Powell (Business Manager, Environmental Health and Trading Standards, London Borough of Bromley was unable to attend the meeting.

**4. NI 184 registration of food premises/ counting unrated premises as not compliant.**

This Agenda Item taken next to allow JB to be released to attend other FSA meetings later today.

PS welcomed JB to the meeting of the LFCG and introduced this item by saying that this query originally arose from discussions concerning food hygiene enforcement issues in relation to the 2012 Olympics as to whether unrated, un-inspected food premises should be counted as “non-compliant” for the purposes of compiling data relating the NPI 184

PS continued by saying that in planning inspection programmes regard had to be had to the current guidance in the C of P which required that inspection should be carried out within 28 days of falling due. This posed capacity problems as it was understood that some boroughs had identified up to 400 - 500 unrated premises in their areas

It was generally accepted in the Sectors that these unrated premises should be included in the denominator when determining the percentage of non-compliant premises. PS said it would be useful when the C of P and Practice Guidance were next amended if some guidance on this issue could be included.

In replying JB said that he agreed with the conclusions being reached. The implication with the C of P was that unrated / new premises should be looked at relatively quickly. JB explained that the purpose of NPI 184 was not only to show how well a LA was doing but also to indicate whether it had the required resources – a large percentage of unrated premises would suggest it had not. The Audit Commission is focusing on the percentage of compliant premises a LA has, NPI 184 and it should highlight quite reasonably LA’s with a low percentage of compliant premises eg because they have high numbers of unrated premises.

The FSA would also welcome some idea of the number of premises that have not yet been risk-rated although it was aware of the politics involved in declaring this figure; however he did not believe it was in anybody’s long-term interests to fudge the issue by not indicating the numbers of un-risk rated premises an LA has on its books.

In reply to a question asked by BG, JB confirmed that there was no official “target” for the number of compliant premises that a LA must achieve – the LA could set their own PI level. The Audit Commission have been told by the Agency that the focus on broadly compliant in NPI 184 is a step on the journey towards achieving full compliance. JB commented that he would anticipate most LA’s would be looking to 70 – 75 % of premises judged to satisfy the broadly compliant standards. The Audit Commission’s approach is about looking for a programme of general improvement, so LA’s should build this aspiration into their strategies.

In opening out the discussion, BG raised the issue of dealing with new premises and when it was appropriate to award them an S on the D’s star rating. JB said the timing of looking at new premises was important having regard to the Audit Commission expectations but the Agency is aware about premises that are being looked at through Alternative Enforcement Strategy (AES). If LA’s have decided their risk is low and they do not need to visit them should they be presumed to be broadly compliant? Whilst AES is not recognised by the EU as an Official Control, it does imply they are a second-class intervention in achieving compliance. This is something which will probably need to be discussed and / or clarified when the C of P is next revised.

A query was also raised as to whether full inspections had to be alternated with the use of other official controls with respect to broadly compliant premises. The use of the word “may” in the C of P was ambiguous but seemed to indicate that this was intended.

JB agreed that the wording was meant to imply this but it was not clear and this would be sharpened up when the Code was revised.

The intention was better defined in the Code in relation to inspections of Cat “D” premises where the need to alternate between other official controls and full inspections was clearly indicated by the wording used.

JB then mentioned the Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System (LAEMS) which is being introduced during 2008/09 and which will replace the existing OCD monitoring system used to report local authority food law enforcement activities to the FSA. A programme of update seminars is being planned. The FSA is aware of software issues and mapping and testing problems already experienced by some LA’s.

LAEMS is going to be used to collect the data required to assess the level of compliance in connection with NPI 184 required by the Audit Commission. JB said that we couldn’t afford to lose NPI 184 due to a lack of submitted data. As such, the FSA would be doing all it could to ensure all LA’s return the necessary data, eg accept top-line data in any shape or form at the moment with a view to this being submitted by LA’s by April / May 2009. This was confirmed in a recent circular to LA’s. The data collected in respect of this year (2007 – 08) is important as it will for the first time give full UK data on compliance levels as well as supporting the NPI 184.

PS asked if it was the plan that LA’s will submit their broadly compliant figures to the FSA who will then forward these to the Audit Commission. JB confirmed that this was correct and that the system is being designed to handle this task. The Audit Commission will then prepare a full CAA report for that LA ensuring that in focusing on the 25 local priorities for that authority, other areas covered by national LAA PI’s such as PI 184 are not being neglected.

A further FSA Roadshow and on-line support on the LAEMS will be available in the New Year. It was intended that the Roadshows would cover different topics from those dealt with at the previous seminars held during 2008.

PS then widened the subject areas for discussion and invited questions for JB on any current issues where he might be able to assist.

