



MINUTES OF LONDON FOOD CO-ORDINATING GROUP MEETING

Tuesday 31st March 2009 at 10.00 am

CIEH, Chadwick Court, 15 Hatfields, London, SE1 8DJ

Present			
Rick Mason	(RM)	LB Barnet	Chair
Peter Scott	(PS)	LB Havering	Vice-Chair / For NE Sector
Juliet Isitt	(JI)	LB Hounslow	For NW Sector
Helen Clark	(HC)	LB Wandsworth	For SW Sector
John Barnes	(JB)	FSA	
Mina Mistry	(MM)	HPA	
Isobel Nicholas	(IN)	Steelhenge	Consultants to the FSA
Duncan Arthur	(DA)	Public Analyst	Eurofins
David Lock	(DL)	LACORS	
Tay Potier	(TP)	CIEH	London Region Policy Officer
Carole Zelenka	(CZ)	LB Greenwich	For SE Sector
Peter Kemp	(PK)		Minute Taker

1. Apologies for absence / Introductions

Apologies were received from Chris Carabine (LB Barnet). Attendees introduced themselves by stating their names and the organisations they were representing.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held 4th February 2009

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

Page 2 (Item 2) – DL asked if there was any update to the discussions at the last meeting of the LFCG concerning whether newly registered food premises had to be inspected within 28 days of the registration being received by an LA?

DL also raised the question of the food registration of child-minders following the advice letter recently sent by Colin Houston (FSA). He wondered to what extent one had to make a visit; should the need to visit be a risk based decision. DL thought that the Code of Practice (CoP) gave some degree of flexibility as to when a visit could be made but he thought this was an issue that required resolution.

In answering DL's points, JB said that a number of issues were presenting themselves connected with the 28 day inspection window and unrated food premises but the FSA did not tend to adopt a prescriptive approach to these matters. It was sensible to exercise flexibility. Concerning the registration of child-minders, the FSA was looking to arrange for the food registration requirement to be "piggy-backed" onto the registration that Ofsted required but so far this had not proved possible. JB was undecided as to whether a revision of the CoP was required with respect to clarifying the 28 day inspection requirement – which some LA's felt was not transparent – and it could be providing further guidance would provide a better and more immediate approach.

DL suggested a meeting be arranged to steer matters in a sensible direction and JB thought that colleagues would be in a position to talk with LA's about any necessary guidance after the FSA had completed its reorganisation of its Food Safety Group. There were about a dozen key food safety issues that had been raised as part of the recent LAEMS training in relation to inspection approach which probably needed to be addressed.

Continuing the discussion concerning the registration of child-minders, HC asked if LA's were actively seeking them out. JB replied that the letter from Colin Houston stated what the legal position was, but LA's had to deal with any food registrations it did receive. It was best to avoid double registration but child-minders seeking registration would need to be registered and might warrant a visit and inspection if they were preparing food.

PS described the system introduced and operated by his authority the LB Havering after 2006, where he has access to the Children's Services (CS) database and the record of all child-minders registered by CS. JB said that the turnover of child-minders was often high which could result in a number of "dead" registrations being held on a LA database. The FSA was still trying to agree a protocol with Ofsted but so far they were reluctant to take on the task of becoming involved with food premises registration.

Jl said the letter from Colin Houston gave the impression that if any food in whatever quantity was prepared and offered by a child-minder then the premises needed to be registered.

DL suggested that the LACORS guidance covering this area of work could be updated and he thought that the system operated by the LB Havering was a good example of best practice that should be highlighted on LACORS website.

PS to provide DL with details of the child-minder registration procedures operated at the LB Havering

Page 3 (Item 2 – Action Points) – CZ still awaiting permission from the student EHO to circulate her dissertation on allergen awareness. TP has circulated information regarding the organisation "Allergen Awareness" and also that concerning the increase in eating out noted in lower-income families.

