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## EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP TUESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2024

A MEETING of the EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP will be held via MICROSOFT TEAMS on TUESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2024 at 10.00 am.

N. MCKINLAY,  
Director Corporate Governance,

26 January 2024

<b>BUSINESS</b>		
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
2.	<b>Order of Business</b>	
3.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
4.	<b>Minute (Pages 3 - 4)</b>  Consider Minute of the Meeting held on 21 November 2023. (Copy attached.)	2 mins
5.	<b>SBc Contracts 3rd Quarter Report 2023-24 (Pages 5 - 12)</b>  Consider report on summary of performance of SBc Contracts to 31 December 2023. (Copy attached.)	20 mins
6.	<b>Any Other Items Previously Circulated</b>	
7.	<b>Any Other Items which the Chairman Decides are Urgent</b>	
8.	<b>Items Likely To Be Taken In Private</b>  Before proceeding with the private business, the following motion should be approved:-  “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.”	
9.	<b>Minute (Pages 13 - 14)</b>  Consider Private section of the Minute of the Meeting held on 2i Novemeber 2023. (Copy attached.)	2 mins

10.	<b>SBC Contracts Trading Operation to 31 December 2023</b> (Pages 15 - 26) Consider report by Chief Officer, Roads. (Copy attached.)	10 mins
11.	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b> The meeting of External Services & Providers Monitoring Group (SBC Contracts) was scheduled for 21 May 2024.	

**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.**

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**Membership of Committee:-** Councillors J. Anderson, M. Rowley (Chair), 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 held via Microsoft Teams on  
Tuesday 21 November 2023 at 10.00am

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Present:- Councillors M. Rowley (Chair), J. Anderson, M. Douglas, J. Greenwell, S Hamilton, E. Jardine, J. Pirone, E. Thornton-Nicol

Apologies:- Councillor P. Brown, Director Infrastructure & Environment.

In Attendance:- Contracts Manager (P. McNulty), Estimator (M. Douglas) and Democratic Services Officer (L. Cuerden).

**1. MINUTE**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting held on 28 August 2023.

**DECISION**

**AGREED the Minute for signature by the Chair.**

**2. SBC CONTRACTS 2ND QUARTER REPORT 2023-24**

- 2.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Officer Roads, the purpose of which was to provide Members with a summary on the performance of SBc Contracts for the financial year 2023/24 up to 30 September 2023. Mark Douglas presented the report and provided a workload update. In relation to road surfacing activity, there had been 23 surface dressing patching site, 4 carriageway patching sites, 11 screed sites, 8 capital resurfacing schemes and contracts for private clients. SBc Contracts had completed the year's surface dressing programme across an area of approximately 187,040 sq.m.
- 2.2 Work had been completed on numerous Civil Engineering projects: bridgeworks, floodworks, building and footpaths. Some contracts were scheduled to extend beyond the end of 2023/24 financial year. Since April 2023 work had commenced on 81 new sites, 12 of which remained active.
- 2.3 The report contained detailed information on three projects undertaken to highlight the work and the benefit to communities. A summary of the Peebles to Eddleston Cycleway, Peebles Swimming Pool and the Hawick Active Travel Network was provided.
- 2.4 A management update was provided. The Pothole Pro had been deployed to 6 sites of the A Class network which included the entire length of the A72 and the A701 south of Blyth Bridge. To date, 885 potholes had been repaired with 4799 sq.m. of asphalt. With reference to recruitment, SBc Contracts had recently recruited four modern apprentices (three in general civil engineering and one bricklayer). The employees had embarked upon college work and on job training and continued to make good progress. Work experience had been provided for two Earlston High School pupils at Hawick ATN operations and in the design team. A site visit to the Earlston Primary School had been arranged and a Contract Manager and an Engineer facilitated a Q & A session with several 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year pupils in relation to operations and career opportunities at SBc Contracts.

