



Sandwell
Community
Information and
Participation
Service Limited



Annual Report
2023 - 2024

Chair's Report



SCIPS continues to play an important role in supporting tenants and residents of Sandwell to be involved and to influence decisions affecting their homes and neighbourhoods. This year will see greater regulatory need for tenant voices to be heard from April 2024.

In June 2023, the Board took the decision to redesign the staffing structure and create the new role of Operations Manager. This role is to support the CEO and manage the day to day management of the Project and Administration staff.

SCIPS continue to work with the Council to implement the tenant engagement framework, supporting both the Tenant Auditor Group and TRA's.

The cost of living crisis has affected us all. SCIPS regularly circulates useful information to its members and the wider community of Sandwell.

We are still working with Hateley Cross Big Local (HCBL) and supported them to deliver projects that have improved green spaces, work with young people and commissioned on behalf of HCBL community navigators to support individuals in a number of ways.

Our partnership with St Albans gets stronger as we work together to deliver the digital support to the residents of Sandwell. We have successfully delivered our Know Your Neighbourhood (KYN) project in which SCIPS were able to distribute 13 Chromebooks and two WiFi dongles free to participants. On the 18th March 2024 SCIPS and St Albans held a celebration event to thank the participants of KYN and to highlight lessons learnt through this project.

Together we have also successfully delivered the first year of our DIGI-COMM Power up project in community centres across Sandwell and have now started delivery for year two of a three year project.



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 2023 to 31st March 2024.

Income Received

The company received total income of £571,743 from a number of sources:

1. SMBC – Core Grant

This was a core grant from Sandwell MBC of £160,000

2. Big Local Trust – Hateley Cross Grant

This amount of £243,666 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 Power Up Project

This grant of £116,630 was awarded to us to develop and deliver the first year of our Digi-comm Power Up project in Partnership with St Albans Community Association.

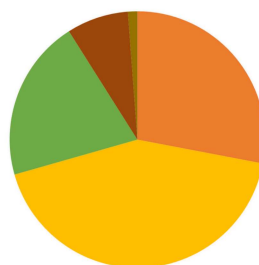
4. Know your Neighbourhood – Digi-comm Unity Project

This grant of £44,620 was awarded to us to pilot our Digi-comm services in Community Rooms on Tower blocks in the borough, another project in partnership with St Albans Community Association.

4. Other Income

This was received from bank interest and sundry income £6,827.

Source of Income Received



SMBC - Core grant	28.0%
Hateley Cross Big Local grant	42.6%
Reaching Communities - Digi-comm Power Up	20.4%
Know your Neighbourhood - Digi-comm Unity	7.8%
Other Income	1.2%

Expenditure Incurred

Total expenditure for the period was £530,974 as detailed below:

1. Project Expenditure

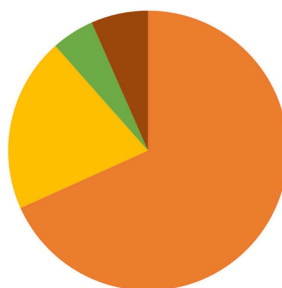
All restricted funding expenditure including project planning, salaries, training and all project expenses amounted to £362,502

2. Core Expenditure

Core expenditure was £168,472 which is further broken down as follows:

- a) Staff Costs** – Our largest core expense totalled £107,206, some staff costs were also 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 and service charges, insurance, accountancy fees, office and equipment hire costs these amounted to £26,219.
- c) Administration and Service Delivery** – This includes all costs incurred in carrying out services, including postage, stationery, expenses, training and conferences, AGM and Annual report costs, advertising and depreciation. These costs amounted to £35,047.

Analysis of Expenditure



Project expenditure	68.3%
Core Expenditure - Staff Costs	20.2%
Core Expenditure - Building and Running Costs	4.9%
Core Expenditure - Admin & Service Delivery	6.6%

Core work programme

Funded by
Sandwell Council

In 2023 / 2024 we embarked on a new 3 year grant agreement with Sandwell Council. The aims and objectives of the grant 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.

Members of the Tenant Auditor Group.

SCIPS AGM 2023



Throughout the year we continued to deliver the activities and outcomes set out in our grant agreement and in some cases, we exceeded them significantly. Between April 2023 and March 2024 we have:

- Delivered 73 digital training sessions throughout the year. In addition, we delivered 5 away days, 1 Board Induction day, 1 TRA training day and a funding session.
- Provided support for local groups attending 128 community meetings.
- Held 5 public General Meetings and 1 Annual General Meeting.
- Published 228 news articles, viewed 16,405 times online and 313 funding opportunities which were viewed 18,315 times online.
- Secured 2,218 hours of voluntary time to support the work of the organisation.
- Engaged 1,800 tenants and residents throughout the period.
- Secured a total of £419,196 in addition to the Council core grant, including £10,000 to deliver support for the Welcoming Spaces programme. The additional funding secured means that for every £1 we get from SMBC we bring in an additional £2.79 from external funders.

