

THE HIGHLAND AND ISLANDS FIRE BOARD

24 April 2009

WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE

Report by Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Summary

Changes to The Working Time Directive are being dealt with through the European conciliation process. To date the European Parliament and European Council have failed to reach agreement. If no agreement is reached, then the proposed legislation falls.

Background

At the request of the Fire Board, the Convener, Richard Durham, wrote to MPs, MSPs and MEPs outlining the needs of Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service with regards to the Working Time Directive. The letter made it clear that if the European Parliament proposals were adopted there would be a significant and negative impact upon the standards of emergency services provided to the people of the Highlands and Islands. Since that time the matter has been progressing through the European conciliation process.

Progress to date

An agreement on the proposed amendments to the Working Time Directive proved elusive at the beginning of April when the European Parliament and European Council held their second conciliation meeting.

The Chair of the European Parliament delegation therefore proposed to hold a final meeting of the Conciliation Committee on 20-21 April, as a last chance to find an agreement.

The EU Council Presidency however, has not accepted this proposal. Instead, it is proposing to continue the negotiations in the form of informal "trialogue" discussions, with the decision on whether to convene a further formal Conciliation Committee to be based on whether progress is made in these informal talks.

Future

The Conciliation Committee has six weeks, dating from 17th March, to reach an overall agreement in the form of a "joint text". The Working Time Directive is currently on the agenda of the last plenary session of this Parliamentary term, on 4 May 2009.

The Conciliation Committee is composed of one representative of each Member State (ministers or diplomats) and an equal number of MEPs. The Commission also takes part in the proceedings, to help reconcile the positions of the Parliament and the Council.

If the Conciliation Committee does not reach an agreement, or if Parliament or the Council does not approve the "joint text", the proposed legislation falls. This would leave the Commission to draft a new proposal from scratch.

Recommendation

Members are advised to note this position.

**BRIAN A MURRAY
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

09 April 2009