



Sandwell
Community
Information and
Participation
Service Limited



Annual Report
2022 - 2023

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. This year will see greater regulatory need for tenant voices to be heard.

SCIPS continue to work with the Council to implement the tenant engagement framework, supporting both the Tenant & Leaseholder Scrutiny Group and the Tenant Auditor Group. The cost of living crisis has impacted on us all and in November 2022 we held a cost of living event at our general meeting with presentations from a number of organisations offering advice and support to our members. We have now uploaded their presentation to our you tube account (@scipsb70).

We have continued to work with Hateley Cross Big Local (HCBL) and have signed a new contract that means that we will support this program until it finishes in March 2026.

Our partnership with St Albans continued to deliver the digital support to the residents of Sandwell. We have successfully secured funding for another 3yrs from May 2023 to deliver DIGI-COMM power up which builds on the findings from our previous project.

We were also given an uplift to our DIGI COMM grant for the Know Your Neighbourhood programme. Under this programme we will deliver DIGI COMM UNITY which offers support in community spaces within high rise buildings. This will enable residents to access digital support at a very local level. It will also provide additional services in relatively unused community spaces.

In April 2023 SCIPS held a Celebration event for the successful delivery of DIGI COMM over the previous 3 yrs. I was heartened to hear Donna Adams Allen from the Lottery say "It is an honour to fund this partnership" both myself and Tonia Flannigan CEO of St Albans were touched by her complimentary presentation about our partnership.



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 2022 to 31st March 2023.

Income Received

The company received total income of £491,025 from a number of sources:

1. SMBC – Core Grant

This was a core grant from Sandwell MBC of £165,000

2. BIG Local Trust – Hateley Cross Grant

This amount of £215,134 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.

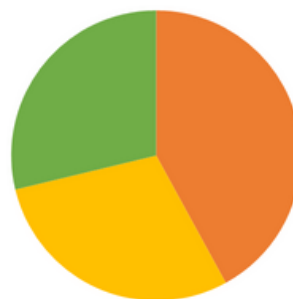
3. Reaching Communities – Digi-comm Project

This grant of £107,516 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 £3,375

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 £431,309 as detailed below:

1. Project expenditure

All restricted funding expenditure including project planning, salaries, training and all project expenses amounted to £290,990

2. Core Expenditure

Core expenditure was £140,319 which is further broken down as follows:

a) Staff Costs

Our largest core expense totalled £79,313, some staff costs were also partially funded using restricted project grants, this figure also includes contracted out staff.

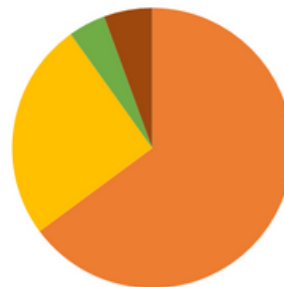
b) Building and Running Costs

Essential costs needed to operate the company. Including rent & service charges, insurance, audit and accountancy fees, office and equipment hire costs these amounted to £18,413.

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 £42,593.

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

In 2022/23 we were in the final year of our 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.

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.

Members of the Tenant Auditor Group.



SCIPS AGM 2022



Between April 2022 and March 2023 we have:

- delivered 61 training sessions to residents in the community.
- provided support for local groups attending 115 community meetings.
- held 5 public General Meetings and 1 Annual General meeting.
- published 217 news articles viewed 11,798 times online and 618 funding opportunities which were viewed 26,871 times.
- secured 943 hours of voluntary time to support the work of the organisation.
- engaged 6358 tenants and residents throughout the period.
- secured a further 3-year funding package with SMBC of £450k enabling us to continue to support residents, groups and communities across Sandwell until 2026. In addition, we secured £100k from Hateley Cross Big Local and £406,870 from the Big Lottery Community Fund. By securing funding from Hateley Cross and the Big Lottery for every £1 we get from SMBC we bring in an additional £1.12 from external funders.

Core work programme

Supporting the Development of Sandwell's Resident Engagement Strategy

To prepare for the new regulatory framework we provided a wide range of support to assist with the development and delivery of SMBC's tenant engagement strategy including.

