



## MINUTES OF LONDON FOOD CO-ORDINATING GROUP MEETING

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2009 at 10.00 am

Walbrook Wharf City of London  
78-83 Upper Thames Street  
EC4R 3TD

| <b>Present</b> |       |                |                            |
|----------------|-------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Peter Scott    | (PS)  | LB Havering    | Vice-Chair / For NE Sector |
| Chris Carabine | (CJC) | LB Barnet      | For NW Sector              |
| Helen Clark    | (HC)  | LB Wandsworth  | For SW Sector              |
| James M Smith  | (JS)  | City of London | For SE Sector              |
| Krishna Pathak | (KP)  | HPA            |                            |
| Jackie Jewett  | (JJ)  | FSA            | FSA Regional Liaison Unit  |
| David Lock     | (DL)  | LACORS         |                            |
| Nigel Whiteley | (NW)  | LB Hackney     | LFCG Approvals Group       |
|                |       |                |                            |
| Peter Kemp     | (PK)  |                | Minute Taker               |

### 1. Apologies for absence / Introductions

Apologies were received from Rick Mason (Chair LFCG / LB of Barnet), Carole Zelenka (LB of Greenwich), Duncan Arthur (Public Analyst / Eurofins) and Tay Potier (London Region Policy Officer – CIEH).

### 2. Chair of the London Food Co-ordinating Group

PS took the Chair for this meeting and explained that Rick Mason (RM) had unfortunately stepped down as Chair of the LFCG due to pressure of work in his day to day post with the LB of Barnet and the increasing workload involved in leading on the Scores on the Doors Working Group.

PS said that RM had chaired the LFCG for over four and a half years and that he wished, on behalf of the LFCG to formally thank him the commitment and leadership he had provided during his chairmanship. PS confirmed that he had put his name forward to ALEHM as RM's successor and that the future chairmanship of the LFCG will be considered at ALEHM's next meeting due to be held on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2010. In the meantime PS will chair the next meeting of the LFCG to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

PS urged any other persons interested in becoming chair of the LFCG to also put their names forward so they could also be considered for this post.

The meeting unanimously endorsed the vote of thanks to RM for all the work he had undertaken as Chair of the LFCG and wished him every success for the future

#### **All To Note**

### **3. Actions and Minutes of the Meeting held 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009**

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

**The Minutes were agreed for accuracy.**

#### **Updates on Action Points identified at Last Meeting of the LFCG – 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009 (See Action Points Table – Grayed Out indicates completed))**

**FSA Food Fraud Division Presentation** – JJ contacted London Region Food Study Group but no response received. A presentation could be incorporated within the FSA London Update event being organised. Background information based rather than specific.

**Vacuum Packaging Machines** – FSA letter from Sarah Appleby circulated to LA's in May 2009 dealing with FSA's response to the Pennington Report. Clearly stated that LA's could not prohibit the use of just one vac packing machine. PS reported that LB Tower Hamlets are using notices to require two machines.

Brian Curtiss presenting at a recent RSSL Vacuum Packaging Course advised that fbo's should be required to validate the cleanliness of the machine(s) they are using and this validation has got to be maintained all of the time.

Suggestion that the RSSL course be organised for each Sector. CJC to forward course details CJC asked if there was any information as to the number of e.coli outbreaks where a vacuum packing machine was implicated. PS said that there were many factors involved in the Tudor outbreak

#### **CJC to forward details of RSSL Vacuum Packing Course to PS**

**Legal proceedings involving "Use-By dates** – Discussed at SE Sector Meeting. No further cases

**Safety of Raw Lamb Menu Items** – JS said that he had discussed this matter with Sheila at the FEW Laboratory. the potential problems with this product was originally reported by Westminster City Council (WCC) which now has a large number of middle-eastern style restaurants serving raw lamb dishes. WCC have been conducting their own sampling project the results of which so far have indicated that this may be less of a problem than first thought.

JS will speak to WCC to obtain an update on the position and to discuss how the result of their project will be presented. It would be of benefit if WCC were prepared to allow a wide circulation of the report.

**FSA Benchmark Study on Food Incident Planning (Steelhenge Project)** – Report was published and placed on the FSA website towards the end of October.  
**JJ to circulate link to the Report to LFCG**

**Possible Repeat of CASH / LFCG Salt in Pub Meals Project** – HC has made contact with CASH who are keen to work with the LFCG. A suggested topic for a further project is Salt in Take-Away Soups; simple to undertake. Many soups of this type are unlabeled and have been found to be quite salty.