Core work programme

Supporting the delivery of Sandwell's Resident Engagement Strategy

We continue to provide a wide range of support to assist with the development and delivery of SMBC's tenant engagement strategy including:

- A renegotiated package of training and support to the Tenant Auditor Group. This involved provision of independent advice on scoping and action planning for the audit on fire safety in tower blocks, and more recently a new audit into repairs complaints.
- Delivery of a capacity building grant programme on behalf Sandwell Community Hubs to oversee the distribution of £130,000 funding to five local organisations.
- Commissioning to deliver training to frontline housing officers in resident engagement and good customer care.
- Co-design and delivery of the first SMBC tenant conference in many years, with comprehensive involvement in planning, as well as the provision of a keynote address, facilitation of 4 workshops and chairing of a Q&A panel.
- Distribution of digital equipment – 31 Chromebooks – provided by the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Celebrating the work of Tenants Groups across Sandwell

Since 2015 we have developed and supported new and existing Tenants and Residents Associations with Sandwell Council's TRA Registration Process, grant funding and other issues identified as important by their communities. TRA's are formed to champion local issues and to improve the quality of life for residents. They work tirelessly on behalf of their local community and are driven by dedicated local volunteers.

In the last 12 months we have supported the formation of two new Tenants and Residents Associations – Lancaster House TRA and Willow, Beech and Aspen Houses TRA – strengthening the already solid TRA movement that exists within Sandwell.

In addition to this ongoing support we also hosted a committee skills and governance training event specifically for TRAs, bringing groups together for the first time in recent years, with feedback received being so positive that we have now commenced a regular quarterly TRA networking session. These events are going from strength-to-strength with the sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise that groups have being an invaluable resource.

We would like to thank all of the TRAs across Sandwell, their committees and members, for their dedication and hard work to improve the communities and areas in which they live.



Hateley Cross Big Local



Big Local Trust funded 150 different under-represented areas of the country, awarding £1 million to each area over a period of 10 years. Hateley Heath and Stone Cross was one of those areas. A group of local residents joined forces in 2015 to become Hateley Cross Big Local (HCBL). SCIPS is their Locally Trusted Organisation, assigned to hold the funding on their behalf and provide advice on governance issues. SCIPS also has a contract with the Partnership group to provide project management and support services, ensuring that they are fully supported by our professional staff.

In 2023 the HCBL Partnership group took up an offer of free support from Local Trust to help them to measure the changes that they have made since they began. Wendy Sugarman Associates conducted a series of workshops with the group, culminating in an event attended by nearly 70 stakeholders and residents of the Hateley Heath and Stone Cross area at West Bromwich Albion. HCBL went on to commission and publish a pictorial representation of the project's journey to date and another Artwork recording the changes made during the time of Big Local's activities so far. This is it.....



Both are displayed outside the 4 Community Trust Hub in the heart of the community.

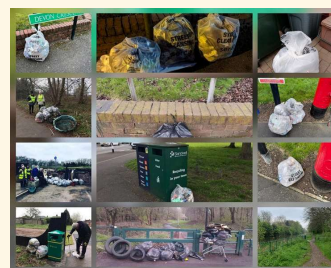
New signage will soon be installed on the Mill Pool to enhance the visitor experience.



Hateley Cross Big Local

Under the **COMMUNITY PRIDE** strand of the project, HCBL has, in partnership with Sandwell MBC, continued the much needed improvements to the local green spaces including:

- Maintenance and line painting at the football pitch on the Denbigh Drive green space.
- Tree maintenance and the planting of new trees to the perimeter of the Denbigh Drive site.
- Installation of extra bins on Marsh Lane green space.
- Much needed tree maintenance on the Mill Pool.
- The planting of a Community Orchard in January 2024, made up of a variety of fruit trees but sadly 94 of the 111 trees planted in the orchard were stolen in late May 2024.
- Planting of an additional 40 indigenous trees on the Mill Pool site and general maintenance and path clearance on this site.
- Re-siting of a vandalised picnic bench to the outside of the 4 Community Trust Hub on Wiltshire Way.
- Improvements to the Mill Pool entrances on Westminster Road and Canterbury Road/Wills Avenue with welcome signs designed by local Primary School children.
- Enlisting support from Sandwell MBC Rangers to work with the 4 Community Trust Hub Men's Group with a view to educating the group on how best to monitor and maintain the new trees on Mill Pool.



