

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201604907, Dumfries and Galloway Council  
**Sector:** local government  
**Subject:** employment grants/business development grants and loans  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C is the chair of the board of trustees for a charity and complained on behalf of the charity. The charity had applied for funding from the council's area committee discretionary fund, and their application was considered along with others.

The grant application scoring panel had recommended an award to the charity. However, following a vote to award another organisation a sum of money, a decision was made to award the charity a sum less than had originally been recommended. The other organisation had been recommended for a nil award by the scoring panel, and had not met the minimum points in two key criteria to be eligible for funding, in terms of the scoring framework. The shortfall in the budget had been balanced by reducing the award recommended for the charity. All other applicants were awarded grants in line with the scoring panel's recommendations.

We found that although the council's decision was discretionary, they ought to have provided a clear and robust rationale for deviating from the scoring panel's recommendations. The reason the council gave for their decision was vague, and called into question the entire scoring process. We upheld the complaint.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the council:

- apologise to Mrs C for the lack of transparency in their decision-making process;
- remind elected members of the importance of transparency in all decision-making; and
- review Mrs C's case and reflect on the issues raised in it, with a view to identifying learning and improvement to ensure transparency in future decision-making.