- 2.5 The Chair welcomed the engagement of local contractors where possible, and Members expressed gratitude for the ongoing beneficial work undertaken by the department. In response to a question about the reopening of Peebles Swimming Pool and any planned review of further work required, Mr Douglas was to discuss the matter with Director Infrastructure & Environment. There followed a brief discussion during which the impact of narrow sections of the Peebles-Eddleston Cycleway was raised, particularly in relation to horse riders. Mr Douglas agreed to consult with engineers on the matter and report back. It was confirmed that SBc Contracts continued to hold regular meetings with HR partners to develop a more structured approach to recruitment of local youth and school leavers. There was a suggestion that female employees within the service be approached to act as mentors at careers events to promote roles to female school leavers. The Chair undertook to liaise with HR staff to discuss school engagement.

**DECISION**

**NOTED the performance of SBc Contracts for the 2nd quarter of 2023/24; and AGREED:**

- (a) to the Chair to liaising with HR staff to discuss school engagement; and
- (b) to Mr Douglas consulting with engineers on the matter of narrow sections of the Peebles-Eddleston Cycleway.

3. **ITEMS LIKELY TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE**

**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.**

4. **MINUTE**

Members considered the Private Section of the Minute of the Meeting held on 28 August 2023.

5. **SBC CONTRACTS TRADING OPERATION TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2023**

Members considered a report by the Chief Officer – Roads.

*The meeting concluded at 10.45 am*

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**SBc CONTRACTS 3<sup>rd</sup> QUARTER REPORT 2023-24**

**Report by Chief Officer Roads**

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**EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP**

**6 February 2024**

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**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 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.**

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **I recommend that the External Services/Providers Monitoring Group notes the performance of SBc Contracts for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2023/24.**

### **3 WORKLOAD UPDATE**

- 3.1 SBC Contracts deliver infrastructure improvements across the Council's roads and built estate. The work undertaken are 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 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023. We have commenced or successfully completed 23 Surface Dressing Patching sites, 7 Carriageway Patching sites, 11 Screed sites, 16 Capital Resurfacing schemes, and various 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 completed this year's surface dressing programme by the end of July across an area of 187,040m<sup>2</sup>
- 3.4 In addition to the above, our specialist bond coat operation continues to have 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 numerous projects covering bridgeworks, floodworks, building and footpaths. We have some contracts, which will extend beyond financial years. Of note we currently have 2 sites which remain active from 2022/23 into 23/24. Since April 2023, we commenced works on 90 new sites, 13 of which remain active.

All of these projects deliver benefits to the local Community, offer career development to our workforce and provide economic opportunities by using local Contractors and Suppliers through our frameworks.

- 3.6 Following on from the previous report where we provided details of projects we have recently undertaken to highlight the works we carry out and the benefits this delivers to the local community and we would like to report on further projects we have recently completed.

#### **NHS BORDERS: BORDER GENERAL HOSPITAL**

As well as carrying projects for SBC we also work in close collaboration with our local stakeholders.

During the summer/autumn of 2023 we carried out works at Borders General Hospital. We have a successful and positive longstanding working

relationship with the Estates and Property Department of NHS Borders and have carried out numerous projects over the last 20 years.

A competitive tender exercise was undertaken by NHS Borders for a contract to carry out upgrading works within the carpark and inner access road and SBc Contracts were the successful bidder and following award of Contract works commenced in June 2023.

Due to the sensitive nature of the site a rigorous pre-construction exercise was carried out between NHS Borders and SBc Contracts to agree work programmes and phasing of the works to always ensure unrestricted access and limit any temporary reduction in parking space to a minimum.

There was a requirement to implement the risk management system HAI-SCRIBE (Healthcare Associated Infection System (for) Controlling Risk In the Built Environment) which SBc Contracts were successfully assessed on to ensure infection control and controlled management of harmful dust created from operations.

Regular assessments were carried out and agreed adjustments made with minimal impacts to progress.

The works involved widening the access road to the site of the mobile MRI scanner and Melbourn Lodge, creating a new footpath and providing safer pedestrian routes within Car Park 2. Further works were undertaken to resurface and patch areas within Car Park 2 and the inner distribution road and additional works were carried out to apply new and refreshed road markings.

We are happy to report the works were successfully delivered to design, specification and budget providing improved parking provision and pedestrian safety to this vital facility in our community.

