



Sandwell  
Community  
Information and  
Participation  
Service Limited



**Annual Report**  
**2020—2021**

## Chair's report

2020 -2021 has been a very strange and difficult time for not only SCIPS and its membership but also the wider community and the country. Covid-19 has meant that we have not been able to deliver services in the normal way and had to look for a new approach. We provided 30 weekly welfare calls to members that needed that extra support making in total over 1600 calls.

The Board took the decision not to furlough SCIPS staff but to embrace the digital opportunities that were available. Staff have continued to work throughout the pandemic from home with very limited access to the office.

SCIPS has also during this time secured the Digi-Comm funding to deliver the Reaching Communities project in partnership with St Albans . We were successful in receiving Covid-19 government funding to set up a Tablet loan scheme. This enabled us to hold regular Board meetings via Zoom. Tablets were also loaned to Hateley Cross Big Local to enable them to hold partnership meetings and carry on the fantastic work in their community. This loan scheme has complimented our Digi-Comm project and contributed to some of its outcomes. The Board are now looking at how we can work with other organisations to broaden the reach of the scheme.

SCIPS have continued to work with and support the HCBL partnership to deliver projects and will support them with their new plan from July 2021

Sandwell MBC have also embraced the digital agenda and have worked with SCIPS and tenants on the following issues :

- ◇ Tenant Review Panel
- ◇ Fire Safety
- ◇ Ombudsmen

In April 2020 we had a new member of staff join the organisation as a Community Development and Engagement Worker. This member of staff has work on developing digital support, fire safety and TRA support . All of this has been done through Covid-19 and lockdown.

I would like to thank the Board for all their hard work and commitment to SCIPS, supporting the staff and myself. I would also like to thank the staff for their endless enthusiasm and willingness to go the extra mile.

*Ann Marie Docker*

Chair of SCIPS Board of Trustees



## Our core work programme

SCIPS receive a core grant from Sandwell MBC and deliver services against an agreed work program. The nature and volume of this work is flexible and reactive to ensure that we can deliver the most relevant services to groups and communities in Sandwell. Some of the key projects we undertook in 2020/21 are shown below:

### **New Resident Engagement Strategy**

SCIPS have worked with SMBC to develop a new Resident Engagement Strategy that was approved by Cabinet in May 2021. The new strategy offers a wide range of opportunities for tenants, leaseholders, and the wider community to engage in the housing service.

In addition, we supported a task and finish group to develop the new Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and we are part of a core group of officers who are developing a work programme to ensure the Council is compliant with the Building and Fire Safety Bill. We are currently developing a training session on the new White Paper – A Charter for Social Housing which will be delivered to SMBC Staff later in the year.

### **Covid-19 response**

The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns had a massive impact on everyone and threatened to impact on our ability to maintain contact with local communities. SCIPS were incredibly fortunate to have secured funding for our Digi-Comm Project from The National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund just before the first National lockdown. This, along with a successful application to the Government's Covid-19 Emergency Fund enabled us to purchase 50 Samsung Tablets and carry out significant training with our Board, TRA's and Community Groups in using digital platforms to hold meetings and keep in touch with our members and partners. This training also enabled these groups to keep in touch with each other and their own members. No staff were furloughed as we equipped all staff to work from home and we spent many hours making welfare calls to those members and partners to help ward off loneliness and isolation during the lockdowns.

### **Relocation of SCIPS Office base**

On March 4th 2020 we moved into our new office base at The National Metalforming Centre in West Bromwich. Almost immediately we were all forced to lock down and work from home. We have been gradually transitioning from home working, through flexible home / office working and now all staff are back in the office full time.

The new serviced offices with ample parking and a light bright plan office is a huge change for staff and visitors.



## Our core work programme

### Sandwell Tenants & Residents Associations

SCIPS deliver direct services to Tenants and Residents Groups across Sandwell. We currently support 8 TRA's with ongoing training and governance issues. SCIPS endeavour to continue to deliver proactive support that strengthens the relationships with tenants and residents groups and their communities.

Our services include:

- Training, support, and advice to tenants and residents groups to enable them to deliver their aims within their community
- Support to groups to engage in the Council's wider agenda
- Administration of the tenants and residents registration and grants system for SMBC
- Encouraging and enabling groups to attract additional funding to deliver their aims
- Setting of governance and financial standards and monitoring groups against these
- Sustaining and increasing the number of tenants and residents groups in the Borough and the number of tenants involved in them
- Supporting groups to develop and produce regular newsletters to the areas they represent.
- Support to manage their Covid-19 emergency response and help the to digitally enable their committees and get support to purchase equipment to get them online.

