



Sandwell
Community
Information and
Participation
Service Limited



Annual Report
2021 - 2022

Chair's Report



SCIPS plays an important role in supporting tenants of Sandwell Council to be involved and to influence decisions affecting their homes and neighbourhoods.

SCIPS worked with the Council to review its tenant engagement and participation framework so that it reflects changes in legislation and regulatory standards as outlined in the Housing White Paper "The Charter for Social Housing". One of the first engagement groups to be set up was the Tenant & Leaseholder Scrutiny Group, SCIPS were heavily involved in training them to carry out their new role.

New Building and Fire safety regulations have led to consultation around Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS). In July 2021 staff worked with the Board to provide a response from SCIPS to the PEEPS consultation circulated by the Home Office.

From early March 2022, the Board worked towards restarting our General meetings as restrictions due to COVID 19 started to be lifted. The Board set a date for our first General Meeting in late May 2022 to coincide with the Queens Jubilee, and invited guest speakers along to inform members on a number of issues.

We have continued to work with Hateley Cross Big Local (HCBL) who have successfully installed equipment for young people on two separate green spaces. On Kesteven green they installed a Trim Trail and on Somerset Green pavement games were painted.

Our partnership with St Albans continued to deliver the DIGI-COMM project proving digital skills to tenants and residents of Sandwell. We also developed a Train the Trainer course for community centre staff to be able to offer digital training through their centres.

In February 2022 I was honoured to have been nominated by Sandwell MBC for Tenant of the Year Inside Housing Award 2022 and was successful in being shortlisted. It was very pleasing to see that the contribution that tenants give freely is being recognised on a National level.

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

SCIPS Ltd most recently prepared accounts are summarised below and cover the year from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

Income Received

The company received total income of £356,934 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 £104,267 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.

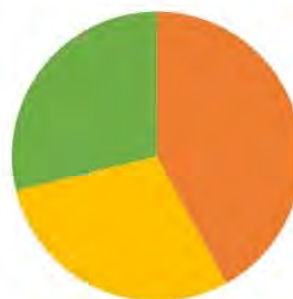
3. Reaching Communities - Digi-comm Project

This grant of £102,629 was awarded to us to develop and deliver the second year of our Digi-comm project in Partnership with St Albans Community Association.

4. Other Income

This was received from bank interest and sundry income £38

Total Income Received



SMBC - Core grant	42.0%
Hateley Cross Big Local grant	29.2%
Reaching Communities - Digi-comm project	28.7%
Other Income	0.1%

Expenditure Incurred

Total expenditure for the period was £422,353 as detailed below:

1. Project expenditure

All restricted funding expenditure including project planning, salaries, training and all project expenses amounted to £274,006

2. Core Expenditure

Core expenditure was £148,347 which is further broken down as follows:

a) Staff Costs

Our largest core expense totalled £106,548, some staff were partially funded using restricted project grants, this figure also includes contracted out staff.

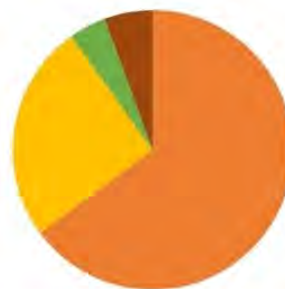
b) Building and Running Costs

Essential costs needed to operate the company. Including rent & service charges, insurance, audit and accountancy fees, office and equipment hire costs these amounted to £18,205.

c) Administration & Service Delivery

This includes all costs incurred in carrying out services, including postage & stationery, expenses, training & conferences, AGM and Annual report costs, advertising and depreciation. These costs amounted to £23,594.

Analysis of Expenditure



Project expenditure	64.9%
Core Expenditure - Staff Costs	25.2%
Core Expenditure - Building and Running Costs	4.3%
Core Expenditure - Admin & Service Delivery	5.6%

Core work programme

SCIPS are fortunate to have been supported by Sandwell MBC for all of our years in operation. We currently receive a core grant for which we deliver an agreed work programme, but we are also proud of our ability to be flexible and reactive to the needs of Sandwell tenants and residents and regularly and proactively discuss amendments to this work programme with Sandwell MBC to maximise the benefit of our work.

The aims and objectives of the grant agreement are

- To provide training for tenant led groups and organisations
- To provide support for existing and new tenant led groups and organisations
- To provide development and capacity building to groups leading to local initiatives, especially provision of activities and services
- To support the independent contribution of tenant organisations and to enable effective consultation by SMBC and partners with tenant led groups and organisations
- To support tenant led groups and organisations to develop initiatives and to attract funding to deliver and sustain them.

Some key achievements on the last 12 months include:

Development and training of a Tenant Scrutiny Panel

A working group of senior officers, SCIPS and residents have been co-designing the review and restructure of the tenant engagement framework. Tenant scrutiny in Sandwell is a key part of that structure. TPAS were engaged as a critical friend throughout the process. A Cabinet Report was agreed in May 2021 which outlines a new Tenant Engagement model which has scrutiny at its centre. Every tenant and leaseholder living in Sandwell was contacted and invited to be part of the new scrutiny group, which is made up of 8 tenants and 2 leaseholders. A series of taster sessions were undertaken throughout October 2021.