BG mentioned the S on the D’s report that was due to be considered by the FSA Board later that day. BG thought that the recommendation to go for a scheme based on four-tiers might have some merit. JB said that the debate was still open; there was support for the proposed scheme as it was cost-neutral, however there had been a huge lobby by LA’s to adopt the five-star scheme and Scotland might want to go their own way, but there was no appetite for inconsistency across the rest of the United Kingdom and whatever scheme was decided upon at the Board meeting it was important that the FSA and LA’s will have to work together to implement it.

PS thought that a potential problem was that planned inspection programmes might be led by the need to operate the S on the D’s scheme. He thought it is not impossible that we could end up with three different schemes operating in London. There were also resourcing issues, whether rescoring should be carried out on-demand and certain of the proposals did not appear to follow the principles set out by Hampton.

JB commented that rescoring was seen by industry as important and it had to be recognised that awarding a low number of stars to a food premises could put it out of business – so whatever system was agreed it had to be fair and proportionate.

CZ commented that we want to ensure that premises maintain a broadly compliant standard.

There was a need to to devise an incentive that would encourage a food business to maintain standards rather than see an improvement which it is found has not been maintained on a subsequent inspection. As a host borough of the Olympics, CZ said that her authority, LB of Greenwich would consider adopting whatever national scheme was recommended.

PS thanked JB for finding the time to attend this meeting of the LFCG and for his valuable contribution.

**All To Note**

**5. Change of co-ordinator for South West Sector**

BG announced that due to pressure of work he would be stepping down from the position of Sector Co-ordinator for the SW Sector.

This role would now be undertaken by Janine Avery and Helen Clark of the LB Wandsworth. They currently work a job-share post at Wandsworth and will similarly share the Sector Co-ordinator role.

PS said that he was sorry that BG was having to step down as Sector Co-ordinator and he thanked him for the work he had undertaken in representing the SW Sector and for his valuable contribution at the meetings of the LFCG.

**5a. Update on Proposed LFCG / CASH Salt Levels in Pub Meals Project**

BG then spoke about the salt levels in meals project which was discussed at the last meeting of the LFCG on 15<sup>th</sup> October. He had now received further information from Helen Clark (HC) (LB of Wandsworth) who presented this agenda item and from the Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH).

PS told the meeting that he had circulated a briefing paper prepared by HC detailing the project which would be targeting popular meals served in pubs. Looking at the financial implications, it was estimated that a full nutritional analysis would cost £190 per portion examined. The suggestion was put forward that to reduce the costs of participating in the project, only the main course of the meal be examined and this would be just for salt levels. This would reduce the costs for analysis to £65 per portion examined.

Details of the premises to be included in the project and the types of meal to be sampled have been included in HC's briefing paper. A covering letter has also been drafted and a sampling protocol prepared. The deadline for the submission of samples would be the end of January 2009 (ie during the last quarter of the year).

**All To Note**

**To confirm that the LFCG will participate in the delivery of the project but to also point out that some Sector Boroughs may have little or no budget left to pay the costs of analysis and this may be reflected in the number of samples that can be taken**

**PS to email Sectors to ask them if they are able to participate or not and to confirm that the deadline for the submission of samples is the end of January 2009**

**If budgets allow it is preferable to sample all three course of popular pub meals otherwise samples to concentrate on just the main course of the meal**

## 6. Updates from the Sectors NW / NE / SW / SE

- **SW Sector** – BG reported that the Sector had met two weeks ago. Items discussed included NPI 184 and the way the FSA had interpreted the information to be reported; the change of Sector Co-ordinators with a suggestion that the person fulfilling this role should rotate annually. SW Sector sampling numbers appeared to be low and it was discovered that the LB of Lambeth had inadvertently been sending HPA project samples to Eurofins for analysis and had consequently been paying for the examinations whereas this work carried out by the HPA would have been at no cost. One Sector Borough had not yet carried out any sampling work but would use the Nuts and Seeds project to build up its sample numbers.

The sector will now be concentrating on completing the Salt in Food / CASH and its other sampling projects.

- **SE Sector** – CZ said that at their last meeting they again looked at the CoP and the model Food Premises Registration Form following the letter from the FSA that the model form should be used. Notwithstanding this, several Sector Boroughs have said that they will continue to use their own adapted form which incorporates the model form information but also incorporates additional questions. The meeting also dealt with technical problems and the need to make manual uploads in connection with the S on the D's scheme. The query was also raised as to what rating can be given to two-star premises under the current London six-tier (five-star) scheme if an alternative scheme is recommended by the FSA following its Board meeting this afternoon. The Sector Boroughs were also likely to split between five-star (six tier) and three-star (four tiers) schemes if the latter was the preferred scheme decided upon by the FSA Board. LB of Greenwich would consider adopting whatever national scheme was recommended.
- The meeting had discussed the LAEMS arrangements and the recent melamine food incident. An Approvals training session to be given by Nigel Whiteley was being arranged for the next Sector meeting.