- Delivering a package of training and support to the Tenant Auditor Group. This involved assisting them to undertake an audit and produce a report on fire safety in tower blocks.
- Delivering a number of training sessions to the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny group helping to build their skills to enable them to undertake effective scrutiny of housing services.
- Holding several focus groups to help inform the content and style of the annual report for tenants.
- Consulting our membership on changes to the disability facilities grant and the council insurance scheme.
- Working with housing staff to arrange an annual conference for Sandwell tenants.

Celebrating the work of Tenants Groups across Sandwell

Since 2015 we have developed and supported new and existing Tenants and Residents Groups with Sandwell Council's TRA Registration Process, grant funding and any other issues that are important to their communities. TRA's are formed to represent 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 they have:

- Held celebration events for the late Queens platinum Jubilee.
- Secured funding to deliver the Holiday Activities and Food programme in a local community centre.
- Delivered an annual community cohesion event.
- Delivered regular coffee mornings and craft sessions for local residents.
- Arranged regular litter picks by local volunteers.
- Started to plan a community garden project.
- Co-ordinated a formal complaint on behalf of residents who suffered a major service failure.

We would like to thank all the local TRA's, their committees and members for their dedication and hard work to improving their homes and community.



Hateley 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 activities delivered under each theme over the last year are described below.

COMMUNITY PRIDE

The HCBL Partnership contracted SMBC to improve a number of green spaces in these areas:

- Denbigh Drive - installation of 2 goal posts
- Somerset Green - Installation of a goal post and baseket ball hoop
- Kesteven Green - Installation of 2 new picnic benches and bins nearby
- Marsh Lane/Wetminster - Clearance of some of the bushes and trees to discourage Anti Social Behaviour
- Mill Pool (The Milky) - repairs to footpaths and existing benches, installation of new picnic benches and bins and general clearance of the undergrowth to allow better views of the pool itself at this beautiful site. Improvements were also made to the entrances at Beverley Road and Rydding Lane
- Local children designed art works to create new signage at these entrances, and another entrance that will be improved next year.
- Alex and Edna, the Co-chairs organise monthly litter picks on the green spaces too.

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

Following a detailed research project into the needs of local residents and services available, with regard to training and employment, HCBL contracted Sandwell Consortium to provide a Navigator service to help local people access the services they need. Ann-Marie Frost from SWEDA and Garry Oliver from Ideal for All deliver this project for us, they are based in Sandwell Adult Family Learning on Huntingdon Road. They also deliver Cost of Living support at The 4 Community Hub.

The local primary schools finished their projects, that were funded over the last 3 years or so; We funded things like gazebos that are used by the children and staff to allow learning to take place outdoors. Children love playing in them, listening to stories, practising their phonics or even just chilling out in a safe space with their friends.

Powered by CAN are delivering a Young Voices project on behalf of HCBL, which as well as partaking in acts of kindness, they allowed the children to design the fun days that are held on our green spaces each summer.



COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND INVOLVEMENT

The Community Grant offer to groups has welcomed and funded applications across the area including food for a Cafe at J's Pantry, which opened its door in the Spring of 2023 and HCBL also providing start up funding to Essex Avenue CTRA to provide coffee & natter and craft sessions in the 4 Community Hub, these sessions are self-funding.

Powered by CAN and the Young Voices designed and delivered four hugely popular Family Fun Days on the improved green spaces in the area, with free games and activities for all, and free food provided by 4 Community Trust.

The 4 Community Trust Hub goes from strength to strengths with new activities starting all the time, including Bingo evenings, that have just started up, all designed to get the local community involved and raising community spirit.



Our original 3 year, £326,000 Reaching Communities funded Digi Comm Project – delivered in partnership between SCIPS and St Albans – drew to a close in May 2023. The Project exceeded its targets by 27%, with some of the highlights including;

- A total of 395 local people supported
- 92 devices secured and made accessible to the community
- 28 community organisations worked with directly throughout Sandwell
- An additional £118,919 (36%) funding secured to support delivery of outcomes, including upgrades to connectivity infrastructure at community centres and devices for TRAs, SCIPS Board and St Albans.

Digital Skills & Confidence Training

Our face to face digital training and confidence building sessions / short courses supported people on a one-to-one basis, through structured group training sessions and piloted new ad-hoc sessions. This training was supplemented and underpinned by a tablet loan scheme for everyone that needed a device.