Page 4 (Item 3 NE Sector Report) – DL did not find any specific references to food offences in “Guiding Light”, the Magistrates publication. He thought that there was scope for highlighting food issues, the implications of the credit crunch, cutting corners on food hygiene, the importance of food enforcement work, ensuring a level playing field etc. Would a leaflet for Members be of help in bringing these matters to their attention and was there any merit in providing this information?

PS believed it would be better to target the Clerks to the Magistrates Courts.

DL will look at this area again and draft a paper. The issues raised are applicable across the whole range of services LACORS supports not just referencing food.

Page 4 (Item 3 SE Sector Report) – DL asked for further information concerning the consistency training mentioned in the report. He wondered if the video’s used in the training could be posted on the LACORS website. JB thought that this training material was owned by the FSA but he would investigate further

JB to investigate who holds the copyright to the consistency training videos

TP to contact Andy Bowles (ABC Food Safety) as indicated by the Action Point

Page 5 / 6 (Item 4) – TP reported that in connection with a possible healthy eating award about eight LB’s have so far reported on what they are doing and quite a lot have expressed an interest. A number of LB’s in the NW Sector are also keen. TP is organising a meeting to discuss the issues involved to be held on 28th April 2009. HC said that she understood that the FSA were also looking to devise a scheme. JB said that a Healthy Charter Mark scheme was being created aimed at organisations carrying out catering operations in institutions. The FSA was also trying to promote interest amongst the larger retails chains eg Gregg’s, but it didn’t have the resources to research and compile the evidence base as to what the outcomes might be if a scheme was rolled out to the smaller high street businesses.

It might be possible to encourage some specific changes in certain types of catering premises, for example, pizza restaurants, fish and chip shops etc that could be actioned now. DL suggested a “Safer Food – Better Business” style approach to businesses covering nutrition or an insert could be produced highlighting nutritional information. RM asked the meeting if anyone was aware of any LA bidding for FSA grants. HC said that she believed the SW Sector had bid for or would be submitting a bid for a further project looking at salt and saturated fat levels.

TP to invite a FSA representative responsible for nutritional issues to attend the meeting on the 28th April

JB offered to approach the Head of Nutrition Section at the FSA to see if they were available to attend the 28th April meeting

Page 6 (Item 5) – RM confirmed he had written to the FSA concerning FSA representation at meetings of the LFCG.

Page 7 (item 6) – TP confirmed that she had forwarded the information on the LB Tower Hamlets / PCT Schools Project to RM who in turn has circulated this to the Sector Co-ordinators

Page 8 (Item 7) – HPA training. Sector Co-ordinators to remind their LA’s that the HPA would welcome suggestions for topics that could be covered on their training courses.

Page 8 / 9 (Item 10) – DA reported that in relation to Imported Food sampling bids; he had circulated the information to the Sectors. It was now up to individual LA’s to submit their bids.

Page 9 / 10 (Item 11 Action Points) – RM confirmed that Richard Block (Westminster City Council) has agreed to chair the Mobile Vendors Sub-Group. RM said that he had also circulated a Briefing Note on current Olympic issues to the LB's but so far there had been little response.

RM thought that perhaps something more specific needed to be drafted and circulated to the LB's indicating exactly how the Olympics would impact on their authorities.

Sector Co-ordinators to remind their Sector LA's that a response to RM's Briefing Note on current Olympic issues was required

RM and TP to speak with Sharon Smith and discuss progress on Olympic issues

3. FSA Benchmark Study on Food Incident Planning

RM introduced Isobel Nicholas (IN) and welcomed her to LFCG meeting. IN told the meeting that she worked for a consulting company, Steelhenge who had been retained by the FSA to carry out a study to help identify the current level of food incident management and response planning across the food and drink industry in the United Kingdom. IN circulated a paper outlining the main points of her presentation.

The aim of the project was to assist the FSA to better understand how they could support businesses in food incident planning and response, in particular SME's.

