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**AUDIT REPORT**

**ANALYSIS OF STAFF TRAVEL**

**AUDIT PANEL**

**APRIL 2008**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## Contents

Contents .....	1
1.0 Introduction.....	2
2.0 Executive Summary.....	3
3.0 Analytical Review .....	4
4.0 Benefits & Risks .....	21
5.0 Conclusions / Recommendations .....	23

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Belfast City Council received a request from Mr K Magee of BBC Northern Ireland under the Freedom of Information Act in January 2008. Mr Magee requested details of the extent and cost of staff and member travel outside of Northern Ireland for the years 2005/06 and 2006/07. Details of Member travel are routinely published each year by Belfast City Council under the Council's Publication Scheme.
- 1.2 A detailed response to the request for details of staff travel was prepared by Mrs H Loudon, Head of Financial Services in cooperation with Mr M McCann, Business Support Manager and other Business Support Managers around the Council. A reply was sent to the BBC in February 2008, within the timescales laid out under the Freedom of Information Act.
- 1.3 Audit, Governance & Risk Services (AGRS) has undertaken an analysis of staff travel outside of Northern Ireland in response to a request from the Audit Panel. This analysis has been performed on the basis of the information published by the Council as a result of the Freedom of Information request.
- 1.4 The objectives of this review, as agreed by the Audit Panel, were to:
  - To provide an analysis of the information published by BCC under the Freedom of Information request
  - To identify the key benefits and risks associated with staff travel outside Northern Ireland

## 2.0 Executive Summary

- 2.1 In 2005/06, there were a total of 2,374<sup>1</sup> staff in Belfast City Council. Of this number
- 408 staff
  - went on 1,052 trips
  - to 26 different countries
  - to attend 656 events
  - at a cost of £445,638
- 2.2 In 2006/07, there were a total of 2,401 staff in Belfast City Council. Of this number
- 415 staff
  - went on 968 trips
  - to 31 different countries
  - to attend 606 events
  - at a cost of £405,344
- 2.3 Staff Travel costs amount to approximately 0.3% of total Belfast City Council expenditure.
- 2.4 Staff Travel costs amount to approximately 0.4% of Income from District Rates.
- 2.5 The principal reasons why staff travel is necessary in Belfast City Council are
- Personal and professional development
  - Operational activities and identifying best practice
  - Promotion of Belfast as a place for investment and as a tourist destination
- 2.6 86% of the staff travel outside Northern Ireland in 2005/06 and 2006/07 included trips to Great Britain & Ireland. A further 13% of trips were to Europe with the remaining 1% to the rest of the world.
- 2.7 Approval procedures and associated guidelines are in place. These are currently being revised by the Travel Task Force (a working group of officers in the Council) and a revised policy and approval form are being developed.
- 2.8 The detailed analysis in section 3 of this report shows that costs, numbers of trips, numbers of travelling staff and numbers of approximate days are highest in the departments with most staff.
- 2.9 A number of potential benefits and risks associated with staff travel have been identified and are included at section 4 of this report.
- 2.10 Conclusions and recommendations arising from this analysis are presented in section 5 of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> Total Staff Numbers are based on a point in time analysis as at the financial year end (31<sup>st</sup> March) in the years 2005/06 and 2006/07. Figures were compiled by the Council's Business Improvement Section.

## 3.0 Analytical Review

### Introduction

3.1 Our initial analysis will focus on answering the following high level questions

- **What** was the cost of staff travel outside Northern Ireland?
- **Why** did staff need to travel outside Northern Ireland?
- **Where** did staff travel to?
- **How many days** were spent on staff travel outside Northern Ireland?
- **Who** was involved in staff travel outside Northern Ireland?
- **When** did the staff travel occur? (For the purpose of this review, our analysis focussed solely on travel undertaken in 2005/06 and 2006/07 as published under the FOI request).
- **How** is staff travel currently approved and controlled?

