

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

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 3rd and 4th 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