

Supporting Communities NI
Consolidated Group Accounts
Company Limited by Guarantee
Financial Statements
31 March 2023

Finegan Gibson Ltd
Chartered accountant & statutory auditor
Causeway Tower
9 James Street South
Belfast
BT2 8DN

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Financial Statements

Year ended 31 March 2023

	Page
Directors' annual report (incorporating the director's report)	1
Independent auditor's report to the members	12
Consolidated statement of financial activities (including income and expenditure account)	17
Consolidated statement of financial position	18
Consolidated statement of cash flows	19
Notes to the financial statements	20

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Directors' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	Supporting Communities NI
Charity registration number	NIC100005
Company registration number	NI 026765
Principal office and registered office	The Hatchery NI Unit 19 Antrim Enterprise 58 Greystone Road BT41 1JZ Antrim

The directors

Lorraine Campbell	
James Whitten	
Basil Davidson	
Siobhan Mullan	
Linda Watson	
Ivan Armstrong	
Ryan Black	(Resigned 26 th May 2022)
Justin Cartwright	
Marty McColgan	(Resigned 8 th December 2022)
	(Served from 27 October 2022 to 21 July 2023)
Jillian Strain	
David Lamb	
Anthony Kerr	
James Ripley	
Geraldine O'Kane	(Resigned 8 th December 2022)
Karen Rodgers	(Appointed 2 March 2023)
Kathleen Foster	(Appointed 1 June 2023)
David Maher	(Appointed 26 th October 2023)
Caroline Farrar	(Appointed 26 th October 2023)

Company secretary Colm McDaid

Auditor Finegan Gibson Ltd
Chartered accountant & statutory auditor
Causeway Tower
9 James Street South
Belfast
BT2 8DN

Bankers Ulster Bank
49 Wellington Street
Ballymena
BT43 6AD

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Directors' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

ANNUAL REVIEW 2022-23

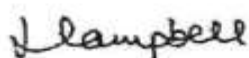
Introduction: A Message from Our Chair

The past year is one on which I will look back with much pride as Supporting Communities continued to deliver our services advising, supporting, enabling and ultimately empowering communities across Northern Ireland . For a number of years we have been extending our reach, working with housing organisations across the island sharing our experience and assisting with tenant engagement . This year we established ourselves firmly on the all island stage with the hugely successful All Ireland Tenant Engagement Conference when we brought together housing professionals and tenants north and south sharing experiences and committing to take tenant engagement to the next level.

As Chair, I am also enormously proud of the Supporting Communities staff team who, despite the many challenges they face in their work, continue to find new ways of working, reaching out to all the groups we work with to offer support, and adapting our services to an online world . Adopting a hybrid model of working we continue to offer the personal service we have always provided our groups, catering for all needs and demands.

We have continued to develop our services, working in partnership with other organisations recognising that collaboration maximises our effectiveness. We have outperformed in many areas of our work and are delighted to have maintained our customer service excellence accreditation.

As always, we will continue to innovate and adapt to the ever-changing needs of our communities.



Lorraine Campbell,

Chair

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

Structure, governance and management

Nature of Governing Document

Supporting Communities NI is a company limited by guarantee and is also a registered charity. For the purposes of charity law, the Directors are Trustees of the Charity.

The Supporting Communities Team

Supporting Communities is an independent charitable organisation that champions tenant and community participation by developing groups, supporting active citizenship, and building cohesive communities.

We promote best practice in community participation in Northern Ireland through a grassroots approach to community development, providing tailored support, advice, information, and training to new and existing community groups, statutory and voluntary organisations.

We work to empower society through engaged, confident, sustainable, and inclusive communities.

Our team of 25 staff members work throughout Northern Ireland.

We have 11 Community Development Officers based throughout the province working directly with individuals and groups to enable their full participation in their communities' matters.

Our Corporate Services team provides specialist help to groups and other third sector organisations through funding support and advice, training on a range of community building topics, and, importantly this year, digital skills and capacity.

The Administrative Team keeps everything running smoothly for our staff and the groups we serve through; PAYE support, surveys, minutes, and other correspondence.

Organisation Structure

The company is governed by an Executive Board of up to a maximum of 15 members, which meets on a quarterly basis. It delegates certain matters to two sub-committees, namely the Finance, Audit and Risk Sub-Committee and the Governance, Remuneration and Disciplinary Sub-Committee, which also meet on a quarterly basis. A formal Planning Control Framework covering the Executive Board, the Sub-Committee and the Executive Officers of the company is in place.

The Directors of the company are appointed at the Annual General Meeting for a 3-year term of office up to a maximum of 9 years, with a third of Directors standing down each year in rotation. Members are eligible to stand for re-election.