We are in regular discussion with NHS Borders and hope to continue our successful working partnership in 2024 and beyond.

## **DESTINATION TWEED - TWEED TRAILS ESHIELS TUNNEL**

SBc Contracts have commenced initial works on the new exciting Destination Tweed project which features the creation of a 113 mile trail from Moffat to Berwick upon Tweed.

The project involves numerous initiatives and phases to create the trail led by Tweed Forum and working with numerous partners including Scottish Borders Council, SOSE, Sustrans and local Landowners.

The scope to this phase of advance works of the Tweed Trails was to install lighting and a widened bituminous surface to the inside of the existing Tunnel to provide safer cyclist passage through the structure.

The Victorian tunnel was opened in 1864 as path of the NBR's Galashiels to Peebles railway and closed in 1962. Following closure, the tunnel was filled in and remained hidden until 2010 when SBc Contracts working with SBC reopened the tunnel as part of the Walkerburn to Peebles Cycleway.

The tunnel is a very popular feature of the cycleway and with busy usage proposals to improve the lighting and cyclist/pedestrian safety were implemented during the summer of 2023.

With limited power sources nearby the lighting design proposal suggested running a service from the Eshiels Roads Depot, however a local overhead supply to the South side of the structure was identified as a more feasible option and the initial phase of works involved installing ducting below the footpath adjacent to the A72 for a distance of around 150m before dropping down to the tunnel opening where a new control box was installed.

Cable trays with associated wiring were fitted within the tunnel and 4 LED. Luminaires were installed to provide low emission lighting.

The design of the lighting also required careful consideration due to the presence of bats. A bat friendly system was installed to meet SBC ecologist specification and recommendations.

The existing hardcore surface was regulated to level with more sub-base stone added where required and the existing surface layer was widened to leave narrow drainage strips down either side. The full extent of the tunnel was resurfaced and this will receive a buff-coloured resin bound anti-slip surface treatment product and road markings early springtime once surface temperatures rise to suitable levels for this form of specialist treatment.

Keep left, Pedestrian and Cyclist signs have also been installed to further minimise the risk and once complete this will further support and encourage safer community active travel along this popular route.

Works will continue on the Tweed Trails project over the coming year, and we will report on further phases in future reports.

## **FORMER CROSS KEYS SELKIRK**

The former Cross Keys Inn in Market Square, Selkirk had been derelict for a number of years and was demolished in 2022. This created a gap site and SBc Contracts were awarded a Contract in 2022 to reinstate and landscape the site in a sympathetic manner to enhance the site in a manner befitting its town centre location using materials that match the streetscape works which were undertaken and completed by SBc Contracts in 2019.

Due to the tight and restricted nature of the site, works were carefully planned and programmed to ensure all necessary precautions to minimise disruption etc. to adjoining properties, businesses, public access and egress.

The project comprised of groundworks including: -

- Earthworks to grade existing ground to meet proposed levels.
- Formation of masonry retaining walls and steps



New and adjustments to existing drainage and gullies.  
Formation of a new sloped areas.  
New paving to match the streetscape works in the Market Place,  
Soft Landscaping  
New Lighting

Due to site restrictions a site compound for the storage of the specified materials was located within a public car park at distance from the site which required carefully planned movement of plant and operatives to ensure public safety and restrict disruption.

The project was completed on time and budget and with the location adjacent to the Historic Sir Walter Scott Courthouse this has further enhanced the Market Square

### **Management Update**

- 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 the summer months 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.
- 3.10 Our Pothole Pro continues to provide an alternative to traditional patching methods and that to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 we have completed extensive repairs on 6 sites on the A Class network, notably the entire length of the A72 and the A701 south of Blyth Bridge. In addition we have moved on to urban locations in Jedburgh, Kelso, Selkirk and Coldstream.  
To date, we have repaired 1440 potholes amounting to 8157m<sup>2</sup> 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 We reported at the previous Committee our recent MA recruitment. No further recruitment has been undertaken over the last quarter. We will continue to provide updated reports on this and any related activity at future meetings.
- 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 wherever 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 CONSULTATIONS

5.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change) 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](mailto:eitranslationrequest@scotborders.gov.uk).

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