



MINUTES OF LONDON FOOD CO-ORDINATING GROUP MEETING

Wednesday 15th October 2008 at 10.00 am

Walbrook Wharf Offices – Corporation of London

Present			
Peter Scott	(PS)	LB Havering	Chair / For NE Sector
Tony Bride	(TB)	City of London Corporation (HSE)	(London Partnership & External Relations Team)
Carrie Bott	(CB)	CASH	Consensus Action on Salt & Health
Chris Carabine	(CJC)	LB Barnet	For NW Sector
Helen Clark	(HC)	LB Wandsworth	
Janet Francis	(JF)	HSE	
Jackie Jewett	(JJ)	FSA	
David Lock	(DL)	LACORS	
Susanne Surman-Lee	(SSL)	HPA	
Carole Zelenka	(CZ)	LB Greenwich	For SE Sector
Brian Griffiths	(BG)	LB Croydon	For SW Sector
Peter Kemp	(PK)		Minutes Taker

1. Apologies for absence / Introductions

Apologies were received from Duncan Arthur (Public Analyst – Eurofins) and Tay Potier (London Region Policy Officer)

2. London H&S Partnership / Food Team Governance Arrangements

PS welcomed JF and TB to the meeting of the LFCG. TB confirmed that his secondment to the HSE as a Partnership Liaison Officer had now ended but he was still involved in

finishing this particular project. JF would temporarily assume the role of PLO until a new appointment had been made.

TB summarised the presentation he gave at the last meeting of the LFCG on 19th August when he presented a number of alternative strategies aimed at improving and formalising communications between the London LA/HSE Partnership and the LA Food Teams; These were

1. Dedicated and additional H&S London wide meetings between Partnership Manager (PM) and / or Partnership Liaison Officer (PLO)) and Food Team managers, as part of the round of quarterly planned Partnership 'Quadrant' meetings;
2. Food Team Managers attend quarterly H&S Quadrant meetings
3. PLO / PM attend LFCG and Food Sector meetings to brief / discuss / obtain feedback from Food Team managers
4. E-mail H&S information relevant to food teams direct to Food Team Managers; encourage access to LA H&S Extranet (HELex)
5. Inclusion of Food team Managers in LA/HSE planning / process meetings.
6. Do nothing / carry on with ad hoc arrangements.

TB said that he had also now had an opportunity to attend the meetings of the SE and NE Sectors to discuss these options. He had also attended a London Boroughs Liaison meeting yesterday but generally he had found that there was no resounding agreement as to a preferred option.

TB suggested the following way forward:

1. Food Team officers to attend LA/HSE planning meetings. This was an important forum and the aim would be to encourage as many London Borough's as possible to attend
2. Invite Food Team Managers to a selection of Quadrant Meetings when food matters would be top of the agenda
3. PLO to attend Sector Meetings. Often the agenda's of these meetings were long and often there was insufficient time to cover all the issues that might need to be discussed. Attendance would therefore most likely be used as an opportunity to update Sector Authorities on what was going on.

JF informed the meeting of a recent Sheriff's fatal accident enquiry in Glasgow arising from an accident where an employee was scalded to death when a pan of boiling food tipped over him. A food officer had inspected the premises beforehand but had limited competence in health and safety enforcement and had not at specific priority topics. The comment mad by the Sheriff in this case were not a direct criticism of the individual officer themselves, more directed at the systems that were employed and questioned the management of competency by the local authority.

The case also highlighted capacity issues for local authorities and their ability to deliver adequate levels of Health and Safety enforcement.

TB informed the meeting that the next LA/HSE Planning Meeting would be held at Rose Court on 28th November. It promised to be a very interesting meeting and TB advised that if Food Team Managers do not attend any other planning meetings during the year they should make every effort to attend this one.

BG mentioned particular problems he had experienced in recruiting officers of sufficient levels of competence to carry out health and safety duties. Budget restriction on the salaries that could be offered to applicants often limited the employment of officers with the degree of experience and competence required.

BG also remarked that while there were numerous training opportunities for food officers being organised by the FSA and others dealing with subjects such as Diversity, and Approvals, there appeared to be very little health and safety training aimed specifically at food officers.

In bringing discussion on this item to a close, JF mentioned that the proposed Health and Safety Competency Framework was drawing interest from both the LBRO and the FSA. It was very possible that similar frameworks based on competencies rather than just qualifications will eventually be developed for all enforcement functions.