Interview sessions were held on the 1st of December 2021. Shortlisting was conducted by a panel which consists of 3 members representing SMBC's Housing Management team, TPAS and SCIPS. SCIPS along with SMBC staff undertook 3 months of training for the new Scrutiny Group which was completed in May 2022. SCIPS continues to support the work of this group.

Social Housing White Paper - Training SMBC Staff

SCIPS developed and delivered training for Sandwell MBC to train housing staff on the Social Housing White Paper. The training was delivered via a digital platform to 98 members of staff. The training outlined the key measures, across 7 chapters of the forthcoming legislation. The new Housing Regulator would oversee how services by all housing providers are delivered. Services are required to be tenant focused and requires tenants to be front and centre in the way services are shaped and delivered in the future.

SCIPS have continued to support SMBC in the delivery of this work through the aforementioned development of housing scrutiny services.

Core work programme

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

In early 2022 Sandwell Council undertook a survey with customers, members, and partners of SCIPS. This has provided very valuable information on the experience and satisfaction levels of those accessing our services. Participants were asked what SCIPS services they used, most said they use us to provide information on new initiatives and national developments, followed by support in running their group. When asked how they found the service 96% rated it excellent. Respondents were asked if they were able to get hold of the right person 100% responded it was easy. The survey identified 96% of respondents rated SCIPS training either 9 or 10.

When asked, taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by SCIPS 100% rated us 9 or 10.

Some specific comments include -

"Knowledgeable
Approachable
Flexible"

"Provide
excellent
service"

"Always honest
and reliable"

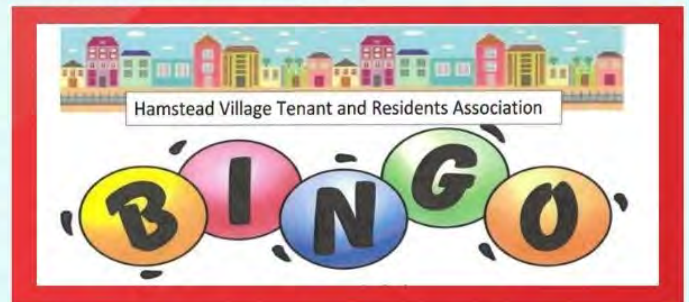
"All info accessible and
readily available in
electronic communication
due to my impairment, do
a fantastic job"

Housing Hero Award SMBC nominated our Chair Ann Marie Docker as Tenant of the Year at the Housing Hero Awards. Ann was shortlisted from several hundred to the last eight candidates. Unfortunately, she did not win this time but we are incredibly proud that Ann and the work of SCIPS was highlighted on the national stage



Sandwell Tenants and Residents Associations

SCIPS deliver direct services to Tenants and Residents Groups across Sandwell. We currently support a number of TRA's with ongoing training and governance issues. SCIPS endeavour to continue to deliver proactive support that strengthens relationships following the challenges that COVID-19 has brought to tenants and residents' groups and their communities.



Hateley Cross Big Local



Hateley
Heath

Stone
Cross

Big Local

Big Local Trust funded 150 different under-represented areas of the country, awarding £1million to each area over a period of 10 years. Hateley Heath and Stone Cross were one of those areas. A group of local residents joined forces in 2015 to become Hateley Cross Big Local (HCBL). Their final plan was launched in the middle of 2021, spelling out their vision for the final years up to the end of December 2025 when the funding ends. SCIPS is their Locally Trusted Organisation, who hold their funding and advises them on governance. SCIPS also has a contract with the group to deliver their community development services, ensuring that they are fully supported by our professional staff.

The three areas that the new plan is focusing on are:

Community Pride

The Hateley Cross Keep It Green group have continued to encourage involvement in the Green Spaces within the Hateley Heath and Stone Cross areas. Within the past year they have:

- Worked with SMBC to install a bench and pavement games on Somerset Green
- Also in partnership with SMBC, installed a Trim Trail on Kesteven Green
- Ensured marketing of the project on new signage at both Kesteven & Somerset Green
- Commissioned a fun-day to celebrate the installation of the Trim Trail
- Completed a door knocking exercise of all the properties surrounding the Denbigh Drive Green Space
- Continue to work with Sandwell Council on the development of a Green Space Strategy for Hateley Cross
- Exploring potential projects to address the issue of litter across the area
- Worked with the Council to ensure undergrowth and trees are cut, to make pathways more accessible at Mill Pool
- Exploring the options to meet the needs of the community for the green space at Marsh Lane.

If anyone within the project area would like to get involved, please contact a member of the project team.



Hateley Cross Big Local

Community Aspiration

The group commissioned a research project into the barriers to employment, education and training within the hyperlocal area, the findings will be shared with all the local stakeholders at a networking event in September 2022, with the hopes that we can all work together to overcome the employment barriers experienced by the local residents.