### What was the cost of staff travel outside Northern Ireland in 2005/06 & 2006/07?

3.2 The overall cost of travel / trips outside Northern Ireland in 2005/06 & 2006/07 as published under the FOI request is detailed in the table below:

Department	Total Cost 2005/06	Total Cost 2006/07
Chief Executive's	£ 22,458.24	£ 16,153.55
Community & Recreation <sup>2</sup>	£ 66,231.20	£ 60,487.96
Contract Services <sup>3</sup>	£ 3,231.07	£ -
Core Improvement	£ 21,232.91	£ 13,085.96
Corporate Services	£ 108,272.74	£ 83,212.50
Development	£ 113,474.83	£ 119,800.24
Health & Environmental	£ 107,904.15	£ 109,051.69
Legal	£ 2,833.01	£ 3,552.22
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£ 445,638.15</b>	<b>£ 405,344.12</b>

<sup>2</sup> Community & Recreation was reorganised in April 2007. There is now a Parks and Leisure Department and Community Services has moved to the Development Department

<sup>3</sup> As part of a restructure of the Council's Departments during 2005/06, the Contract Services Department was removed from the structure. Staff were transferred to the Corporate Services, Community & Recreation and Health and Environmental Services Departments.

- 3.3 The Council's total spend on staff travel outside of Northern Ireland, expressed as a monetary amount and as a percentage of total council spend during the two years analysed was as follows:

Year	Staff Travel Expenditure <sup>4</sup>	Total Expenditure <sup>5</sup>	Percentage of Total Expenditure used on Travel
2005/06	£445,638	£131,122,974	0.34%
2006/07	£405,344	£141,623,325	0.29%

- 3.4 One aspect of the media's reporting of BCC's staff travel was that the costs of staff travel are borne by the ratepayers of Belfast. In order to put this into context, the table below shows the Council's total spend on staff travel outside of Northern Ireland, expressed as a percentage of total income from District Rates:

Year	Staff Travel Expenditure	Total Income from District Rates <sup>6</sup>	Percentage of District Rates Income Spent on Staff Travel
2005/06	£445,638	£92,606,521	0.48%
2006/07	£405,344	£98,071,592	0.41%

- 3.5 A more detailed analysis of costs is included at 3.16 – 3.24 below.

**Why did staff need to travel outside Northern Ireland?**

- 3.6 There are a number of reasons why BCC staff need to travel outside of Northern Ireland. These are detailed in the table below, together with the approximate percentage of trips attributable to each of these reasons:

Reason	No. of Trips	% of trips	Total Cost	% of Total Cost
Personal & Professional Development	792	39.21%	£404,709.34	47.56%
Service & Operational Visits	602	29.80%	£177,358.33	20.84%
Study Vists / Best Practice	272	13.47%	£100,029.97	11.75%
Promoting the City	264	13.07%	£115,449.57	13.57%
Research into Strategic Priorities	73	3.61%	£47,105.56	5.54%
Professional Network Meetings	13	0.64%	£4,018.05	0.47%
Miscellaneous	4	0.20%	£2,311.45	0.27%

<sup>4</sup> Travel Expenditure figure based upon information published under Freedom of Information Request

<sup>5</sup> Gross Operating Expenditure figure taken from District Fund Summary of the Published Year End Accounts

<sup>6</sup> As published in the Council's Year End Accounts for 05/06 and 06/07 in the District Fund Summary

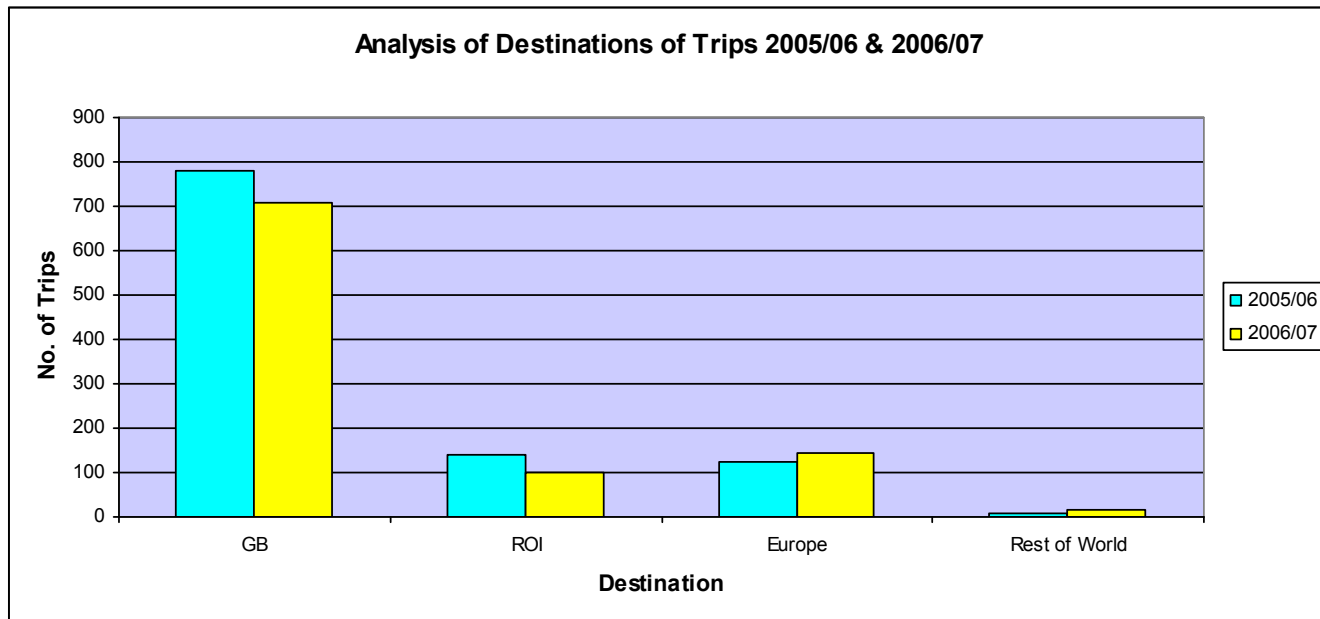
	<b>2020</b>		<b>£</b> <b>850,982.27</b>	
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**Where did staff travel to?**