PS asked if there was any mileage in repeating the initial project. Contact could be made with the big chains to see if any had reformatted the dishes they were offering. JS thought that we also needed to include food manufacturers. JJ said that the FSA was looking for a commitment from food manufacturers to reformat many products to reduce salt and fat content.

**Interest in repeating the original CASH / LFCG project or a new project to be ascertained among Sector Authorities**

**Potential Administrative Problems / Costs Involved for LA's in Organising Low-Cost FSA Courses** – JJ confirmed that she did mention this potential problem to Bob Pilling at the FSA. The feeling of the LFCG was that there was a lot of work involved for LA's in organising the FSA's low-cost training courses, arranging venues, refreshments, invoicing delegates, collecting fees etc. There was a lack of clarity over other connected matters such as payment of travel expenses, booking of hotel accommodation and similar arrangements that have to be made. JJ spoke about the FSA low-cost Imported Food courses that it had previously offered to LA's. In the past they have been delivered by Andy Bowles (ABC Food Safety) and the Imported Food Branch of the FSA had organised and funded everything. Unfortunately different parts of the FSA appear to organise similar courses differently. HC suggested that we needed clarity in identifying who is in charge of what.

**JJ to follow up to see what can be done to reduce the burden on LA's in organising the FSA's low-cost training.**

**Dangers of CO gas production from the use of charcoal fired tandoor ovens** – HC said she could not recall agreeing to brief MP on this matter or to talk at a future Gas Safety Seminar. There had been no contact from the HSE. She told the meeting that LB Wandsworth had now purchased its own monitoring equipment.

**SE Sector Reports - Residential Care Homes Listeria / Nutrition Sampling Project** – JJ has circulated the FSA's published guidance on nutrition for older persons. The Residential Care Homes Project will not be going ahead.

**FSA Update / LAEMS** – JJ has circulated the information asked for by HC.

**Healthy Eating Award Scheme** – TP to be asked to update the LFCG on the current position. HC told the meeting that her authority, LB Wandsworth were already promoting a scheme, part funded by the PCT. This was going very well.

**Agenda Item for next meeting of the LFCG**

**LACORS involvement with Healthy Eating Award Scheme to be clarified (Gemma Cantelo)**

**Scores-on the-Doors / Revised Banding Scheme** – RM dealing with this matter and a letter has been sent to the FSA expressing concern as to what is now proposed.

This letter had been copied to all the FSA Board members and to all other representatives sitting on the Steering and Working Groups. DL confirmed this and said that he was meeting with RM after the LFCG meeting to discuss the situation.

The current unsatisfactory situation was discussed by FSA Board who asked that a “summit” meeting of all the interested parties be urgently convened and this will now take place on the afternoon of 17<sup>th</sup> November 2009. RM, DL, Steve Miller and Beryl Morgan (London Boroughs Rep on the Food Hygiene Focus Group will be attending. Industry and consumer representatives have also been invited. It is understood that the London Boroughs have called their own meeting which will be held on the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> prior to the FSA summit meeting

JS said that the London Borough’s meeting on the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> would be held in the City’s Walbrook Wharf offices so he need to know who will be attending to arrange with security access to the building.

#### **4. Report from Approvals Group**

PS welcomed NW to the LFCG meeting. NW commenced his report on current activities by describing the Approvals Group and the work it carried out. It operated independently of any other similar groups and did so remarkably well. Meeting were attended by on average about 15 officers, mostly at Principal EHO or management level and about 25 of the London Boroughs sent representatives. Technically the Group was very able and could call on a wealth of knowledge on the subject of Approvals / Approved Premises. The Group is supported by two paid Minute Takers. The Group relies on contributions from its members; Carol Milligan who represents LB Islington contributes frequently as do a number of other knowledgeable officers.

The Approvals Group use to have an Information Officer but this post has been vacant for over a year and NW said that this sometimes left him out of touch on new or emerging issues. NW said he found himself the focus of most enquires made outside of the Group meetings and in dealing with the not inconsiderable number received he would welcome some help.

The Approvals Group had its own web pages accessed through the CIEH’s London Region site. The Minutes of the Group’s meetings and presentations could be found on its web pages as could an “Approvals Determinator” which was based on a flow diagram and this could be used to see if approval was required in respect of a certain premises.

NW commented that the Group was very good at sharing and disseminating information between its members but much of this was not generally available on its web pages as it had not been produced “in-house” by the Group. There were good liaison arrangements and PS asked if the sharing of experience included officers visiting other colleague’s authorities. NW replied that sharing information and experiences was normally achieved via telephone calls or by email.