JF informed the meeting that the HSE were hosting training courses on the Competency Framework to be held on 12th and 23rd January 2009. Places would be available for the Health and safety Team Manager and one other per authority.

Finally JF mentioned that in connection with the Regulators' Development Needs Analysis (RDNA) a phone questionnaire was being conducted on Slips, Trips and falls in Retail Premises. she thought that this might best be arranged with the individuals who attended the original training course

PS thanks JF and TB for their attendance at the meeting and for their interesting contributions.

All To Note

TB to produce a Briefing Note on the improving and formalising communications between the London LA/HSE Partnership and the LA Food Teams to be sent to PS for forwarding to the Sectors

JF to send PS the link to the specific Fatal Accident Enquiry case she reported on DL to speak to LACORS Health and Safety Team to determine if there are any specific key health and safety messages that should be passed onto Food Team Managers

JF to forward details of the January 2009 Competency Framework Training Courses to PS

3. Helen Clark – Campaign on Salt and Health (CASH)

PS welcomed HC and CB to the meeting. HC spoke to this item and introduced CB from the Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH). HC explained that when the SW Sector were carrying out a recent sampling project looking at Fish and Chips and Fried Chicken it was suggested that CASH be contacted to see if they would like to participate.

HC had subsequently spoken with Professor G.A. MacGregor, of St George's Hospital Medical School who is associated with CASH, they were very keen to become involved and it was suggested that a London-wide survey looking at salt in food be undertaken. HC was now seeking the views on this proposal.

PS asked what types of food were to be included and HC replied that it was thought that a typical popular meal that most people would order if going out to a pub to eat was the most appropriate. The LB would determine which types of premises to include in the sample and it was intended that a full meal be sampled, starter, main courses and dessert. The project could also extend to looking at other components within the meal, for example, trans-fats, portion size etc, but CASH would only be interested in salt levels. Extending the scope of the survey would add to the cost of examining the samples however.

DL thought that this would be a good project to link in with the LACORS sampling programme.

HC then spoke on how the results of the survey would be used. There was an intention to attract maximum publicity but this would not extend to a "naming and shaming" exercise. She thought that there was little point in undertaking the project unless the results were placed in the public domain. HC told the group that the results of the Fish and Chip survey carried out by the SW Sector were used to draft follow-up advice that was subsequently offered to businesses.

CB spoke to the meeting about CASH, its role and aims and what it was hoping to achieve. The organisation had already investigated packet and convenience foods and wished now to look at catered meals. CASH promoted National Salt Awareness Week in January this year and this was due to be repeated in early 2009. She also spoke of the recent publicity campaigns focusing on salt levels in food which received a high level of national coverage in the press etc. A number of the larger multi-unit food retailer had responded to the adverse publicity about their products.

PS asked about proposed timescales as it would take some time to set up the project so 2009 / 2010 might be a realistic start date. He also wondered about costs involved and had any thought been given to see if any funding might be available from the local PCT's? He understood that TSO's had also looked at salt in food at county level and a tool-kit had at sometime been produced.

CZ asked if this was the right time to proceed with such a survey. Had not the current economic situation resulted in far fewer people eating out than before? CB replied that the evidence showed that people were still eating out but were switching to take-away meals. CZ suggested that a 6-month follow-up after the completing of the survey be undertaken to gauge if people's behaviour had changed.

CJC spoke about a similar LACORS project that had looked at salt levels in food served in leisure centres. It had found little favour with the London Boroughs and getting them to buy into a similar exercise when budgets are shrinking he thought, might be problematical.

PS accepted this but thought that we needed to make a start somewhere and begin the process of chipping away at the problem.

BG mentioned a survey carried out in nurseries that discovered that a high number of convenience food based meals were being used. The project on salt would link in well with this area of work. BG wondered if the FSA might be prepared to provide any funding.

DL circulated a paper detailing the proposed Nationally Co-ordinated Food Standards Sampling Survey proposals for 2009 / 2010. He thought the proposed project was a good idea but wondered if a London-wide publicity push is of use? It might help reduce the numbers of samples that needed to be taken.

The general opinion of the meeting was that the Sectors would be very interested in taking part in this project but CZ said that we needed some better idea of the numbers of samples to be taken and of course the cost involved. A project outline would be helpful. The possibility of including any add-ons to the main project, eg extending it to also look at trans-fats as already suggested might encourage officers to buy into it.

