



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Beechvale Farm – Letting to the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
Date:	14 August 2014
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure, Ext. 3400.
Contact Officer:	Cathy Reynolds, Estates Manager Property and Projects Department, Ext, 3493

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	At its meeting on 11 February 2010 the Parks and Leisure Committee agreed to provide the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute with a 5 year Lease from 1 December 2009 for 45.81 acres of Council lands at Beechvale Farm, Gransha. The Lease is subject to an annual rent of £8,000 and also provides a right of access from the Gransha Road. A map is attached as Appendix 1 to this report showing the leased land outlined in red and the right of access shaded yellow.
1.2	AFBI use the land for growing various grass, cereal and potato varieties for research and trial purposes. Prior to this AFBI had held the land under annual conacre agreements. However, as a conacre agreement typically covers a period of 11 months and requires the tenant to remove crops from land outside this time, AFBI had sought a 5 year lease which was more suited to their needs.
1.3	The current Lease is due to expire on 30 November 2014 and AFBI have requested a further lease under the existing terms for a further 5 years.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The proposed new lease will be held on similar terms to the existing agreement and at the passing rent of £8,000 per annum. This rent equates to a price per acre which is above the average agreed for similar land in the area held under conacre agreements. This reflects the increased security of tenure offered to the AFBI by way of a 5 year lease.
2.2	The AFBI will continue to be responsible for maintaining all existing hedges, ditches, fencing and gates. They will also be responsible for indemnifying the Council against damages, costs, claims and proceedings arising from their operations on the land and maintaining public liability insurance.

2.3	The Council will protect its interests by reserving the right to terminate the agreement at any time by giving 6 months written notice.
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	<u>Financial</u> - A yearly rent of £8,000 from 1 December 2014 would become payable on completion of the new lease between the Council and the AFBI.
3.2	<u>Human Resources</u> - Legal Services and Estates Management resources required during lease finalisation.
3.3	<u>Asset and Other Implications</u> - The Council's medium term interests will be protected by reserving the right to terminate this agreement at any time subject to giving six months written notice.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	No known equality or good relations considerations.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Committee is recommended to agree to renew the current Lease between the Council and AFBI for a further 5 year term from 1 December 2014 at a rent of £8,000 per annum, subject to approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Orders and incorporation of appropriate terms in a legal agreement to be prepared by the Town Solicitor.

6	Decision Tracking
The Director of Parks and Leisure to liaise with the Director of Property and Projects with a view to bringing this matter to the next available meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.	

7	Key to Abbreviations
AFBI – Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute	

8	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 – Map showing the land to be leased outlined red and the access route shaded yellow.	