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EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP TUESDAY, 22 AUGUST 2023

A MEETING of the EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP will be held via MICROSOFT TEAMS on TUESDAY, 22 AUGUST 2023 at 10.00 am.

All Attendees, including members of the public, should note that the public business in this meeting will be livestreamed and video recorded and that recording will be available thereafter for public view for 180 days.

J. J. WILKINSON,
Clerk to the Council,

15 August 2023

BUSINESS		
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Order of Business	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
4.	Minute (Pages 3 - 4) Minute of the Meeting held on 30 May 2023 to be noted. (Copy attached.)	2 mins
5.	SBc Contracts 1st Quarter Report 2023-24 (Pages 5 - 10) Consider report on summary of performance of SBc Contracts to 30 June 2023. (Copy attached.)	15 mins
6.	Any Other Items Previously Circulated	
7.	Any Other Items which the Chairman Decides are Urgent	
8.	Dates of Next Meetings Subsequent meetings of the External Services & Providers Monitoring Group: SBc Contracts had been scheduled as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 21 November 2023 at 10am• 6 February 2024 at 10am• 21 May 2024 at 10am	2 mins
9.	Items Likely To Be Taken In Private	

	<p>Before proceeding with the private business, the following motion should be approved:-</p> <p>“That under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the aforementioned Act.”</p>	
10.	<p>Minute (Pages 11 - 12)</p> <p>Private section of the Minute of the Meeting held on 30 May 2023 to be noted. (Copy attached.)</p>	2 mins
11.	<p>SBc Contracts Trading Operation to 30 June 2023 (Pages 13 - 30)</p> <p>Consider report by Chief Officer, Roads. (Copy attached.)</p>	15 mins

NOTES

1. **Timings given above are only indicative and not intended to inhibit Members' discussions.**
2. **Members are reminded that, if they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any item of business coming before the meeting, that interest should be declared prior to commencement of discussion on that item. Such declaration will be recorded in the Minute of the meeting.**

Membership of Committee:- Councillors J. Anderson, M. Rowley (Chair), P. Brown, M. Douglas, J. Greenwell, S. Hamilton, E. Jardine, J. Pirone and E. Thornton-Nicol

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**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP**

MINUTES of Meeting of the EXTERNAL
SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING
GROUP – SB Contracts held via Microsoft
Teams on Tuesday, 30 May 2023 at 2.00 pm

Present:- Councillors M. Rowley (Chair), P. Brown, M. Douglas, J. Greenwell,
S. Hamilton, E. Jardine and E. Thornton-Nicol
In Attendance:- Director - Infrastructure and Environment, Contracts Manager (P. McNulty),
Estimator (M. Douglas) and Democratic Services Officer (D. Hall).

1. **MINUTE**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting held on 7 March 2023.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the Minute for signature by the Chair.

2. **SB CONTRACTS FINAL QUARTER REPORT 2022/23**

2.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Officer Roads which provided a summary of SBc Contracts for the financial year 2022/23 up to 31 March 2023. The Director – Infrastructure and Environment, Mr John Curry, presented the report and explained that the work undertaken by SBc Contracts included infrastructure improvements across the Council's roads and built estate. Works involving road surface treatment, civil engineering, internal building, bond coat application, traffic management and sign manufacture would be taken on. There had been 21 surface dressing patching sites, 9 carriageway patching sites, 8 screed sites, 12 capital resurfacing schemes, contracts for private clients and 3 Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS) sites. Mr Curry highlighted the opportunities for young people to gain work experience as part of the capital works at Earlston High School.

2.2 Members welcomed the report, and highlighted that the Pothole Pro appeared to have made a positive experience on working practises and the teams who operated it. In response to a question regarding the standard by which repairs to pot holes were assessed, Mr Curry explained that it was important to draw the distinction between temporary and permanent repairs. Temporary repairs were often washed out as part of the thaw-freeze conditions prevalent throughout the winter, and were aimed at making roads safe by use of coal tar and similar products. Regarding permanent repairs, the Contracts Manager, Mr Peter McNulty, explained that Scottish Borders Council's Roads Asset Team would direct SBc Contracts where works were required, and then inspect the finished repair. If the repair was not done to an acceptable standard then the Roads Asset Team would request that the work be carried out again. The relationship between the client and contractor was professional and ensured that a high standard of work was delivered. In response to a question regarding whether a new process was in place for reporting pot holes, Mr Curry explained that Roads Inspectors had been undertaking assessments of road conditions across the region, and reporting by the public via an online interface, had allowed the timely identification of sites which required repairs. Sites would be categorised based on factors such as road classification and the likelihood of the hole causing damage to vehicles. Mr Curry undertook to share the classification system with Members via email. Regarding road planings, Mr McNulty explained that they were a waste material and that the preference was to recycle or resale the product where possible. Certain procedures needed to be followed to allow disposal. Mr Curry encouraged Members to use the Members Enquiries Portal to raise instances where projects required materials such as planings. Students from across the region could access work experience opportunities as part of the Capital Programme works taking