## Digi-Comm



In March 2020 SCIPS received notification that we had secured £325,000 from Big Lottery Reaching Communities fund to deliver a digital project. SCIPS, in partnership with St Albans Community Association had been developing a project that encompassed the digital needs within our communities. Targeting individuals and groups that were at a very grass roots level regarding technology, as well as training champions with Sandwell's Community Hubs.

Due to lockdown SCIPS were able to secure £17k for a Tablet Loan Scheme as part of the Government's COVID-19 Emergency Fund, this provided an additional 30 tablets to loan to individuals and groups. The tablets enabled each organisation to teach individuals and groups how to use the devices, set up email accounts, and enable groups to set up and use their own zoom accounts to undertake online activity within their own communities.

We have achieved the first year 's outcomes of the project and have re-commenced face to face delivery moving into year 2 of the program.

## Hateley Cross Big Local

### Hateley Cross Big Local Plan Review

The Big Local Trust provide funding to the area based on a Community Plan. The current Plan finished in May 2021 and the Partnership were required to produce a new one that covers the period June 2021 to March 2026.

In December 2020 the Partnership recruited a consultant to produce their new plan. Big Local Trust have now approved this new plan and awarded the Hateley Cross Big Local area £664,351.81 to continue their activities for the next four and a half years. They have reappointed SCIPS to continue as their Locally Trusted Organisation and also to provide Community Development Support. The aim of the new plan is to ensure a legacy for the Hateley Cross Big Local area.

### Two of the Highlights

#### Green Spaces

The group want to improve five local green space sites and encourage more local people to use them making the most of the assets we have in our area.

There are two exciting projects currently being developed on Somerset Green and Kesteven Green which will provide local residents and children with improved facilities on both of these sites. These should be completed by the end of September 2021.

#### The Old SAPA Building

The Big Local Partnership were aware of the strength of local feeling over the boarded up old SAPA building on Wiltshire Way. Members of the community organised a petition which was submitted to the council. This resulted in the council inviting tenders for organisations to take over the management of the building and deliver community activities for local people. 4Community Trust were successful in tendering to manage the building.

4Community Trust is an organisation that provides pre and after school clubs, summer activities, play and youth activities. In June 2020 Hateley Cross Big Local provided 4Community Trust with a £20,000 grant to support with repairs and improvements in the building, in return Hateley Cross Big Local can use this as their base. 4Community Trust will commence their activities on Monday 26th July 2021.

## Financial review

SCIPS Ltd most recently prepared accounts are summarised below and cover the 12 month period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

### INCOME RECEIVED

The company received total income of £335,076 from a number of sources:

#### 1. SMBC – Core Grant

This was a core grant from Sandwell MBC of £150,000

#### 2. BIG Local Trust – Hateley Cross Grant

This amount of £51,257 was to continue work with Hateley Cross Big Local Area Partnership Group as their Locally Trusted Organisation and to help them deliver their Big Local Plan.

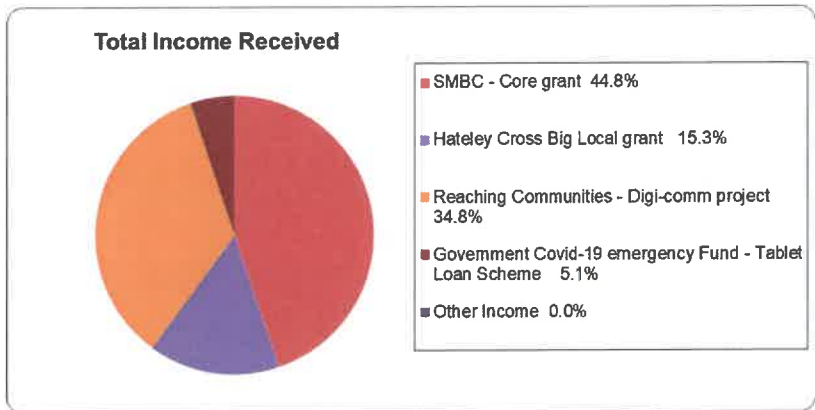
#### 3. Reaching Communities – Digi-comm Project

This amount of £116,596 was awarded to us to develop and deliver the first year of our Digi-Comm project in Partnership with St Albans CA.