The project would be a qualitative study rolled out using questionnaires and interviews of various sizes of company both large and as already mentioned SME's. This would be a national survey covering all the English Regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The survey officially closed last Monday but it had proved difficult to access companies in the Greater London area so she was approaching the LFCG and she hoped that it may be able to assist her company in identifying local authority food officers and commercial businesses who they could speak to in some depth about incident planning arrangements.

She was interested in information as to the number of food businesses that might be operating in Greater London and in connection with selecting suitable ones for the study, companies of all sizes would be welcome to contribute. The FSA was however particularly interested in input from smaller businesses.

IN would initially be looking for a contact list of companies she could email or send questionnaires to (with an SAE for return). IN asked for an opinion on how they should be approached; would the LFCG be prepared to do this or was it best left for Steelhenge to deal with them directly with the responses being directed back to IN?

IN confirmed that the information in the returned questionnaires was kept completely anonymous and therefore no data protection issues arose. JI said that it was estimated that there were about 18,000 food businesses in the London area; the majority would be in the catering sector but that total number would also include wholesalers and manufacturers. IN said the survey questionnaires could be sent to selected businesses either on-line or in hard copy forms if local authorities could provide the contact details.

RM said that he thought that the LFCG could do something to assist with this survey and information about what was required could be circulated via the Sector Co-ordinators. He thought that it was unlikely that LA's would hold many email addresses for businesses but they might be able to provide a list of addresses. If these details

appeared on the food business register maintained by LA's as a public record there would be no privacy or data protection issues.

IN confirmed that the survey information would be kept anonymous and that any address information would be destroyed. She would be happy for Steelhenge to send out the questionnaires directly and she wanted to include, manufacturers, food importers, food packaging plants and retailers in the survey but not caterers.

JB explained to the meeting how the FSA's incident prevention strategy was being used to build bridges with the food supply chain, in particular, SME manufacturers. Regarding premises to be included in the survey across London, JB thought that this might be more manageable if this did not include retailers because of the high number that would be involved.

DL asked if the survey included focused questions and IN confirmed this. The questionnaires had been scrutinised by LACORS. IN said that from returns received so far it was evident that a number of businesses had built up very good relationships with their EHO's and TSO's in developing procedures,

CZ mentioned that English would not be the first language in a number of premises that IN was hoping to include in the survey and IN said that a telephone "help-line" number was included in the questionnaire.

DL asked if the SotD website might be used to provide manufacturers details but RM replied that the majority of LA's in London had not included these types of premises in implementing their pilot SotD schemes.

IN asked if LA's were likely to have any information or guidance on food incidents on their respective Council website's and RM said that if there was any reference to food incidents it would likely point to the FSA website as a source of further information and guidance.

JB asked if many LA's were aware of the guidance to be found on the FSA website and perhaps this could be circulated with the questionnaire. However it was then realised that the guidance is not available as a hard copy publication so to do this it would have to be downloaded and printed. The meeting thought therefore it might be better to draw the attention of businesses to the availability of this guidance which could be accessed via the FSA website.

IN said that based on the information contained in the returned questionnaires she would like to follow-up a number of them with face-to-face interviews asking them of incidents that they may have been involved in and how they dealt with them. RM thought that the information concerning a possible follow-up interview could be included with the questionnaire when these were distributed.

CZ asked if anybody knew if any LA's had ever produced an information pack for potential food manufacturers but the meeting was not aware of any having been produced.

RM thanked IN for her presentation and her contribution to the meeting.

All To Note

IN to provide basic information on the Steelhenge project and the survey to RM by Thursday.

RM to circulate this to the Sector Authorities via the Sector Co-ordinators and ask that they provide details of suitable businesses to be included in the survey direct to Steelhenge. Information to be supplied in a suitable form, eg Excel Spreadsheet

4. Updates from the Sectors NW / NE / SW / SE

- **NE Sector** – PS said the Sector is due to meet this Thursday. Sector has started the benchmarking exercise on broadly compliant premises which has produced some interesting results. A clear picture of what is happening in the Boroughs is being produced. PS said that he would be happy to circulate the spreadsheet they are using to plot the data for general use by all Sectors. There were only 8 or 9 fields to be completed including one for unrated premises. TP offered to collate the information for the whole of the LFCG if the Sectors sent her their data.