Powered by CAN continue to develop our local Young Voices as part of the **COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND INVOLVEMENT** strand, they are currently working with Young Voices in Hall Green school. The group are designing summer family fun days that Powered by Can will deliver on our Green Spaces in the Summer holidays 2024. Under this strand there are a variety of projects being delivered by Essex Avenue CTRA, 4 Community Trust and Stone Cross Library including J's Pantry, Yoga sessions and more all kick-started by HCBL's small grants. HCBL continue to sponsor the very popular Christmas tree in Stone Cross and supporting monthly litter picks.

Hateley Cross Big Local Community Navigators are still working hard for the local community under the **COMMUNITY ASPIRATION** strand. The Navigator project was recently extended to run until the end of September 2024. Community focussed staff from Ideal for All and SWEDA provide information and guidance to residents to help them navigate their way through to greater employment prospects. This project is delivered and managed for Hateley Cross Big Local by Sandwell Consortium.

Hateley Cross Big Local is now approaching its final year so attention is turning towards celebrating and publicising all of their incredible achievements.

Digi - Comm



Our original Digi-comm project ended in May 2023 and we immediately started delivery of the successor project, **Digi-comm Power Up** in partnership with St Albans Community Association. At the same time, we delivered our year long pilot programme funded by Know Your Neighbourhood, **Digi-comm Unity**. This pilot focused on rolling our successful digital training model out into under-utilised community rooms in tower blocks.

The new project combines all the best and most valued elements of the original Digi-comm project and “powers it up” to provide an enhanced solution to the communities digital exclusion issues.

SCIPS works intensively with Community Organisations to identify their key needs and challenges and helping them to identify potential Community Champions who can help imbed the training we offer to their centre users to ensure the benefits continue beyond our project input. Our “Train the Trainer” session is delivered to digital champions and centre staff and volunteers, 8 “click and chat” training sessions and 3 sessions specifically designed to help with accessing local services are all part of this package of training and support. This training is at a pre-entry level so even if you have never switched on a digital device before, you can learn from this training. The learning from the first year of the Digi-comm Power Up project and that from the Digi-comm Unity pilot project is used to inform and improve the next 2 years of Digi-comm Power Up delivery.

Boscobel TMO, Friar Park Millenium Centre, Great Bridge Forum and Wednesbury Sons of Rest engaged with us during this the first year of the project. This is what these centres and some of their training participants said about their experience with the project

Our confidence has been built up and new friends have been made. Some of what the group has already learnt has been passed on to other friends and family.

Boscobel TMO

My confidence has dramatically increased, and the ability of the tutor to adapt to my way of learning and being patient has been beneficial as it has made the learning better, fun, and relevant to what I want to know.

Recipient of Digital Support Package

You have given me an insight into the real needs in the community for digital and communication skills that have been taken for granted by the Government and business, and the danger of exclusion to the older generation and persons of alternative needs and requirements.

Digital Champion





Digi - Comm Power Up



St Albans Community Association work in different centres to deliver group sessions specifically designed for older people. These centres wanted to replicate some of the strategies and methods that were designed by the original Digi-comm project and have proved to be a great success. Cape Care in Smethwick, Smethwick Library, Willow Gardens in Rowley and Smethwick Baptist Church have embraced the group training which has been adapted to fulfil each groups specific needs.

St Albans Community Association also deliver digital support packages for older people which are on a one-to-one basis, designed to build skills and confidence for clients who have low levels of confidence in using a device and who may be excluded or vulnerable. The client is allocated a tablet and is supported over an 8-week period to use it covering issues and topics that are important or necessary to the individual e.g. accessing NHS, online shopping etc. These have proved to be particularly popular and there is a permanent waiting list.

Through St Albans Pre School project we have engaged parents and families in building digital confidence. The Pre School is utilised by families from a wide variety of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We have worked with parents and families providing support to enable them to access the Baby Days app which enables them to follow their child's early years development. We have also utilised the project to support parents access to free childcare and register their children for school placements which is now predominately a digital process. The Google Translate function has enabled the project to effectively engage parents whose first language is not English.



Here is our 2023 - 2024
timeline of SCIPS in pics!



Winter



Spring












Digi-Comm Unity Celebration Event





Summer



The Journey

TENANT CONFERENCE 2024

Saturday 13 July 2024

10am - 3pm

West Bromwich Albion F.C
The Hawthorns | 9 Birmingham Road
West Bromwich | B71 4LF

Limited Spaces
Book your place today!

For more information please email
Tenant_Conference@sandwell.gov.uk
or call 0121 569 2537

BOOK NOW










www.sandwell.gov.uk/housing/tenant-conference





Exciting new developments for the year ahead



Why not become a member of SCIPS?

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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Funded by
Sandwell Council