HC thought it could be sold to the Sectors as an opportunity to participate in a national campaign. PS thought the next step should be to speak with Eurofins to discuss protocols and timing of the project regarding the submission of samples. The numbers to be taken would need to be representative of the Sector and reflect any particular variations within it. CB thought it might be better to sample from national chains even if the samples are taken from London located premises. The samples would be standard plated meals, not including carveries, the meal just as it comes to the customer.

To reduce the burden of any follow-up work PS suggested that where appropriate this could be referred to the Home Authority where one had been appointed. The survey should also note if any premises included for sampling already offered low-salt options.

CJC asked did we know that there was a problem with meals served in pubs. CB replied that the general public might be shocked at the high levels of salt in some pub meals.

Thinking ahead PS thought that the natural progression after the completion of this stage of the project would be to look at smaller businesses that operate independently perhaps in a joint exercise with the PCT's.

Turning the discussion back to the Nationally Co-ordinated Food Standards Sampling Survey proposals for 2009 / 2010, DL spoke briefly on these and asked that the Sectors look at the options listed and get back to LACORS by the end of the month with their three preferred choices.

PS thanks HC and CB for their attendance at the meeting and for their interesting contributions.

All To Note

HC to draft project protocol to be circulated to the LFCG and Sectors for further consideration

Sectors to review the Nationally Co-ordinated Food Standards Sampling Survey proposals for 2009 / 2010, and inform LACORS by the end of the month of their three preferred choices.

4. Minutes of Meeting 19th August 2008 Accuracy and Matters Arising

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

Page 4 (Para 3 referring to Page 11 AOB Emergency Scenarios) – Update. Dates have been discussed and tabled for future meetings

Page 4 (Item 4 FSA Meeting 7th August 2008 EPN) – PS has written to the FSA regarding problems experienced in the service and use of EPH. Reply from Shaheen Zar sent direct to BG. Guidance will be included in the revised Practice Guidance when this is eventually updated

When discussing this item BG spoke of a recent case taken by the LB of Lambeth where the Clerk of the Court wanted to charge the LA £75 to handle the case. BG thought that there was now a general move to charge LA's to deal with their cases.

PS also said that the FSA had recently offered the LB Tower Hamlets funding to launch an appeal concerning a EPN but TH declined to take the matter any further as they were concerned that this would affect their future relationship with the Court. The meeting then discussed attitudes to claiming costs associated with the service of EPN's and the fact that a number of local authority legal departments were of the opinion that costs could not be recovered as at this stage no prosecution had been taken.

Page 6 (item 6 Imported Food Returns) – Software codes have been introduced by a number of local authorities that will identify the country of origin.

Page 11 (Item 11 AOB) – BG reported that the students on the Higher Certificate course he teaches at NESOCOT are employed so no additional sponsorship was required at this time

All To Note

BG to circulate the reply he receives from the FSA re EPN to DL for information

5. Update from the Sectors NW / NE / SW / SE

- **SW Sector** – BG reported that the Sector met two weeks ago and discussed the salt in food and CASH campaigns, SotD's. An Approvals course if being offered and there area couple of places spare. LB Wandsworth is hosting a course for the Sector on nutrition to be held March 2009; there may also be spare places on this course as well. TB attended this meeting

BG to email PS with details of the courses so that the spare places can be circulated to the other Sectors

- **SE Sector** – CZ said that at their last meeting they looked at the CoP and Food Premises Registration Forms. Not using the new model form but have adapted the old version with the optional sections added. Local Authorities were adopting various optional information criteria, for example the City of London was asking for information on where within a premise a food business was located. DL confirmed that the standardisation of official forms was in the pipeline.

The meeting also discussed various management issues when businesses closed and new owners took over when was an appropriate time to re-score the premises for SotD? If the current SotD's rating was detrimental to the standards now being achieved by the new owner that poor score should not be in the public arena.

Also looked at Intervention policy for the year. Most LA's appeared to be inspecting "A's" & "B's" and non-compliant "C's" but a number of Sector authorities were adopting various different approaches.

On the Intervention Definitions, little progress had been made. SSL spoke on the difference between the definition of "sampling for analysis" and "sampling for examination" and pointed out that these were not new definitions in the CoP but were related back to those in the previous Code.

CZ said that a demonstration by Nina of practical sampling and swabbing techniques would feature in the next Sector meeting. The Sector was also looking at undertaking some type of nutritional sampling project possibly looking at food outlets near schools

- **NW Sector** – CJC said their last meeting had also looked at SotD and the possible impact of the FSA consultation exercise. The Sector considered where it would stand if the FSA went with a 3-star based scheme. The NW Sector was fully committed to the current 5-star scheme.