The Executive Board undertook a comprehensive review of the company's activities going forward and developed a new Strategic Plan 2022-25, which sets out its overall vision, mission, and values to inform its business development priorities for the next three years.

Supporting Communities NI's overall vision is for 'vibrant, inclusive, sustainable communities,' and its mission is 'to champion community participation by developing groups, supporting active citizenship, and building cohesive communities.'

In delivering these objectives Supporting Communities NI will be governed by our values.

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

We are:

- Trusted: We are open, transparent, and accountable in all we do.
- Passionate: We love what we do and believe in doing the right thing.
- Empathetic: We recognise and understand the communities we serve and our stakeholders.
- Inspiring: We encourage everyone to find and use their voice.
- Innovative: We continue to review and improve what we do.
- Inclusive: We are committed to being open, fair, respectful, and diverse.

We have identified six strategic priorities for the coming period to strengthen our organisation so that it can grow, improve, and meet the needs of tenants and communities throughout Northern Ireland and expand our reach and influence further in the Republic of Ireland.

We will:

- Empower communities to create diverse and inclusive places where people are proud to live.
- Continue to drive performance and transformation
- Increase visibility and presence across society
- Cultivate talent for the future
- Improve financial sustainability
- Realise the potential of our trading subsidiary

Alongside these Strategic Priorities, the Annual Business Plan and related Action Plan have been developed, and smart targets have been identified. The Board undertakes a regular review of the progress towards achieving these objectives

Objectives and activities

The principal activities of the charity are the relief of hardship and the advancement of community development, education and skills of members of socially and economically disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland.

Grassroots Community Development

We work directly with community and resident groups to ensure they can fully participate in matters which affect their lives. We help new groups to form, constitute themselves, and become sustainable and productive for the betterment of their local area.

This year, we provided support to 539 community groups, including 21 new groups in under-represented areas. In areas without an organised community group, we helped support 27 'Village Voices' or 'Community Champions' who are willing to engage with housing providers and other statutory agencies on behalf of the people in their area.

Post pandemic, our Community Development Officers (CDO's) continued to contact our groups. We completed more surveys to gauge the situation and establish where we could help our members through the crisis.

Our website has a new section dedicated to community resources and information organised by geographical area to help signpost groups to support near to where they live.

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

Improving Quality of Life: Inter-agency Working

Supporting Communities helps residents' groups to take an inter-agency approach to identify problems and find solutions in a coordinated way.

We facilitate regular estate inspections and inter-agency meetings between community groups, the Housing Executive, the PSNI, councils, the Department for Infrastructure, and any other body that needs to be included to make the changes needed.

Post Covid and into 2022/23, we were able to facilitate more inter-agency meetings between community groups, the Housing Executive, the PSNI, Councils, the Department for Infrastructure, and any other body that needed to be included to make the changes needed at a local community and estate level.

In total this year, we facilitated and supported 105 inter-agency meetings. We also facilitated 136 Estate Inspections across all 13 housing Executive Areas supporting residents to ensure their communities are well maintained and looked after.

The Housing Community Network

Despite the logistic challenges of the Covid years in facilitating the Housing Executive's hugely important engagement framework we continued to support all tiers of the HCN throughout 2022/23. The HCN is the largest tenant engagement structure in Northern Ireland, made up of approximately 500+ community groups across Northern Ireland as well as representative tenant involvement panels in each of the Housing Executive Areas of housing management.

Last year we convened 103 Area and Local HCN meetings in addition to ongoing regular Regional and Central Housing Forum and Working Group meetings on top of that.

All of these groups were supported by our staff in terms of the new hybrid approach to meetings, as well as our usual role in facilitation and record keeping.

We found that hybrid meetings have been very good for HCN groups and meetings. Not having to travel to & from meetings has freed up many whose other responsibilities sometimes precluded them from attending and most agree it is an easier and more efficient way to do business.

Good Governance: Charity Commission Support

Supporting Communities is a member of the Developing Governance Group, a group of charity sector support organisations dedicated to helping voluntary and community organisations comply with best practice and their statutory obligations.

We support community organisations to develop good governance and comply with the Charity Commission's regulations. In 2022/23, 73 support meetings/phone calls were provided to assist groups with Charity Commission registration.

Training Courses

Supporting Communities offered a range of training both in person and online to suit the needs of community groups and organisations that we support and serve. We specialise in topics that help groups to sustain and improve their work in the community, such as:

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

- Good Governance
- Impact Measurement
- Completing Funding Applications
- Effective Meetings
- Reporting to the Charity Commission NI
- Tenant Participation

We also delivered OCN NI accredited courses at various levels including; Understanding Social Enterprise, Community Capacity Building, and Community Development.