DL mentioned that he was aware of e Memorandum of Understanding in this area of work that had been agreed by Kent LA’s to share resources. DL also commented that the information on the LACORS website relating to the sharing of expertise in respect of very specialist premises had been amalgamated and would be reposted on the LACORS site with a request that Sector Groups update the information as necessary.

NW asked if the arrangements for sharing of information could be developed by the LFCG and ALEHM into a more formalised scheme. PS thought this might be possible but initially it could be operated informally.

The meeting believed it would be helpful if the Approvals Group could define the level of knowledge required to be considered an “expert” and could this expertise be marketed. It was an idea well worth exploring further but PS suggested that the term be used informally as there were contractual and liability implications. JS thought that it was potential minefield setting up an advisory service on a paid for basis however DL said the idea had some merit as resources got tighter and tighter.

NW said that the idea of expanding the role of the former NW Approvals Group to cover all the London Boroughs was based on the desire to share experience. One of the original aims was also to provide training opportunities and NW said that he had undertaken a number of training sessions. Further interest in repeating these had also been expressed by some LA’s.

The Approvals Group had also organised two presentations; in July 2009 by Meat and Livestock Commercial Services Ltd a company specialising in offering consultancy services to the meat industry and previously by the FSA’s Veterinary Meat Hygiene Advisers (VMHA) on the Meat Plant Approvals process. The events were very successful and the VMHA’s were particularly interested in learning about the work carried out by EHO’s in enforcing the Approvals legislation.

DL asked how the transfer of enforcement responsibilities for catering premises operating as meat cutting plants was going and NW said quite well but a number of cutting plant inspections were still outstanding.

CJC informed the meeting that he had heard that the FSA might be looking again at issues relating to the approval process that had arisen along with uncertainties. NW responded by confirming that he had met with Catherine Bowles at the FSA last year but had heard nothing more. JJ said the Catherine Bowles had since moved jobs within the organisation.

PS thanks NW for his most valuable contribution to the meeting and on behalf of the LFCG thanked him for the excellent work undertaken by the Approvals Group.

**All To Note**

**DL to forward to NW a copy of the MOU agreed by Kent LA’s**

**ALEHM to be asked to consider formalising a scheme to share Approvals information among LA’s**

**5. Public Analysts Report**

Item deferred. No Public Analyst (Eurofins) representative was able to attend the meeting

**6. LACORS Report (Not previously included on the circulated Agenda)**

DL addressed the meeting and said that initially he would welcome views on the recently circulated letter sent out on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2009 (ENF/E/09/046) from the FSA stating that food premises should be inspected within 28 days of the food registration application being received. The letter, written by Catherine Bowles confirms that LA’s should already be doing this but the Code of Practice (CoP) may not be clear and it will need to be updated in due course.

DL thought that it was not always possible to carry out a first inspection within 28 days; inspections should be programmed on risk. A response to this letter had been posted on the LACORS website and comments from LA's have been invited.

PS said that from feedback via the Sectors LA's were carrying on with the current practice of following up the registration of new premises by inspection those of the highest potential risk first. HC thought that in an environment of staff cuts the FSA needed to work in the real world. Some LA's were not able to carry out inspections of compliant "C"s, and were concentrating their resources inspection category "A" and "B" premises only.

JJ, asked what role Catherine Bowles the author of the letter played in the FSA said that she was second in command to Sarah Appleby (Head of Implementation & Delivery Division). CJC thought it would be useful if the FSA would acknowledge that the situation regarding food service resourcing in some LA's was serious.

The meeting then went on to discuss LAEMS and this part of the meeting related to the work of the new LAEMS Joint Working Group that HC had been invited to join as reported at the last meeting of the LFCG.

DL said that performance indicator 70 / 30 had been scrapped and the NPI to be reported was NPI 184. LACORS position was that unless it was absolutely justified it only required NPI 184 to be reported to it.

LACORS will be exploring the resource implications in providing and completing the LAEMS data input next year and it will be canvassing LA's views on how they feel the exercise can best be carried out. The meeting discussed a number of issues and problems experienced in inputting data using the LAEMS application. CJC asked if there was any facility for making a "dummy run" say every three months or so, so that any errors or problems could be identified and resolved before attempting to load the final data in LAEMS?

HC thought that it would be useful if there was a "free text" screen in the LAEMS return as this would be valuable in highlighting for example, any project work that the authority had carried out.

DL believed the whole process needed to be made as painless as possible and LACORS will be circulating further guidance by email. HC agreed to separate out the types of enforcement activity.

For information DL reported that in respect to Pennington issues, LACORS had updated the information on its website relating to compliance with Regulation 5 and has asked for comments by 11<sup>th</sup> December 2009. It has also revamped guidance on the training of food handlers and food business operators and this has also been posted on the website.