With interventions, no others were being considered at present, with Sector LA's carrying out "A's", "B's" and non-compliant "C's". With NPI 184 there was still confusion if unrated premises should be included. It would help if LACORS could clarify this point as if a LA can include un-rated premises they can achieve a better performance. HC spoke on how the LB Wandsworth's inspection programme was being formulated. All non-compliant premises were being inspected in the first six months. The affect of non-adoption of SF-BB by some businesses will result in a higher proportion of non-compliant premises as they attract a higher confidence in management score. HC added that her service plan included 85% broadly compliant premises and she thought it difficult to improve on that. The LFCG meeting then generally discussed the problems associated with trying to carry out partial or "light-touch" inspections.

- **NE Sector** – PS said they the Sector meeting had discussed the recent meeting with the FSA and the Diversity course. He reported that the FSA had recently assumed enforcement food hygiene responsibility for a couple of large scale kebab producers. one located in LB Havering and the other in LB Redbridge. The local authorities were still responsible for food standards in these premises.

The recent BBC "Rogue Restaurants" series was raised at the meeting as a number of the premises featured were located in the LB's of Newham and Tower Hamlets. These LA's were very unhappy at the methods used by the BBC to scope and researched the premise they had targeted as when re-inspected the premises were often not as poor as had been alleged in the programme

PS said that for a future meeting of the LFCG and the Sectors he would like to conduct a quick benchmarking exercise to see what is happening following the introduction of the new CoP and how LA's are employing the official controls and AES's. CZ asked what stage the ALEHM benchmarking project had reached and PS replied that he believed it had now been completed.

6. CIEH Update

Deferred – Apologies received from London Region Policy Officer.

7. FSA Update

JJ addressed the meeting and gave an update on the current SotD consultation process. The responses to the consultation document were still being evaluated but the intention was that a report would be presented the FSA Board at its December meeting. Currently the SotD scheme was the only item being considered at this meeting. The Head of the Division is likely to be tasked with presenting the report.

Regarding Interventions, Practice Guidance would be issued and this was being developed by Colin Houston. The CoP may also have to be further revised once a decision on the SotD scheme to be adopted is made.

JJ concluded her item by informing the meeting that a new learning package on Allergen Awareness had been produced. This could be used and would attract CPD points.

All To Note

JJ to email link to the Allergen Awareness to PK for circulation
(<http://allergytraining.food.gov.uk/>)

8. HPA Update

SSL updated the meeting on current HPA issues. A national procurement plan was being produced to cover transport of samples. SSL urgently needed an address from the SE and SW Sectors of a premises from which samples could be collected but this would be useful for all four Sectors as well. She could not guarantee that funding would be available to provide this level of support but the information was urgently required as it needed to be included in the procurement specification for tendering purposes.

SSL said that if Sectors believed that a collaborative approach was possible then this information as to how this might be organised also needed to be submitted to the HPA again asap to meet the preparation of the procurement specification deadline.

The earlier the HPA could pick up samples the better as they had to be examined within a 24 hour window.

Commenting on current projects, SSL said that the methods of sampling from mobile vendors and boats had now been clarified but the response so far had been poor.

The laboratory would appreciate if the collection and submission of samples connected with the current projects could be delayed during November as the lab has been inundated with water samples connected with a number of Legionella outbreaks which they are investigating.

SSL reported on progress made in connection with the current sampling projects as at August 2008:

SW Sector – 130 samples representing 12.4% of the number of samples allocated
SE Sector – 206 samples representing 15.7% of the number of samples allocated
NE Sector – 676 samples representing 40.4% of the number of samples allocated
NW Sector – 836 samples representing 52.7% of the number of samples allocated

The meeting then discussed the use of APT kits and the fact that the correct type must be employed to prevent false results. SSL commented that APT kits were a useful educational tool as they could show that although a surface had been cleaned, contamination could still be present and they had been employed in this role successfully in large production premises. APT test used in conjunction with the micro kits can also be used to demonstrate that areas were not being cleaned effectively.

SSL then provided more detailed figures on the numbers of samples taken to date in connection with the sampling programme topics

INFORMATION TO BE CONFIRMED – Susanne, I got the headings down as Specialty Meats (?), Egg Mix and Ready to Eat Shelled Nuts and Seeds but could not get the actual numbers for each by Sector and I didn't have an opportunity to speak with you at the end of the meeting – Could you please email me the correct figures and I will update the minutes – Many Thanks – Peter

In connection with the sampling programme the meeting discussed the time that samples should be picked up. A 10.00 am morning pick-up could be arranged but this would mean that samples would have to be obtained the previous late afternoon / evening. As an alternative an early collection could be made on a Wednesday and on that day there would be no afternoon collection. The meeting agree to try this and see how it works.