CZ asked how this information differed from that recently supplied to Sharon Smith. JB commented that he would be interested in hearing feedback from LA's as to how they would like the FSA to present the 2008 – 09 enforcement activity data which will include business compliance level information. The FSA wanted to allow LA's the opportunity to comment on what data would be useful to help inform their own inspection programmes.

PS to circulate Broadly Compliant Benchmarking Spreadsheet

Offer from TP to collate the data for the LB's is this is forwarded to her

- **SW Sector** – HC reported that the Sector had recently attended a course covering nutrition. This was an excellent course and there was interest in the FSA's proposed Healthy Eating award scheme. HC suggested that further courses be held in London as the places she had offered were taken very quickly. The Sector had discussed the implication of the recent Pennington Report into the E.coli 0157 outbreak in South Wales and it questioned if food authorities being asked to return to a licensing scheme in all but name. FSA guidance was required and in reply JB confirmed that the FSA was studying the Report and the recommendations made in order to agree the lessons to be learned, what needs to be done immediately and what issues need to be addressed in the medium term.

The Sector was submitting a sampling bid to investigate cooking oils. Results from the Fish and Chip survey were sent to the FSA last week; these showed vast differences between similar premises in respect of portion size, salt and trans-fat content. Portion size in particular varied significantly. CASH (Consensus Action on Salt and Health) were extremely keen to publish the results of the project; currently eight reports of samples submitted for analysis were awaited. HC briefly explained the LFCG / CASH project for the benefit of JB telling him that 20 authorities took part and about 60 samples were taken for examination. The meeting discussed how the data and the results of the project could be published. This could be on the CIEH London Region website or the public areas of LACORS site. A draft press release should be prepared and circulated to the Sectors for local publicity. JB said that these need to include what follow up is

being planned and should include simple messages that will resonate with the public. HC said that she needed front sheets that gave supplier details as well.

Sector Co-ordinators to ensure any outstanding data connected with this project is forward to HC

- **NW Sector** – JI reported that at the last meeting of the Sector the sampling projects for next year had been discussed. These would include chocolate claims (% cocoa solids) and fresh cream cakes from in-store bakeries. Issues relating to the food of child-minders were also discussed. The LB Brent raised a problem it was experiencing with melamine contaminated Soya products which were being detained by the port on landing for further examination but then being forwarded to inland authorities while this took place. This required the inland authority to make arrangements to keep the consignments under surveillance. LB Brent had a particular difficulty with the procedure as it had a number of Chinese food importers in its area where such consignments of food had arrived.

JB said that the FSA's guidance on how imports should be dealt with had been circulated. He was involved in developing the guidance and in certain circumstances the transfer of consignments to the inland authority could be refused for example, if it had no facilities available for holding suspect consignments of food securely.

- **SE Sector** – CZ said that the Sector had discussed the FSA's Healthy Eating Award Scheme but thought that authorities would be unable to participate unless resources and / or funding were available. Suggestions for inclusion in the FSA low-cost training programme were "Approvals" training for specific foodstuffs such as fish and meat products, vacuum packing of food and consistency in risk-rating.

Information had been received from Kent Analytical Services following the examination of samples of bird food that had been found to contain high level of aflatoxin. Concern had been expressed that the bird food which included peanuts might be finding its way into the food chain. JB said that the Commission had raised the issue previously and DA added that there had also been problems with composite products including pistachio nuts. RM wondered if it was worthwhile looking at this in some depth and working up a project for the Sectors.

CZ said that the SE-London Health Protection Unit was interested in carrying out a project with the Sector investigating Listeria in older persons for Food Safety Week. The project would cover microbiological and nutritional examinations and would be targeted at residential care homes. The protocols produced by LACORS for nurseries could be used and CZ would ask LACORS for permission to use them. CZ would also ask MM (HPA) if a suitable protocol already existed.

