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EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2023

A MEETING of the EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP will be held via MICROSOFT TEAMS on TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 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.

N. MCKINLAY,
Director Corporate Governance,

13 November 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 28 August 2023 to be noted. (Copy attached.)	2 mins
5.	SBc Contracts 2nd Quarter Report 2023-24 (Pages 5 - 12) Consider report on summary of performance of SBc Contracts to 30 September 2023. (Copy attached.)	20 mins
6.	Any Other Items Previously Circulated	
7.	Any Other Items which the Chairman Decides are Urgent	
8.	Items Likely To Be Taken In Private 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.	Minute (Pages 13 - 14) Private section of the Minute of the Meeting held on 28 August 2023 to be noted. (Copy attached.)	2 mins
10.	SBC Contracts Trading Operation to 30 September 2023 (Pages 15 - 26) Consider report by Chief Officer, Roads. (Copy attached.)	10 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 held via Microsoft Teams on
Monday, 28 August 2023 at 2.00 pm

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

Apologies:- Councillors P. Brown, E. Jardine and M. Rowley

In Attendance:- Director - Infrastructure and Environment, Contracts Manager (P. McNulty), Neighbourhood Area Manager (D. Silcock), Neighbourhood Senior Asst Area Manager (K. Miller) Estimator (M. Douglas) and Democratic Services Officer (L. Cuerden).

In the absence of Councillor Rowley, Councillor Greenwell chaired the meeting.

1. MINUTE

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting held on 30 May 2023.

DECISION

AGREED the Minute for signature by the Chair.

2. SBC CONTRACTS 1ST 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 June 2023. Director Infrastructure and Environment John Curry presented the report and provided a workload update. In relation to road surfacing activity to 30 June 2023, there had been 23 surface dressing patching sites, 4 carriageway patching sites, 6 screed sites, 2 capital resurfacing schemes and several contracts for private clients commenced or successfully completed. With reference to paragraph 2.2 of the Minute of 30 May 2023, use of the Pothole Pro continued to provide timely road repairs. Up to 30 June 2023, 474 potholes had been treated using 30415 sq.m of asphalt. SBc Contracts remained on target to complete the year's surface dressing programme by the end of July 2023 across an area of approximately 200,000 square metres. In April SBc Contracts had been awarded a 5 year framework with South Lanarkshire Council which was to generate external income against the specialist plant and contributed to lower unit and maintenance costs. The Peebles Eddleston Cycleway had been completed with preparation underway on the additional phase from Eddleston to Waterheads. Work continued on this year's bridge and culvert repair programme. In relation to building works, upgrades to Balmoral Primary School reception and installation of acoustic ceilings at Melrose and Burnfoot Primary Schools were underway. Peebles Swimming Pool was operational from August 2023. Flood mitigation work had been completed at Romanno Bridge and erosion damage repair in Selkirk was underway. It was highlighted that 12 sites remained active from 2022/23 into 2023/24. Since April 2023, work on 61 new sites had commenced, 15 of which remained active. SBc Contracts continued to engage local external contractors when necessary and available.

2.2 With reference to paragraph 4.2 of the Minute of 21 June 2022, Mr Curry reported that SBc Contracts were in the process of recruiting and additional 5 modern apprentices, 4 general engineering operatives and 1 bricklayer. Work experience was provided in

relation to the Earlston High School Campus. A site visit was also arranged to the new Primary School in Earlston whereby 3rd and 4th year pupils were provided with career opportunities advice within SBC Contracts.

- 2.3 There followed a brief discussion on road repairs. Mr Silcock confirmed to Members that roads were inspected and categorised according to a 7, 21 and 28 notice period during which work was to be done. There was a balance to be struck between available budget and ensuring repairs were done within the stipulated timescale to prevent potential claims being made against SBC. The categories and repair timescales for actionable defects were to be shared with Members. Work was ongoing to review the Roads Asset Management Plan specifically how to manage, assess and respond to risk. It was acknowledged that it was more economical to have a work force repairing a larger area at one time rather than having to return later to repair other areas nearby. However, the availability of materials for other high priority areas was to be considered. There was a suggestion that a Members' Briefing on the matter would be beneficial. Monthly reports were submitted to Director Infrastructure and Environment and there was to be some consideration how this information was to be shared with Elected Members and the public going forward. In relation to the 5 year framework with South Lanarkshire Council, it was confirmed that the availability of the six vehicles used for specialist bond coat applications, whereby two were in South Lanarkshire, ensured coverage of the Scottish Borders with the remaining four. In response to a question about the number of females recruited to posts recently, it was confirmed that there were none. It was agreed that the matter was to be taken up with HR and schools across the region; there were many career opportunities available across Infrastructure and Environment and there was a plan to expand the work experience programme to the remaining 8 high schools. Gratitude was expressed to the team for the swift pothole repairs carried out around the Berwickshire locality following the reporting by Community Councils. In response to a question about contingency planning for emergencies, it was confirmed that the majority of SBC Contracts workforce was engaged in internal SBC works and were able to be redeployed on emerging priorities.

DECISION

NOTED the performance of SBC Contracts for the 1st quarter of 2023/24.

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 30 May 2023.

5. SBC CONTRACTS TRADING OPERATION TO 30 JUNE 2023

Members considered a report by the Chief Officer – Roads.