Some numbers from our training programme for the year included:

- 6 OCN courses delivered
- 55 qualifications earned
- 58 individual training sessions
- 401 total learners
- TP training delivered to 53 NIHE patch managers
- 99% satisfaction rate from learners

Digital Inclusion: Essential skills

It has been another busy, exciting year for all things digital inclusion at Supporting Communities. We've made the most of collaborations with partners like; Vodafone, Ignite IT and the Consumer Council, to name a few.

We trained 395 people, attended 9 Go On NI events, delivered 17 e-safety sessions, and assisted 36 rural residents in collaboration with Ignite IT's Digital Bus project.

Vodafone SIM Card Project

We distributed 2,050 SIM cards to those in data poverty this year through Vodafone's Get Connected Project. An SROI exercise on the initial 1,500 sim cards we received determined that £11.11 of social value was produced for every £1 invested by Vodafone, a terrific result!

Funding Support and Social Value

Supporting Communities' Funding Service informs groups of the most up-to-date and relevant funding sources and guides them through the overall fundraising process.

Our Funding and Social Value Officer and our Community Development Officers helped groups access a total of £716, 258 in funding in 2022/23.

We supported 166 funding applications, of which 106 were successful.

We also held six funding fairs in; Belfast, Causeway, and Mid Ulster, which were a welcome return to in-person events!

Gallagher Trust Scholarships

Supporting Communities partnered with the Gallagher Trust for the first time this year to run a new scholarship programme for students in the Ballymena area.

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

The Fund targeted year 14 students who were applying to university to study a STEM or business degree.

We were delighted to award scholarships to two deserving young men. Cameron McCaw from Ahoghill is off to Stranmillis University College to become a teacher of post-primary mathematics, and Alex Hamill, from Broughshane, is working towards a Business and Economics degree at Queens University.

New Tenant Advocate Appointed

In our role at the Independent Tenant Organisation (ITO) as appointed by the Dept for Communities, Supporting Communities regularly convenes the Housing Policy Panel (HPP), a group of tenants and residents representing the social housing sector (NIHE and HA tenants). They act as a consultative body to the Department for Communities when developing housing policy.

This year, the Panel elected its first chairperson & official Tenant Advocate. Patricia McQuillan, MBE, has been a longstanding representative for social housing tenants, serving on the Housing Executive's Central and Rural Housing Forums for over 20 years and working tirelessly within her local community in Moneydig (outside Garvagh).

She is already hard at work, representing the interests of tenants. We look forward to working with Patricia to take tenant participation to the next level in Northern Ireland.

Raising the Standard of Tenant Participation in Northern Ireland

This year our trading subsidiary, Empowering Communities, added new members now totalling 21, conducted many meetings online, embarked on two new Tenant Participation Accreditations in Northern Ireland, and continued to facilitate the TPPN (Tenant Participation Practitioners Network). We worked with members on crucial elements of tenant involvement, including ongoing regular staff support sessions, training for staff and tenants, three tenant participation strategies, one major mystery shopping exercise, and several independent reviews of tenant complaints.

This year we also began work on our first All-Ireland Tenant Engagement Conference, a milestone event for our organisation in June 2023!

In our role as Northern Ireland's ITO since 2017, Supporting Communities has overseen the implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy for NI and supported social housing tenants and staff to develop the skills needed for effective participation through our trading arm.

Our Publications

Our popular E-Zine newsletter is published fortnightly to 1500+ recipients and reaches even more in its online version.

Our staff team curates relevant news and information from across the sector, specifically for our core audience of community and resident groups.

SCENE Magazine is published twice a year, highlighting our work, and our monthly Funding Bulletin continues to be a hotly anticipated dispatch

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

Increased Reach & Raised Profile

In a year consisting of continued digital engagement, our online channels saw excellent growth, especially our website which was key point of contact and information. These figures show a percentage increase in followers and website users during 2022-2023 from the previous year.

- Facebook 23%
- Twitter 9.5%
- Instagram 9.6%
- LinkedIn 77%

Our 'How to' Series of 'help sheets' on various community development topics were also well used. Increased interest in starting a community group was evident in a 400% increase in downloads of "How to Set Up a Community Group" compared to the year before.

Looking Forward: A Message from Chief Executive Colm McDaid

As we close the books on this past year, I am tremendously proud of our achievements during 2022/23. We have seen a return to in person meetings post pandemic which has enabled our staff to build on those trusted relationships which they had pre pandemic.

As a staff team, and I use that word deliberately, we have proven our ability to adapt to rapidly changing situations and environments. We will take the lessons we have learnt from this past year with us as we continue to evolve and grow as an organisation, supporting people to be active citizens and helping to build cohesive communities.