Westminster City Council was offering to host a training course covering sushi. The trainer was well experienced in this field. PS commented that guidance on the production and standards for sushi was requested from the FSA previously and it was understood that Colin Houston was meant to be drafting this. Sectors are asked to express interest in such a course via CZ.

Westminster City Council had also raised the question of a London-wide central register of convictions. This matter had been discussed previously and WCC wanted to know if there was any chance that this register would actually be set up. TP offered to investigate this further and DL commented that he understood that the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO) was still considering this matter. PS mentioned recent guidance from LBRO on the use of formal cautions. It appeared that the “victim” now had to be consulted before a formal caution could be considered as a suitable course of action to be taken.

In commenting on CZ’s report to the meeting DL said that he believed the FSA were preparing a training package covering the vacuum packing of food.

JB updated the meeting on changes in the way in which “Approvals” issues were being handled at the FSA. All the areas of work covering Approvals matters were being moved to the Enforcement Implementation and Delivery Division headed by Sarah Appleby instead of being dealt with by various policy teams within the Divisions. This should result in a gradual improvement in service from the FSA. JB said that the FSA had noted various problems across the whole of the UK in the way in which LA’s are dealing with Approvals and Approved Premises. He thought that a rolling Q and A system would assist LA’s with this area of work. The meeting was reminded that an “Approvals Determinator” could be found on the LACORS and ABC Food Safety’s websites. TP added that the minutes of the Approvals Group meetings were usually posted on the CIEH London Region website but she could not recall having received anything from them recently.

TP to check on progress in establishing a central register of convictions for London

DL to check on the action LBRO is taking in relation to this matter and to inform TP

Sector Authorities interested in attending Westminster City Council’s proposed sushi training course to notify CZ

5. Intelligence sharing from counterfeit vodka 2008 (Peter Scott)

PS spoke to this item and reminded the meeting that he had previously reported particular problems with counterfeit vodka being sold within his LA, the LB Havering. He was asking that any information or instances of sales other LA’s might have relating to counterfeit vodka should be circulated and shared as soon as possible. The circulation and the sharing of information quickly between the Sector Boroughs held good for other foodstuffs where similar problems had been identified.

The meeting discussed the need to think about how intelligence was shared so that investigations being carried out by LA’s did not compromise any that might also be being undertaken by any other agency of a similar nature in particular if cross-boundary working was involved. TP thought it would be useful to speak with Simone Taylor Regional Intelligence Officer (London Councils) and to discuss this issue and information sharing.

All To Note

TP to speak to Simone Taylor (London Councils)

Simone Taylor to be invited to attend a future meeting of the LFCG

JB to invite a representative of the FSA’s Food Fraud Division to attend a future meeting of the LFCG

6. CIEH Update

TP reminded the meeting that at the LFCG meeting held on 10th December 2008 she reported that an appointment had been made to the EHP post that was being jointly funded by the HPA and ALEHM.

Ms Camilla Born, a student EHO currently studying at Kings College had been appointed on a one-year fixed term contract. Her task was to review current guidance on gastro-intestinal infections with a brief to resolve anomalies, identify gaps in the guidance and determine training needs.

The project was well underway and TP said that she would circulate an update on progress to date.

All To Note

TP to circulate project update to Sector Co-ordinators

7. FSA Update

JB referred to matters already discussed earlier in the meeting in connection with Item 2 on the Agenda.

JB told the meeting that the FSA was consulting on its next Five Year Strategic Plan and it would welcome input from LA's in particular how LA's could assist in delivering the healthy eating initiatives. Comments on the Plan needed to be with the FSA by the 5th June and could these be copied to LACORS at the same time.

The FSA was looking to put a greater priority on imported foods and embedding messages in the home. Further restructuring of the FSA had taken place with adjustment of staffing levels. Sarah Appleby now headed up the Enforcement Delivery Division and he was now responsible for Local Authority Audit & Liaison.