There was a meeting of the Food Hygiene Focus Group scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> November which Beryl Morgan from LB Southwark would attend representing London.

**All To Note**

**DL to circulate further LACORS guidance on LAEMS by email.**

**7. HPA Report**

KP circulated a briefing note setting out the activities and incidents handled by the HPA since the last meeting of the LFCG and spoke to this item:

**Staffing** – The EHO post remains vacant and will be put out to advertisement in due course. The HPA is reviewing remit of the post which will now include elements relating to the Olympics.

**Dr Susanne Surman-Lee** – Dr Surman-Lee hopes to be able to commence a gradual return to work towards the end of November 2009

**Transport** – KP said that the Royal Mail will not pick up samples unless they are packed in a cool box or a sturdy box. If there are any continuing issues regarding transport KP asked that feedback and information be forwarded to the HPA via [fwem@hpa.org.uk](mailto:fwem@hpa.org.uk). as the HPA has regular meetings with the service provider, “Royal Mail Same Day” and these matters can be addressed.

The activities and incidents investigated by the HPA are set out in the Appendix attached to these Minutes and describe the HPA’s findings in relation to 11 Salmonella incidents and 9 Outbreaks. Particular problems have been noted again where Spanish Eggs have been implicated.

A summary of the Sampling Credits in respect of the LFCG Sectors was also presented by KP and is shown on the accompanying Excel spreadsheet.

KP suggested that an early start be made on the discussions to decide the Pan London Sampling Survey topics for 2010 – 2011 and in view of the Milton Keynes outbreaks it is proposed that this should include another egg survey.

DL spoke on the programme of LACORS / HPA national studies for next year. It was proposed that one of them be built on the issues arising from the Pennington Report; however he thought that these were somewhat vague as the Report never really asked LA’s to focus on the worst premises and take samples, take the appropriate action and then undertake a follow-up sampling survey to gauge any improvement.

HC reported that this work had already been carried out in the SW Sector and the results obtained were not as worrying as it was thought they would be. CJC said that the NW Sector had focused its attention of butcher’s shops in the past and HC informed the meeting that she understood that the LB Lambeth had previously undertaken a lot of work on this type of premises.

Commenting on the incidents reported to the meeting by the HPA, JS said that one of them involving a noodle bar had occurred at a premise in the City of London. He thought that once written up it would form the basis of an excellent case study as a large number of environmental samples had been taken in the course of the investigation.

DL asked KP how the drafting of guidance on the packing of cool boxes was progressing. KP said that she believed that this had now been finalised and she would arrange for him to be sent a copy.

**All To Note**

**KP to send DL a copy of the HPA guidance on the packing of cool boxes when this is issued**

## 8. FSA Report

JJ commenced her contribution to the meeting by saying that a number of the matters she was going to raise had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

The FSA had prepared its next Strategic Plan for 2010 – 2015. This was quite a short document and was discussed at the FSA Board meeting yesterday, 10<sup>th</sup> November. The Plan was agreed subject to changes relating to further input on those sections covering consumer protection and the FSA's work with the rest of Europe. The revised Strategic Plan will be published towards the end of November and JJ will notify us when it is available.

The next round of the Food Champions Award had been announced and JJ encouraged the London Boroughs to apply.

The issue of Magistrate Courts charging LA's when they wished to apply for an Emergency Hygiene Prohibition Order (EHPO) had been raised with the FSA's lawyers. The information available to them suggested that an application of this type should only attract a £75.00 fee not the £200.00 which some authorities had been asked to pay. These court fees operated on a sliding scale. HC reported that her authority had again recently been asked to pay £200.00 to have an application for an EHPO heard. The meeting further discussed this situation and agreed that the current lack of clarity regarding EHPO cost should not preclude the service of Emergency Hygiene Prohibition Notices in London. JJ agreed to circulate the opinion of the FSA's legal department.

JJ said that the FSA was organising an FSA Update Day specifically for London. This would mirror similar events held in other parts of England by the FSA's Regional Offices. JJ mentioned the questionnaire that had been circulated in respect of a NW area event which set out possible topics to be covered and asked for feedback on the area's the London Boroughs would want on the programme. The suggested venue was 15 Hatfields (CIEH) which could accommodate about 90 persons. This would allow 2 / 3 officers from each London Borough to attend.

Food Fraud as a topic to be covered had already been mentioned. A numbers of issues could be covered in part of the day followed by workshop sessions with topics broken down into various subject areas

DL said that LACORS would contribute looking at the LA perspective and what a change in central government might mean for the public sector. It would also present on a number of food safety / food hygiene issues that LACORS had been progressing throughout the year.

