

DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATION TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Subject:

Support for Businesses Affected by the Highlands Farm Fire

Date of Decision:

31st July 2026

Decision Number:

5/2026

Background:

Following the fire and explosion at Highlands Farm, Chelmsford City Council is the lead authority for the response phase. This will give rise to costs, some of which may be recovered from insurers, while the remainder will not be recoverable.

The Council also needs to consider the 40+ businesses and associated jobs affected by the fire. Without urgent action, there is a risk that some may be lost permanently.

It is expected that up to £300,000 could be spent on grants for businesses that would be likely to close without Council support. The impact on employment and the wider community means this is the most appropriate way to support the local economy in the circumstances.

A sum of £350,000 was requested to support businesses and meet the Council's statutory costs. This amount may be revised as the position develops.

Further reports or approvals will be brought forward if required.

Supporting Information:

The Leader of the Council was consulted before making this decision and had no objection to it.