There would be a big focus on delivery. The new Chief Executive wished to fix the delivery problems that been recognised in the past.

As JB then moved on to discuss Scores on the Doors (SotD) progress, Item 13 on the Agenda was taken in conjunction with Item 7

JB said that criticism was being levelled at the FSA that the implementation of the decision of the FSA at its December 2008 Board meeting concerning a national SotD scheme was not progressing fast enough but it was important to get things right and some important issues need to be agreed. The Steering Group had been convened and this had met recently. The LA representative was Sheila Davison who is a member of LACORS Environmental Health Policy Forum. There would be an opportunity for LA's to contribute to the various working groups that will need to be established to implement the national scheme.

RM said the timetable for the Work Programme and the reports discussed at the Steering Groups first meeting were available via the FSA website. RM reported that he understood that Steve Miller, Chair of the Association of London Environmental Health Managers (ALEHM) had written to the FSA expressing his surprise that in appointing persons to sit on the Steering Group, no representative of the Metropolitan Boroughs

had been invited to become a member. JB said that there was plenty of work to be completed and that every opportunity will be given to LA's to contribute to the debate.

TP asked how Ms Davison will communicate with LA's and what arrangements would be made for her to do this. TP also queried what her exact role was; was she a member of the Steering Group representing LACORS or LA's?

DL commented that communications had been identified as a key issue for ensuring the success of the Steering Group and the Working Groups that will need to be established. These were also seen as important forums for driving the process forward. If timescales were not clearly set out, LA's will not feel engaged. Some of the timescales required revision, eg that for resolving guidance on revisits by January 2010 was thought to be far too long and this had now been fixed for completion by August 2009.

RM said the SotD Implementation Group had met after the last LFCG meeting in February with a view to rationalising the London pilot to make it consistent with the other Five-star schemes in use. He hoped this would be completed by June 2009 depending on what progress had been made by the FSA with respect to the national scheme.

Having completed discussion on SotD issues, JB continued his report to the LFCG on other matters being dealt with by the FSA. Food Safety Week this year would be focused on the elderly and further information would be circulated soon. Food Safety Week was programmed to occur in the middle of June.

Concerning the Pennington Report into the South Wales E.coli 0157 outbreak, JB said that the FSA would be studying the lessons to be learned and information will be circulated to LA's. Obviously, vacuum packing of food, the FSA audit process and reality checking were topics that amongst others will need to be considered.

Turning now to comment on the regional development of the FSA, JB said that the aim behind the establishment of an FSA regional presence was partnership working and relationship improvement. Regional teams would not be rolled out to every region because of financial constraints. Teams would probably cover two regions each. This would be challenging but the FSA believed that this could work well. London needed to be considered separately and with Sarah Appleby he will be examining how the FSA can work best with the LB's where much focus is likely to be on Olympic issues and perhaps how existing budgets could be used to target Olympic related activity as a priority eg training and SFBB budgets.

In connection with the introduction of LEAMS, JB said that the workshops held went well. He would welcome feedback from LA's as to what information they would like to see in the final enforcement activity reports.

All To Note

8. HPA Update

MM addressed the meeting and reported on current outbreaks and incidents. She said that Salmonella had been isolated from certain batches of Ayyam Zamam Halwa (Sesame Seed Paste Halva). This product had been sampled by the LB Barnet as part of the Pan-London Sesame Seeds and Products survey currently underway. The importer was Damsgate, a wholesaler who specialise in products from the Middle East.

Further samples have been taken by the Home Authority, LB Ealing and Salmonella detected in both 250g and 400g packs.

Allocations; these have been increased by 1.7%; information on allocations and charges have been sent to LA's.

Transport of samples. MM said that a meeting to discuss transport options was held on 27th February 2009 and the minutes have been circulated for information. If there were any queries or question could they please be emailed to MM.

The Royal Mail had been awarded a contract to provide transport facilities. Samples would be collected from LA's which will allow sampling to be carried out late afternoon and evening.