In further discussion on the intended event it was suggested that this should not been seen as just a training day but should be directed towards the management levels of food safety services. Healthy Eating Awards and how these are developing was thought to be an interesting subject area to be included and working with LAEMS was also thought to be suitable for a workshop session. Pennington Report issues and how LA's were responding to these must be included and JJ reported that at a previous FSA SW Region event a "Show and Tell" session where individual authorities mounted displays and gave presentations on matters occurring within their authorities area proved to be very popular.

HC suggested that working with your local PCT and attracting funding was a topic that could be explored and CJC suggested "how can we get by with fewer EHO's" when food hygiene

enforcement is not being carried out in accordance with the Codes of Practice? He also put forward as topics “dealing with the impact of the recession” and “best practice in adversity”.

**All To Note**

**JJ to circulate FSA Legal Department opinion on Magistrates Court fees for EHPO applications**

**JJ / DL to discuss and agree topics to be covered on the FSA London Update Day**

**9. Sectors Reports NW / NE / SE / SW**

- **NW Sector** – CJC said that at the recent Sector meeting almost all of the time was spent discussing SotD and the current concerns being voiced about the FSA’s proposed changes to the method of scoring premises. There was general opposition to the FSA’s proposals and resolute support expressed for the London scheme. The meeting also discussed intervention models and it was found that the Sector Borough’s were all carrying out full inspections. A small working group has been set up to investigate and prepare suitable formats for other intervention models.

On further progress towards the “privatisation” of LB Barnet’s services the so called “Easy Barnet” concept, CJC said that he did not have a great deal more information to report. There were some thoughts that adjoining authorities might consider sharing the provision of certain services.

- **NE Sector** – Item deferred as PS had previously had to leave the meeting to fulfil a prior commitment.
- **SE Sector** – JS reported that the Sector meeting looked at Pennington Report issues and discussed the sharing of sampling information, using common inspection forms etc. The majority of the Sectors most recent discussions have revolved around Pennington. SotD issues had also been covered in some detail and JS had reminded all the Sector authorities that they needed to be represented at the forthcoming meeting of all the London Borough’s next Tuesday at which the FSA’s changes to the SotD scheme were being discussed.
- **SW Sector** – HC said that the SW Sector meeting had also discussed the current position regarding the revised scoring of the national SotD scheme. It appeared that the FSA’s proposed scoring changes were so skewed toward awarding 4 or 5 stars to a premises that it might appear meaningless to the general public. The meeting had agreed that no revisits should take place in respect of premises awarded 4 stars. In respect of premises falling within the 0 to 2 star bands it was thought that a wait of at least 6 months should elapse before another unannounced visit took place. It was also felt that if boroughs stuck to the London scheme once the nationally scheme was operational this would potentially be to the detriment of London’s food businesses as they would have comparatively lower star scores and in such circumstances it was likely that authorities would have to adopt the national scheme.

The meeting had discussed the recent Godstone Farm e.coli outbreak as a number of cases lived in the LB Croydon. Aflatoxin problems with peanut butter imported from Ghana had also been discussed. HC reported that a very successful vacuum packaging course had been organised and delivered. Authorities had asked for further guidance on the vacuum packaging of biltong. The SW Sector and LB Wandsworth had organised a nutrition course which would be held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010. Places will be available for food officers from London Boroughs in the other Sectors. The delegate fee would be about £25 – 30.

## **10. Any Other Business**

**10.1 CJC** said that he had found that lupin flour was now being used in bakeries and peanut flour was increasingly being employed as a thickening agent in Indian cuisine. This had important implications for persons who might be allergic to these foodstuffs and he wondered if EHO's ought to be alerted to their increasing use via the national communications routes.

JJ said that she would arrange for a colleague at the FSA to organise and deliver a workshop on this topic.

### **All To Note**

**Agreed that it would be a good idea if a slot in the FSA Update Meeting was reserved for this topic. (Interest to be gauged to see if a dedicated event just covering this subject and nutrition would be of value)**

**There being no other business the LFCG meeting closed at 13.15 hrs.**

**The date of the next meeting of the LFCG will be Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2010. This meeting will be held at the Corporation of London's Walbrook Wharf Offices commencing at 10.00 am.**

**PLEASE NOTE: IF FOR ANY REASON THE USUAL SECTOR REPRESENTATIVE IS UNABLE TO ATTEND, A SUBSTITUTE MUST ATTEND IN THEIR PLACE**