#### 4. Government Covid-19 Emergency Fund – SCIPS Tablet Loan Scheme

We secured a grant of £17,125 from the Governments Covid-19 emergency response to deliver a short-term tablet loan scheme, this enabled us to ensure we were able to continue our core service delivery using digital technology during the first two Covid-19 lockdowns.

5. **Other Income** This was received from bank interest and sundry income £98



### EXPENDITURE INCURRED

Total expenditure for the period was £303,304 as detailed below:

#### 1. Project expenditure

All restricted funding expenditure including project planning, salaries, training and all expenses amounted to £153,857.

#### 2. Core Expenditure

Core expenditure was £149,447 which can be further broken down as follows:

##### a) Staff Costs

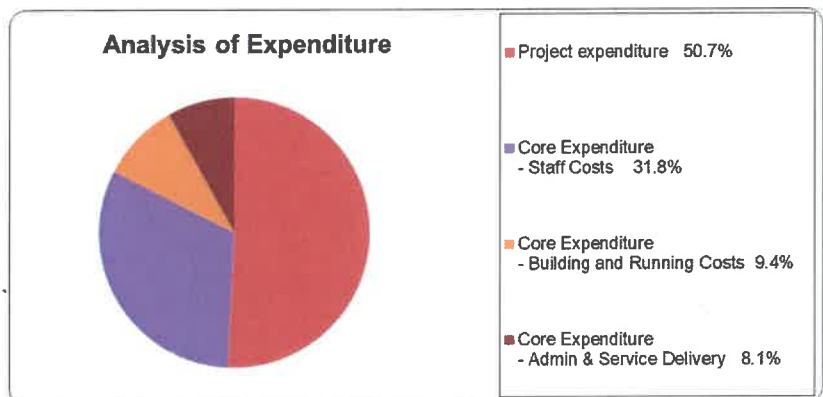
Our largest core expense totalled £96,513, some staff were partially funded using restricted project grants, this figure also includes contracted out staff.

##### b) Building and Running Costs

Essential costs needed to operate the company. Including Rent & Service charges, insurance, audit and accountancy fees, office equipment hire, AGM and Annual report costs these amounted to £28,410.

##### c) Administration & Service Delivery

This covers all costs incurred in carrying out services, including postage & stationery, expenses, training & conferences, advertising and depreciation. These costs amounted to £24,524.



SCIPS Ltd accounts were prepared by the Company's accountant, John Pye FCCA, who has confirmed that these accounts are in agreement with the accounting records kept by the company in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006.



## Exciting new developments for the year

A number of exciting developments are underway in the short term including:

### **Hateley Cross Big Local Final Community Plan**

HCBL have commenced their 3rd plan, with the installation of a trim trail on Kesteven Green and a grant to 4Community Trust for the re-opening of the former SAPA building. SCIPS will continue to support the HCBL Partnership with the delivery of their plan.

### **New staff**

We are fortunate to be in a position to recruit a new Community Development and Engagement Worker to join the team. This new role will support all projects and also help us with the delivery of the Marketing Strategy.

### **Digi-Comm Project**

The commencement of the Digi-Comm project began during lockdown. We are very excited to recommence delivery within community settings and groups across Sandwell.

### **Marketing strategy**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this was put temporarily on hold. We are now able to focus on increasing the membership of SCIPS, marketing ourselves more effectively throughout the whole borough and delivering new and exciting Bi-monthly General Meetings.

### **Tenant Participation**

Working in partnership to develop a new Resident Engagement Strategy for Sandwell. This will ensure that Sandwell is compliant with the new emerging legislation.



SCIPS Head Office  
The National Metalforming Centre in West Bromwich



## Achievements and highlights

- ◆ Renegotiation of SMBC core grant to 2023
- ◆ Relocation of SCIPS Office base
- ◆ Development of DIGI-COMM project
- ◆ Our role in the local responses to new legislation on Social Housing

## Objectives for the year ahead

- ◆ Settling into our new office and developing more outreach work
- ◆ Recruiting new staff
- ◆ Continuing to provide proactive support that strengthens the relationships with TRA's and their communities.
- ◆ Developing a new marketing strategy
- ◆ Delivering Hateley Cross Big Local's final community plan

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