The LA's have been split into ten routes; some LA's are not in the same sector groups. This should allow LA's to sample on a specified day and another and the delivery of samples to adjoining LA's on another route.

Outbreak samples will be collected directly from LA's on an ad-hoc basis as and when required. The HPA is hoping to start a pilot with four routes but the commencement date has been delayed and it is now hoped to start in the middle of April.

LA's will be supplied with four cool boxes and a data logger

Pan London Sampling Projects; MM said the HPA thought that in light of current sampling trends, a third project for 2009 – 2010 would be useful. MM asked if the LFCG would be prepared to undertake three projects instead of two.

PS said that any additional project should be intelligence based or the funding could be used to deal with any immediate problems that presented themselves or were identified during the year. He did not think it worthwhile just sampling anything just for the sake of it. MM asked if a project might be conducted in connection with Food Safety Week involving elderly persons.

DL wondered if there was any merit in revisiting previous projects and carrying out re-sampling to provide a more comprehensive set of results.

RM mentioned that he had emailed Sue at the HPA concerning the allocations to the LB of Hammersmith and Fulham which had recently changed Sectors. MM confirmed that this information had been sent again but RM could not trace having received it.

MM reported on the results of a customer survey that the HPA had conducted; there was a 40% response from LA's that had been sent the survey and this was after several reminders to return the form had been issued. The returns showed that LA's were generally satisfied with the service that was being provided. The main concerns highlighted by LA's were:

- Transport arrangements at the collaborating centres
 - Parking
 - Access to the Laboratories
 - The return of cool boxes to LA's

- Samples being collected too early in the day
- Availability of submission forms and equipment at collaborating centres
- Variable turn round time and consistency of when results should be telephoned over
- Insufficient interpretation of results on the reports
- Availability of information on surveys and protocols

The conclusions reached were that the HPA's LA customers were generally happy with the service the HPA provides.

The HPA needs to make some improvements in its turnaround time and in the reporting of results.

Transport issues should improve with the new system referred to earlier due to start in April 2009.

Suggestions concerning improvements to the forms have already been taken on board as new forms have been designed and these will be introduced from April 2009. Forms will also be made available electronically in Word.doc format.

Improvements are currently being proposed for the HPA's IT systems to be upgraded. The HPA's website is also being upgraded and it may be possible for it to post information for its customers accessed via a protected password

The visit by UKAS to the HPA went well and its accreditation was maintained.

All To Note

Sector Co-ordinators to identify through discussion with their Sector LA's any emerging food issues that could form the basis of third sampling project to be undertaken by the LFCG

9. Public Analyst (Eurofins) Update

DA reported and said that the outstanding reports in connection with the LFCG / CASH project mentioned earlier in the meeting would be available within the next two weeks.

Eurofins was currently undertaking a survey of the food offered by "Meals on Wheels" services. Information covering the sampling projects to be undertaken for next year was being posted on Eurofins website together with the protocols.

DA said that any ideas on areas of work where training was required would be welcomed. Training in sampling techniques had already been suggested.

JB asked DA about the use of the Food Surveillance System (FSS) database and its take-up. DA replied that problems were being encountered in getting sample information on the database and the need to undertake double-entry of the data for separate reporting systems had discouraged many LA's from adopting FSS. JB said that the roll out of FSS was progressing well in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and he was disappointed that England was not following suite.

PS commented that the double-entry problem was significant for officers, however JB said that he believed the advantages of using FSS would take food sampling work forward a great deal. JB agreed that eventually it would be preferable to have just a single reporting system. CZ pointed out that timing was a problem. LA's were engaged in getting the Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System (LEAMS) up and running. There is interest if FSS but the priority is LEAMS which has to be bedded in first.

PS thought that the need for double- entry of data could be eliminated if the FSS could be used for returning the information required on sampling that was now submitted using LEAMS. JB thought that this would be a possibility but needs to be considered in the longer term as there was a statutory driver requiring LEAMS data to be provided and hence 100% returns can be required whereas UKFSS is voluntary.