Finally, I'd like to thank our many members, partners, and especially our key stakeholders; the Housing Executive, other social landlords from Northern & Southern Ireland, the Department for Communities and the Department of Finance all of whom have been very supportive during this past year ensuring the continued delivery of our vital support and services to the communities we serve.

Public Benefit

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the requirements of section 4 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

Supporting Communities NI has a long history of championing community participation by developing community groups, supporting active citizenship and building cohesive communities at a grassroots level across Northern Ireland. We see our primary role as helping to establish, train and support those community groups who are most in need of our help and support.

As the only independent body in the social housing sector Supporting Communities NI delivers essential services to all sectors of the community at the highest level without prejudice. Supporting Communities NI is also the Independent Tenant Organisation for Northern Ireland as appointed by the Department for Communities in February 2017 to assist in the delivery of the Department's TP Strategy for NI.

As a community development organisation, Supporting Communities NI has a portfolio of over 500 community groups which are supported in various ways across Northern Ireland. This support role ensures communities play a vital role in their own communities, making sure their voices are heard.

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

Achievements and performance

The main achievements of Supporting Communities NI during the year are set out in the Chairpersons Annual Review and the financial results for the year are set out in the financial statements accompanying this report.

Financial review

The total turnover for the year was £1,361,600 compared to (2022: £1,282,719). There was a net surplus of £145,474 in operating activities. The revaluation of the pension fund liabilities produced a gain of £4,960 in the year, giving a total net surplus of £150,434. The overall funds on 31st March 2023 were £736,897.

As a registered charity no taxation is payable on the activities undertaken in the year.

Policy on Reserves

In formulating an assessment on the level of reserves the following guidelines provided by the Charity Commission have been used:

- Current and anticipated income and expenditure levels
- The organisations lack of any other tangible assets (such as a building)
- Current and projected funding patterns
- The notice and redundancy requirements associated with the employees
- The programmes/services that the organisation plans to deliver in the period covered by the Strategic Plan

Based on the above guidelines the directors therefore aim to have an operating reserve equal to six months operating cost £603,990.

As shown on the Balance Sheet Reserves are £736,897 after accounting for the gain on the pension fund of £4,960 (2022: £4,637) which represents the current value of the annual payments into the fund over the recovery period of 8 years. The cash reserves as at 31st March 2023 are £558,365 (2022: £686,099).

The Trustees believe that this level of reserves provides sufficient confidence that the company is a going concern and the accounts have been prepared on that basis.

Pay Policy

The pay of Supporting Communities NI staff is reviewed annually in accordance with National Joint Council Awards.

Plans for future periods

Aims and key objectives for future periods

The company plans to continue developing its services in line with its Strategic Priorities outlined above and it will seek to develop collaborative partnerships with a range of external agencies. Fund arrangements will be kept under review in relation to demand for service improvements and constraints on public expenditure.

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

Risk Management

The Executive Board has conducted an ongoing review of the major risks to which the company is exposed, and a Risk Management policy is in place to identify, monitor and control those risks. A Business Continuity Plan and Cyber security procedures are incorporated in the risk management process. External risks to funding the organisation are addressed within the strategic business plan and are kept under review on an ongoing basis through reports for the Finance, Audit and Risk Sub-Committee and to the Board.

The liability related to the Northern Ireland Charities Pension Scheme is subject to an actuarial valuation on a triennial basis. The valuation undertaken in September 2019 showed a reduced deficit of £2.4 m (for the scheme as a whole) and the deficit recovery contributions payable by the employers in this scheme was settled at a lower contribution level following the improved investment performance of the fund. The Trustees of Supporting Communities are confident that the Reserve policy set out above provides sufficient assurance that the pension deficit recovery payments can be met as they fall due on an annual basis.

An independent audit of the company's financial statements has been carried out and an unqualified audit opinion has been given in respect of those statements.

Post Pandemic

As set out in the Annual Review above Supporting Communities has been able to adapt its operations to continue providing services post pandemic. Previous investment in Cloud computing services enabled our staff to now be based from home where they are able to provide vital services to communities and to our key stakeholders.

Although the pandemic years had a major impact on our trading subsidiary, Empowering Communities, it is worthy of note that the Company has shown a profit in the past 2 years showing the need and demand for its services across social landlords in Ireland, north and south.

Supporting Communities NI

Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Director's Report) *(continued)*

Year ended 31 March 2023

Trustees' responsibilities statement

The trustees, who are also directors for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Auditor

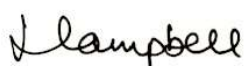
Each of the persons who is a trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- so far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- they have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

Small company provisions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies entitled to the small companies exemption.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 7th December 2023 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:



Lorraine Campbell
Trustee



David Lamb
Trustee