Nina from the HPA had given a demonstration on sampling techniques

- **NW Sector** – Report deferred. Apologies tendered by CJC who was unable to attend this meeting.
- **NE Sector** – PS said the Sector had not met. Its next meeting was scheduled to be held after the Christmas break.

## 3. Minutes of Meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> October 2008 –

### On Matters of Accuracy, Matters Arising & Action Points not covered elsewhere on the Agenda

**Page 2 (Item 2)** – Wording commencing TB suggested the following way forward. Point 2 to read “Invite Food Team Managers with health and safety responsibilities to all quadrant meetings. Partnership team will endeavour to arrange an agenda to suit”

**Page 3 (Item 2)** – Fourth Action Point to be amended to read “JF to forward details of the January 2009 Competency Framework Training Courses to PS. A Health and Safety Team Manager and a Food Team Manager to be invited to attend from each Sector Authority”

**Page 3 (Item 2)** – Actions Points 2, 3 and 4 have been completed.

**Page 8 (Item 7)** – Link to Allergen Awareness website added to Final Minutes of the LFCG 15<sup>th</sup> October 2008 meeting which have been circulated.

**Page 9 (Item 8)** – HPA Update. Information requested concerning the numbers of samples taken in connection with HPA sampling projects covering Specialty Meats, Egg Mix and Nuts and Seeds still awaited.

**All To Note**

**A full list of all the Sector Boroughs with contact points for its Food Team Managers to be prepared and forwarded to Janet Francis (HSE)**

**7. CIEH Update**

TP was able to report that an appointment had been made to the EHP post that was being jointly funded by HPA and ALEHM. This was being offered to Ms Camilla Born, a student who currently studying at Kings College on a one-year fixed term contract.

Initially her task will be to review current guidance on gastro-intestinal infections with a brief to resolve anomalies, identify gaps in the guidance and determine training needs.

In undertaking this project, Ms Born will shortly be visiting the HPU's and LA's information gathering. Ms Born will report direct to TP and will be attending the next meeting of the LFCG

**All To Note**

**8. FSA Update**

This Item deferred – No representative attended the meeting

**9. HPA Update**

This Item deferred – No representative attended the meeting

**10. Public Analyst (Eurofins) Update**

DA reported that few samples had been received from LA's recently which was fortunate as the laboratory was inundated with work relating to the melamine and dioxin incidents.

DA updated the meeting on the introduction of the FSA's Food Surveillance System (FSS) which will allow comparison of local, regional and national sampling data resulting in a more co-ordinated sampling approach. DA suggested that this be first tried as a pilot involving one or two authorities and this be commenced early in the new year with a view to extending its use to all the Sector LA's in due course.

DA thought that the FSA may make the use of FSS mandatory in time but only 19 of over 400 LA's were currently signed up and using it so any general roll-out may be delayed

Regarding the FSA review of the Public Analyst service there had been little further progress. The FSA was currently looking at qualification criteria for appointment as a PA.

**All To Note**

**11. LACORS Update**

This Item deferred – No representative attended the meeting

## **12. Rick Mason Returning**

PS confirmed that Rick mason would be taking over the Chairmanship of the LFCG at its next meeting scheduled to be held on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009. PS will continue to represent the NE sector.

## **13. AOB**

**13.1** CZ asked the question whether the species of a fish could be ascertained by examination of a fish fillet. DA answered that this was possible by examination of its DNA provided the fish / fillet had not been totally processed. Tests to establish the species of a fish using DNA examination would likely cost a couple of hundred pounds to carry out.

**13.2** PS reminded the Sector Authorities of the benchmarking exercise they were asked to carry out. The information flowing from this is required to assist in work to plan the food safety input required for the 2012 Olympics. Only 12 replies had been received so far and it was important that the information required should be supplied early in the New Year. The data being asked for should already be held by LA's. A 100% return is required.

**PS to email Sharon Smith and TP concerning this matter**

**In drawing the last meeting of the LFCG for 2008 to a conclusion, PS expressed his grateful thanks to the City of London Corporation for providing the accommodation for the meetings and thanked all those representatives who attended these and contributed to the work of the LFCG during the past year.**

**The date of the next meeting of the LFCG will be Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009. This will be held at the CIEH's Chadwick Court offices, 15 Hatfields, London SE1 4DJ. Start time to be confirmed.**

**There being no other business the LFCG meeting closed at 11.45 am**