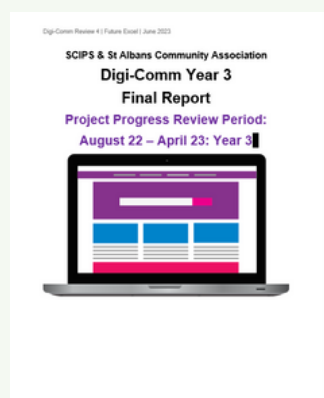
Digital Support Package

St Albans supported elderly and vulnerable residents in their own home or supported living environment to become better digitally connected and improve their overall general quality of life. Beneficiaries would undertake bespoke training tailored to their individual needs and interests to get online and where needed access the tablet loan scheme.



Digital Champions

The project would work with established community centres and spaces in order to provide support, training and advice to enable that centre to become a digital hub for groups and communities in the local area. Volunteers would undertake a 'train the trainer' programme, to be guided and supported to deliver the basic digital training to ensure sustainability of support for communities going forwards.



Independent Evaluation

FutureExcel were engaged to independently evaluate the project, to provide a monitoring framework to map the impact of the programme and provide intelligence to help shape the project. Christine Brown, FutureExcel has said "having evaluated many partnership projects over the years, I have found this project to be an exemplar in joined up working which has not only supported the project to be effectively managed and delivered but supported increased knowledge and learning across both organisations".



Digi - Comm

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

"I've learnt lots and it's been very beneficial. The best bit was learning about the different apps available. I wasn't doing much with my tablet before, this has opened up a whole new world to me"

"The course gives you the time and patience to learn. When I ask family to help, they often go too fast for me and get impatient."

"The project has enabled me to meet people and I am using WhatsApp more to communicate."

Celebration Event & Good Practice Guide

In April 2023 SCIPS and St Albans hosted a Celebration Event to highlight the successes and learning from the Project, to launch a Digi Comm Good Practice Guide, and, most importantly, to thank the very many individuals who helped ensure that the Project was a success.

Succession planning

In the final 12 months of our Project SCIPS and St Albans sought to identify options for succession so that we could continue to deliver and improve our offer and support more people across Sandwell. We prioritised an application to the Reaching Communities fund, and we were also invited to apply for 'Know Your Neighbourhood' Levelling Up monies (both administered by the Big Lottery). We were informed that we were successful in both of these applications!

Know your Neighbourhood - Digi Comm Unity

A new 12 month project, Digi Comm Unity is enabling us to pilot our successful Digi Comm programme into new community and residential settings as well as appoint a new part time Volunteer Coordinator role to expand the pool of volunteers able to deliver training. We are taking our existing model to smaller venues such as community rooms in High Rise buildings which are unstaffed and currently underused by local residents. Our Volunteer Coordinator is developing practices that recruit, train and retain volunteers to assist and support them to become Digital Champions.

Reaching Communities - Digi Comm Power Up

A new 3 year project, Digi Comm Power Up is enabling us to work with digitally excluded and disadvantaged individuals including elderly people living at home and in supported accommodation, and residents that can access community venues across Sandwell. It has been shaped by feedback from and consultation with the community as to where further need exists and the best approach to tackle these issues. It is an ambitious project which scales up the work of Digi Comm, taking the very best parts and delivering to more residents and communities across the borough.



A year at SCIPS

Here is our 2022 - 2023
timeline of SCIPS in pics!

Autumn



Winter

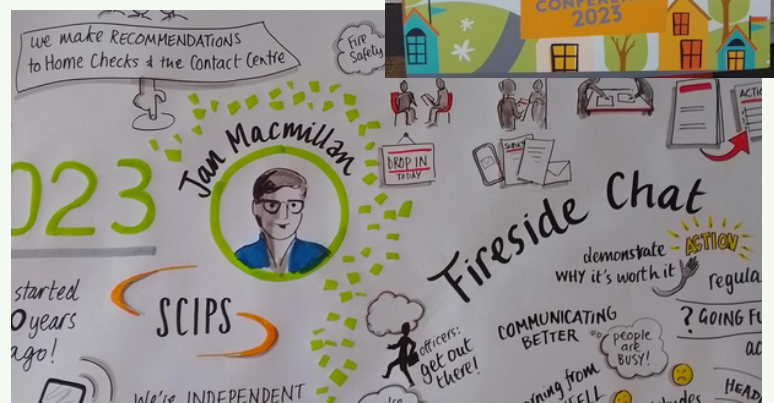




Spring



Summer



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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