JB confirmed that all LA's should have by now received training on how the system worked but take-up subsequent to the training (in England) has been very disappointing.

All To Note

12. Request for information from West Yorkshire Analytical Services

This item was taken next – RM referred to the information on this item he had circulated with the Agenda and the request from West Yorkshire Analytical Services information on how much local authorities in London spend on food standards analysis at their public analysts.

The information was required to use as evidence to demonstrate that this is an under funded and over cut area. The request was also linked in with the on-going review of the Public Analyst service.

RM believed that any data protection issues could be overcome if the figures for London could be anonymised so that individual London Boroughs could not be identified. DA said that any figures for London that were supplied would not include the Port of London or Heathrow Airport.

TP said she was not clear as to exactly what information they were asking for so any information supplied would be general in nature.

All To Note

DA to email information to RM.

DA to indicate exactly what the figures supplied represent and what they include.

West Yorkshire Analytical Services to be advised that any further breakdown of the information would need to be obtained via a Freedom of Information (FOI) application to each London Borough

10. LACORS Update

DL said that he was currently looking at the LACORS framework and guidance on monitoring with a view to updating this.

Following on from the publication of the recent Pennington Report, DL asked the meeting if it thought that this raised any particular issues concerning catering operations carried in village halls and community centres. He recalled that guidance was issued after the first Pennington Report in the 1990's which took the form of posters that could

be displayed, "Top-Tips" leaflets etc. In light of the current recommendations did this need to be updated?

JB thought that any update could be based on the current guidance being developed in conjunction with the Olympics. HC commented that in dealing with these sorts of premises she tended to look at the type and scale of the food business being conducted from them rather than the premises themselves.

DL reported that he had recently spoken to the FSA and discussed its audit process and how this in future might be linked into peer reviews.

DL mentioned a new EU Services Directive and asked if the LFCG had heard of this or knew anything about this legislation. The legislation was designed to minimise barriers to trading in Members States and it could have a bearing if any EU but non-UK based food businesses wanted to begin operating in the UK. Certain procedures must be in place by later this year. Implementation could involve cross-boarder working.

The EU has set up a specific website which has information on the legislation and the implications of cross boarder working.

All To Note

11. Sharing Operational Food Good Practice and Examples of LA work (see attached)

DL referred to the email he had recently sent to food safety liaison group secretaries concerning the sharing of operational good practice (circulated to members of the LFCG with the Agenda for this meeting) and asking for this matter to be an agenda item when the group next meet. DL asked for any examples of LA good practice identified by the group to be emailed to him at .lock@lacors.gov.uk

DL also reminded the meeting of the m Liaison Group Section of the LACORS Website where minutes and examples of locally coordinated work (e.g. sampling initiatives protocols and results) can be posted. Any items for posting should be emailed to .group@lacors.gov.uk

All To Note

13. Scores on Doors (Rick Mason)

This item was taken and discussed during Item 7, FSA Update.

14. Olympics

CZ confirmed that a meeting of the Joint Local Authority Regulatory Services Group (JLARS) was due to take place next week before the next NE Sector meeting. There were concerns that the five host boroughs appear to be working on their own.

An issue had also arisen over who might be actually contracted to provide the catering at certain venues such as the O2 arena and Wimbledon where there were existing catering contracts in place. It appeared to be possible in the contract arrangements that the catering contractor/s who successfully tendered for the whole of the Olympics could move in, and provide catering services for the duration of the Olympic event being

staged at that venue, and displace the existing “resident” caterer” including the equipment and systems already in place.

All To Note

TP to ask Sharon Smith and Jenny Morris to provide regular updates on Olympic projects to future meetings of the LFCG

15. Any Other Business

There being no other business the LFCG meeting closed at 13.14 hrs.

The date of the next meeting of the LFCG will be Tuesday 26th May 2009. This will be held at the usual venue, the Corporation of London’s Walbrook Wharf Offices, 78 – 83 Upper Thames Street London EC4R 3TD commencing at 10.00 hrs.