CJC asked if the above allocation figures included samples taken in connection with outbreaks such as Legionella. SSL replied that samples taken in connection with the investigation of outbreaks are not charged for neither are follow-up samples but anything else is. The figures she reported do not include any outbreak samples.

DL asked if there had been any progress on the PHLS guidelines on assessing the safety of ready to eat foods and SSL replied that these would be published as a consultation document soon. It would be a large document.

SSL said that a change of name had been made to the organism commonly known as E.sakazakii had recently been re- classified as Cronobacter. SSL said that she would be grateful if authorities could arrange to sample baby milks. She is due to speak at a conference and would like to include any further results from additional sampling. Baby foods imported from Uganda were often found to be heavily contaminated.

All To Note

Alternative early collection of samples to be arranged for Wednesday mornings to assess the practicality of this option

9. Eurofins Update

Deferred – Apologies received from Duncan Arthur

10. LACORS Update

DL spoke to this item and circulated a document listing sampling action points which arose from the last sampling meeting held on 13th October. He would welcome comments from the Sectors.

CZ asked if the national sampling programmes could be adapted for local implementation and DL said that if it fitted into the overall protocol then they could and this certainly happened in relation to the microbiological sampling projects.

PS said that looking at the sampling projects these should to be included on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting of the LFCG as there was a need to start planning the work programmes for next year. A lot of local work was being carried out which was not being captured for further development and dissemination.

SSL remarked that local projects were very useful for identifying any problems which might have a national impact and they can be developed to form a part of a national sampling project. Looking at the Rapid Alert can also identify potential problems that were being found throughout Europe.

DL told the meeting that the proposed subject areas for the microbiological sampling programme for next year was out for consultation with short-listed options identified. Details were available via the website and responses were required by the November deadline date.

DL believe that we needed to get better at sharing good practice and that this should be posted on the LACORS website. He had prepared a few ground rules for items that might be included for example service plans.

The draft new Framework Agreement was recently published for consultation which ends on 9th January 2009. LACORS would welcome any comments.

DL said that he had spent some time organising seminars and in particular he drew the meetings attention to the FSA / LACORS update seminar being held on 11th December. This was being aimed at areas where the FSA have yet to establish a regional presence and was being held in Birmingham.

A Food Standards Update course was being held in Glasgow on 25th 26th and 27th November. This course was formally held in Leeds.

DL asked the meeting was there any potential in attempting to produce a "Toolkit for Food Service Managers"? PS though that the Framework Agreement and CoP covered most of the areas that a Food Service Manager would need to know.

CZ asked DL about the development of a Competency Framework for Food and the current position. DL said that this was somewhat stalled at the moment but he had attended various meetings with the FSA.

All To Note

Sectors to respond to LACORS with any observations on the Sampling Action Points document circulated by DL

Sampling Programmes for 2009 / 2010 to be included on the Agenda of the next meeting of the LFCG

SSL to forward link to the Rapid Alert website to PK

Any examples of good practice for posting on the LACORS website to be forwarded to DL

DL to send the link to items that have been included so far

11. AOB

11.1 PS informed the meeting that counterfeit bottles of “Glen” brand Vodka has started to appear in LB Havering again. This was a particular problem a few years ago.

DA to be asked to produce a list of significant issues that relate to possible food counterfeiting

Ports to be asked to send any information to the next meeting of the LFCG on current areas of concern

11.2 HC mentioned the consultation exercise in connection with the introduction of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act. She asked who would be preparing the London response to LBRO. She would be preparing and submitting a response on behalf of the SW Sector. BG mentioned that the Primary Authority arrangements had already been piloted by 10 companies including most of the large food retailers

PS to draft a response on behalf of the LFCG

HC to forward a copy of the SW Sector response to PS

11.3 CJC said that the LB Hammersmith and Fulham were still proposing to change Sectors from the SW to NW and their request was now with ALEHM

11.4 DL asked in connection with the NPI's had any body latched onto any other than NPI 184 and have any links been made to food? BG said that his authority had tried to do this with regard to nutrition in nursery classes – number of children starting school who are classed as obese but they lost the funding to employ a nutritionist to carry out the project so it did not proceed.

The date of the next meeting of the LFCG will be Wednesday 10th December 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 1.30 pm