place in the Borders. Mr Curry undertook to promote the opportunities available via the Communications Department and through the Human Resources team where possible. The Estimator, Mr Douglas confirmed that there was a clear preference to source materials locally where possible. In instances where specifications or contracts dictated then it could be a requirement to import materials. Where possible there was a drive to use locally sourced materials. Between 90-95% of materials would be sourced from within the Scottish Borders. In response to a question regarding benchmarking the usage of the Pothole Pro compared to other Local Authorities, Mr Curry explained that SBC had been the first in Scotland to purchase the machine, and that once more statistical information became available then benchmarking could be explored. Regarding the opportunity to repair multiple pot holes on a single stretch of road where some holes had not been reported, Mr McNulty explained that if a pot hole was not marked for repair then it would not be filled. Mr Curry undertook to investigate pot hole repair operations with crew members to determine whether more pot holes could be repaired if they were discovered on a single stretch of road during planned works. The Pothole Pro was not as fast at repairs compared to conventional patching, however it was safer and produced a higher standard of finish. The potential of putting technology in recycling and refuse collection lorry cabs to allow the detection and reporting of road conditions was highlighted as something that should form part of the long term goal for the Scottish Borders to become the first smart rural region in the UK. Mr Curry undertook to investigate whether it would be possible to give waste collection crews a smart phone to facilitate communication with the depot. It was confirmed that in instances where there was a grouping of multiple holes, each individual hole would be counted for statistical purposes.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) to note the performance of SBc Contracts for the final quarter of 2022/23;
- (b) that the Director – Infrastructure and Environment would examine whether operational the parameters of pothole repairs could be adjusted to allow ensure that multiple visits to the same stretch of road were not required; and
- (c) that the Director – Infrastructure and Environment would investigate smart phone provision for waste collection crews.

3. PRIVATE BUSINESS

DECISION

AGREED under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the business detailed in the Appendix to this Minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 8 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

4. MINUTE

Members considered the Private Section of the Minute of the Meeting held on 7 March 2023.

5. SB CONTRACTS FINAL QUARTER REPORT 2022/23

Members considered a report by the Chief Officer – Roads and noted its recommendations.

The meeting concluded at 3.10 pm

SBc CONTRACTS 1st QUARTER REPORT 2023-24

Report by Chief Officer Roads

EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP

22 August 2023

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report proposes a summary on the performance of SBc Contracts for the financial year 2023/24 up to 30th June 2023.**

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the External Services/Providers Monitoring Group notes the performance of SBc Contracts for the 1st quarter of 2023/24.**

3 WORKLOAD UPDATE

- 3.1 SBC Contracts delivers infrastructure improvements across the Council's roads and built estate. The work undertaken is funded by the Council's Capital budget, these works include:
- Road Surface Treatment including surface dressing and patching
 - Civil Engineering Works
 - Internal Building works to SBC Estate
 - Bond Coat Application
 - Traffic Management
 - Sign Manufacture
- 3.2 In regard to road surfacing activity to 30th June 2023. We have commenced or successfully completed 23 Surface Dressing Patching sites, 4 Carriageway Patching sites, 6 Screed sites, 2 Capital Resurfacing schemes, and contracts for private clients.
- 3.3 With specific regard to surface dressing, we commenced treatment across the network towards the end of June, despite unseasonable weather we are on track to complete this year's surface dressing programme by the end of July across an area of approx. 200,000m²
- 3.4 In addition to the above, our specialist bond coat operation is having a good year to date. We have successfully completed several contracts for third party clients and in April we were awarded a 5-year framework with neighbouring South Lanarkshire Council. This award delivers a number of benefits including generating external income against our specialist plant which contributes to lower unit costs and maintenance.
- 3.5 Moving to our Civil Engineering teams. We successfully completed work on the Peebles Eddleston Cycleway and are preparing to commence works on an additional phase from Eddleston to Waterheads. Works have commenced and are progressing well on this years' Bridge and Culvert repair programme.

