

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