

# SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

## EXTERNAL SERVICES/PROVIDERS MONITORING GROUP

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

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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 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***