In regards building works, we have commenced a project with the Architects team to carry out upgrading works to Balmoral Primary School reception area, and installation of acoustic ceilings at Melrose and Burnfoot Primary Schools. We continue to work in close collaboration with the SBC Estates and Architects team on various works and are approaching completion on the repair and upgrading to Peebles Swimming Pool.

Our works to carry out projects for the SBC Flood team has continued and we recently completed construction of a new flood embankment at Romanno Bridge and have commenced works at to repair erosion damage at Selkirk,

- 3.6 We have some contracts, which will extend beyond financial years. Of note in we currently have 12 sites which remain active from 2022/23 into 23/24 Since April 2023, we commenced works on 61 new sites, 15 of which remain active.

- 3.7 We have continued to meet demand by balancing the use of our own staff with that of external contractors, which in turn helps support and sustain the local economy when it comes to civil engineering/ground works and road surfacing.
- 3.8 Our programmes of delivery have progressed well this year. The good weather during May and June has particularly helped with our roads surfacing programmes.
- 3.9 We believe that the diversity, flexibility and proven record of accomplishment of delivery is a real asset for the Council. Our dedicated and hardworking staff and partners continue to support the Council to meet its needs in terms of roads maintenance and civil engineering whilst retaining the ability to help with emergencies should they occur.

Management Update

- 3.10 Our Pothole Pro continues to provide an alternative to traditional patching methods and that to 30th June 2023 we have completed repairs works using the Pot Hole Pro on 4 sites on the A Class network repairing 474 potholes amounting to 30415m² of asphalt.
- 3.11 We believe that the deployment of the pothole pro has helped the Council meet its obligations to repair the roads in a timely manner, and whilst the pothole pro is only one technique and approach to what is an integrated management regime, which we deploy across our roads. It is important as the type, nature of the repair is permanent, and this will help make us more efficient, and improve the road user experience, whilst also allowing us to reduce our fleet.
- 3.12 Members also previously requested at the Major Contracts Governance Group, 21 June 2022 that we take steps to try to promote the career opportunities within our service through linking into known career promotion programmes with our education colleagues. We made the initial enquiries with colleagues and HR and will continue to seek out and engage with any opportunities we identify to promote our services as a real career choice for our population including the younger people of the Borders.

At present we are in the process of recruiting an additional 5 modern apprentices, 4 general engineering operatives and 1 bricklayer.

We provided work experience from the Earlston High School Campus for 2 pupils at the Hawick ATN operations and also within our design team department. We also managed a site visit for some interested pupils to our site operations on the new PS at Earlston. One of our Contract Managers and young Engineer also took part in session where 3rd, 4th year pupils had the opportunity to ask questions about working for SBC Contracts, the type of operations we got involved in and career opportunities to develop within the service.

- 3.13 We continue to develop our approach to succession and people management in line with Council programmes.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

There are no financial implication associated with the public section of this report.

4.2 Risk and Mitigations

There are risks and mitigations associated with the financial performance of SBc Contracts and these are discussed in the report to be considered in private.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

An Integrated Impact assessment is not required as this report is a review of performance and does not make any recommendation for changes to the operating or business model.

4.4 Sustainable Development Goals

Whilst not directly impacted by the recommendations in this report, SBc Contracts through its trading and project delivery employs where ever possible local suppliers and trades which in turn supports aspects of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, through use of local materials it reduces its impact on the environment because of the reduced miles the materials have to travel.

4.5 Climate Change

There are no significant carbon management implications arising from this Report.

4.6 Rural Proofing

There are no significant rural proofing implications arising from this Report.

4.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

4.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes are required because of this Report.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Name
John Curry

Title
Director – Infrastructure & Environment

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Mark Douglas	Commercial Manager

Background Papers: nil

Previous Minute Reference: nil

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jason Hedley can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Mark Douglas, Infrastructure and Environment, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA, Tel 01835 824000, Fax 01835 825071, email eitranslationrequest@scotborders.gov.uk.

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