Each of the 3 local primary schools were granted £30,000 over the last 3-5 years to spend on environmental and inspirational projects. Due to the pandemic some of these were delayed but they have just been able to complete these. Stone Cross library has also been able to book their long postponed Christmas Pantomime for November 2022.

Powered by CAN are currently researching the ways that HCBL can reach a younger audience with a view to setting up a permanent "Young Voices" opportunity to enable them to be instrumental in directing some of the work of the Big Local funded project.



Community Spirit and Involvement

After working hard to perfect the Community Grant offer to groups within the HCBL area, and taking part in an IVAR research project into best practice that was commissioned by Big Local Trust, the new HCBL Community Grant programme has been launched. HCBL encourages local groups to apply for grants between £250 and £2,500 for creating opportunities for individuals to get involved in local activities and clubs.

The HCBL partnership regularly meet at the New 4Community Hub on Wiltshire Way, this community building was brought back into community use because of a huge amount of work by HCBL Partnership group. 4Community Trust, who have taken on the building deliver pre and after school clubs and also provide activities and food during the school holidays.

It is hoped that following the end of the Big Local Trust funding the groups will continue to work together for the benefit of the local community.



In May 2021 we successfully completed the first year of our Digi-Comm Project funded by Big Lottery Reaching Communities. Between SCIPS and St Albans we achieved and, in some cases, exceeded our delivery targets. We used valuable learning from our first year to develop our second-year programme of delivery.

The project has developed and delivered a number of valuable services to enable local residents to build their digital skills and confidence.

Digital Support packages – St Albans have worked with over 25 clients providing digital support in their home. This involves one to one support and the loan of the necessary equipment over several weeks enabling skills to be developed and embedded.



Tablet Loan Scheme – Access to equipment is a key issue we needed to address throughout the project. We secured 50 tablets which we use to deliver the project. St Albans use the equipment to deliver their digital support package as well as using them to provide activities with their day care clients. SCIPS loan them to residents attending the click and chat training who have access to them throughout the delivery of the training programme. We have made links with Sandwell's equipment recycling scheme to explore what opportunities there are to support groups access equipment.



Click and Chat Training – this is our entry level training for those residents who have little or no digital knowledge. It is delivered in community centres over an 8 week period. We have expanded this work to explore how we can support and sustain a digital offer through our valuable community centre network. We surveyed 11 centres to establish needs and gaps and have secured funding from Sandwell Council Community Partnership Team to assist centres address their specific connectivity needs.

Throughout the year we worked with

- Cradley Heath Community Centre
- Jubilee Park Community Centre and
- Wednesbury 2000

In addition to the existing Click and Chat course we developed a training the trainer programme to enable centre staff and volunteers to deliver direct support to the community through their centre.



Digi - Comm

Independent Evaluation – In year one we engaged FutureExcel as an independent evaluator for the project. They have developed a monitoring framework to enable us to map the impact of the programme. This has provided us with valuable intelligence to help us shape the project to ensure maximum impact.

What participants of Digi - Comm have said about the programme:

'Found it very helpful and hope to be more and more confident'

'I had a bit of IT knowledge, I now am gaining confidence'

'With little or no knowledge at the start I feel I am learning more in every session'

Succession and Future Funding – It is clear that Covid 19 changed the digital landscape and identified extensive and complex needs around this issue. We have worked in partnership with a number of key voluntary and community organisations to identify how the sector could provide relevant and sustainable support to our sector around the digital divide.

We worked with Communities In Sync and Sandwell Community Hubs to explore potential funding sources to develop digital support.

The partnership is committed to securing further funding to enable us to continue to develop and deliver this digital support to communities across Sandwell



A year at SCIPS

Here is our 2021 - 2022
timeline of SCIPS in pics!

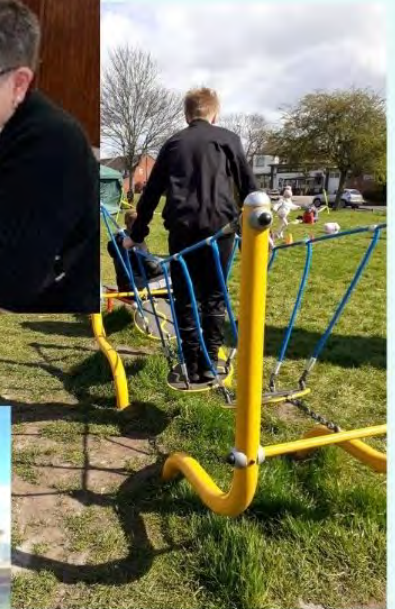
Autumn



Winter



Spring



Summer



Exciting new developments for the year ahead



Have you ever thought about becoming a member of SCIPS?

Would like to understand more about what we do?

We are an independent charitable company in Sandwell, run by the members for the benefit of Sandwell communities.

SCIPS aims to focus on issues and projects that benefit the local community of Sandwell.

Our membership categories:

Tenants and Residents Associations (TRA'S) (Registered with Sandwell MBC)

Community groups (based in Sandwell or benefiting Sandwell)

Individual members (Sandwell residents)

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