The meeting concluded at 2.50 pm

SBc CONTRACTS 2nd QUARTER REPORT 2023-24

Report by Chief Officer Roads

EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP

21 November 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 September 2023.**

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the External Services/Providers Monitoring Group notes the performance of SBc Contracts for the 2nd 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 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 30th September 2023. We have commenced or successfully completed 23 Surface Dressing Patching sites, 4 Carriageway Patching sites, 11 Screed sites, 8 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 completed this year's surface dressing programme by the end of July across an area of 187,040m²

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 numerous projects covering bridgeworks, floodworks, building and footpaths. We have some contracts, which will extend beyond financial years. Of note in we currently have 4 sites which remain active from 2022/23 into 23/24.

Since April 2023, we commenced works on 81 new sites, 12 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.

We would like to report further detail of 3 projects we have recently undertaken to highlight the works we undertake and the benefits this delivers to the local community.

PEEBLES TO EDDLESTON CYCLEWAY

The Peebles to Eddleston Active Travel Path was developed to make the Peebles and Eddleston areas more appealing for walkers, cyclists, wheelers and horse riders and forms part of a campaign to encourage more active travel in the region.

The project was developed in partnership between Scottish Borders Council, Peebles Community Trust, Sustrans, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Peebles Community Council and Eddleston Community Council

The completed section of path runs from the edge of Eddleston village to Peebles and offers a 6km route running through fields and alongside the Eddleston Water.

SBC Contracts were appointed as Main Contractor to deliver the project and commenced construction in November 2021.

SBC Contracts encountered many challenges on the route which was built through farmland, over watercourses, through woodland and adjacent to live traffic on the A703. The successes were the collective collaboration between SBC Contracts, Landowners & Client representatives in overcoming sections of the design that required on-site, as-built adjustments particularly over sections which required re-routing from original designs due to waterlogged ground.

The Scheme was delivered by SBC staff and opportunities were given to local contractors to assist in providing sub-contracted works. During the construction period we awarded 8 individual local small companies work packages covering Groundworks, Builder Works, Fencing, Steelwork, Utilities, Landscaping, Tree Surgery and Cleaning Services. The value of these sub-contracted works amounted to over £520k.

Environmentally there were no reported incidents of contamination to the watercourse and the use of local produce (Sub-base, Tarmac) from Cowieslinn Quarry 3 miles from the site contributed to reducing the carbon footprint of the works.

Wildflower planting was introduced to some areas of the finished landscape to maintain the natural surroundings.

From a quality perspective 5 new timber deck bridge structures were constructed as part of the project to accommodate both active travel and farm machinery.

Following an 18-month construction period the project was completed on time and within budget in May 2023.

A ribbon cutting ceremony to officially open the path took place on 17th June 2023 the new path has been well received by the local community and visitors.

PEEBLES SWIMMING POOL

Following a devastating fire which forced the closure of Peebles Swimming Pool in June 2022, SBC Contracts were engaged in late 2023 to act as Principal contractor on the refurbishment of the fire damaged building. This project involved a collaborative effort between SBC Contracts, SBC Property Dept and Specialist Mechanical and Electrical Consultants.

SBC Contracts responsibility was to pull together all the specialised contractors to; replace the existing roof under a bespoke encapsulated scaffolding system, stripping out and renewal of Electrical Plant and the Filtration and Heating systems, replacement of floor coverings and redecoration. Co-ordinating the works to meet the programme was a complex exercise to ensure all specialist Contractors were on site in the correct sequence and additional issues and further damage to plant was encountered as works progressed. Support was also provided to the client on validating the detailed extent of damage which was collated and reported to the insurance claim discussions.

Although the nature of the works required a number of specialist contractors we endeavoured to procure services to local businesses where we could and work packages were awarded to local suppliers for Scaffolding, Roofing, Joinery and Decorating works to a value of £450k

The project was successfully completed in the summer of 2023 and has resulted in a much-needed facility being handed back to the community in Peebles.

HAWICK ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK

Following commencement of the Hawick Flood Prevention Scheme in 2019 opportunities arose to expand and develop active travel routes within the town.

Following funding contributions from Sustrans and the Hawick Flood Prevention Scheme the active travel route through Hawick to date is well established and on route to be completed in tandem with the Hawick Flood protection scheme.

SBC Contracts are engaged as Main Contractor on these sections working in close collaboration with SBC's in-house design team and the Hawick Flood Board. Fully constructed sections are already being used to the full by the public in Hawick giving safer travel routes for both pedestrians and cyclists.

Local plant and resource suppliers are supporting SBC Contracts delivery team and to 30th September we have engaged 10 local companies providing services worth over £820k covering Groundworks and Plant Hire, Cleaning, Fencing, Landscaping and Tree Surgery, Steelwork, Utility Works, and Builderworks.

Materials are being also sourced from local framework suppliers which contributes further to SBC economy and reducing the carbon footprint.

To date works have been completed at

Wilton Lodge Park
Waverley Walk – North Bridge Street to Mansfield
Hamilton Road

Over the summer additional sections have commenced to upgrade and enhance active routes on Mart Steet and Laidlaw Terrace and a major

section of work has commenced to construct a new 4m wide bridge over the river Teviot to link Mansfield and Weensland Road which will open up greater opportunities for active travel

Works are due to continue on the project through 2023 and into 2024.

Management Update

- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 Our programmes of delivery have progressed well this year. The good weather during the summer months has particularly helped with our roads surfacing programmes.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 Our Pothole Pro continues to provide an alternative to traditional patching methods and that to 30th September 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. To date, we have repaired 885 potholes amounting to 4799m² of asphalt.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 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.

We have recently recruited 4 Modern Apprentices, 3 in general Civil Engineering and 1 Bricklayer. All 4 have started the structured learning program of college work and on the job training and are progressing well within the service.

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.

3.12 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 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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