3.7 The total number of trips outside Northern Ireland in the period under review are displayed in the table below:

Department	2005/06	2006/07
Chief Executive's	43	48
Community & Recreation	173	173
Contract Services	13	0
Core Improvement	40	20
Corporate Services	260	208
Development	244	234
Health & Environmental	272	273
Legal	7	12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1052</b>	<b>968</b>

3.8 In 2005/06 and 2006/07, BCC staff travelled to a total of 35 different countries. A detailed breakdown of these is included at 3.45 below. A summary of the destinations visited is displayed in the chart below. Great Britain and Ireland were by far the most common destinations with 74% of staff travel to Great Britain, and a further 12% to the Republic of Ireland. 13% of staff travel was to mainland Europe with a further 1% of staff travel to the rest of the world.



**How many days were spent on staff travel outside Northern Ireland?**

3.9 The current T1 forms and information systems in the council do not capture information on days spent on travel. For the purposes of producing a set of indicative figures, AGRS has made the assumption that trips with no associated accommodation cost have lasted for 1 day, while trips with an associated accommodation cost are assumed to have lasted 2 days.



Using this assumption, the indicative number of days spent on travel are contained in the table below:

Department	Approximate Number of Days 2005/06	Approximate Number of Days 2006/07
Chief Executive's	69	80
Community & Recreation	265	258
Contract Services	17	0
Core Improvement	54	28
Corporate Services	363	303
Development	385	359
Health & Environmental	401	412
Legal	13	18
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,567</b>	<b>1458</b>

3.10 Further analysis of indicative numbers of days on trips is included at 3.38 – 3.43.

**Who was involved in staff travel outside Northern Ireland?**

3.11 The total numbers of staff on trips outside Northern Ireland in the period under review are highlighted in the table below:

Department	No. of Staff on trips 2005/06	No of Staff on Trips 2006/07
Chief Executive's	17	22
Community & Recreation	87	92
Contract Services	5	0
Core Improvement	11	10
Corporate Services	95	100
Development	68	67
Health & Environmental	118	116
Legal	7	8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>415</b>

3.12 Further analysis of numbers of staff on trips is detailed at 3.29 – 3.37 below.

**How is staff travel currently approved and controlled?**

3.13 Belfast City Council's *Travel Guidelines for Employees* was approved by the Chief Officers Management Team (COMT) on 7 October 2002. The following key guidelines are contained therein:

- Approval of management for employees to travel away from their normal base, except where travel is an integral part of the regular work schedule, is obtained by the authorisation of a T1 form.
- Where Members and staff travel to the same conference or event etc. the approval of the relevant Committee or Sub-Committee is required.

- Travel bookings may only be made either direct with a carrier or through a Travel Agent under contract to the Council.
- Where an employee’s own car is used it is the employee’s responsibility to ensure that their car is properly insured for business use. The council does not meet the costs of this insurance. Mileage rates have been set and communicated to all staff.
- Guideline allowances are in place for travel and subsistence. These guidelines cover overnight accommodation, breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner. They are a guide to the maximum allowable expense. These guideline prices are regularly updated. Any claims for subsistence expenses have to be supported by receipts or they will not be paid.

3.14 The above commentary outlined at a high level the what/why/where/who/when/how of staff travel. A more detailed analysis of this information is provided from 3.15 – 3.47.

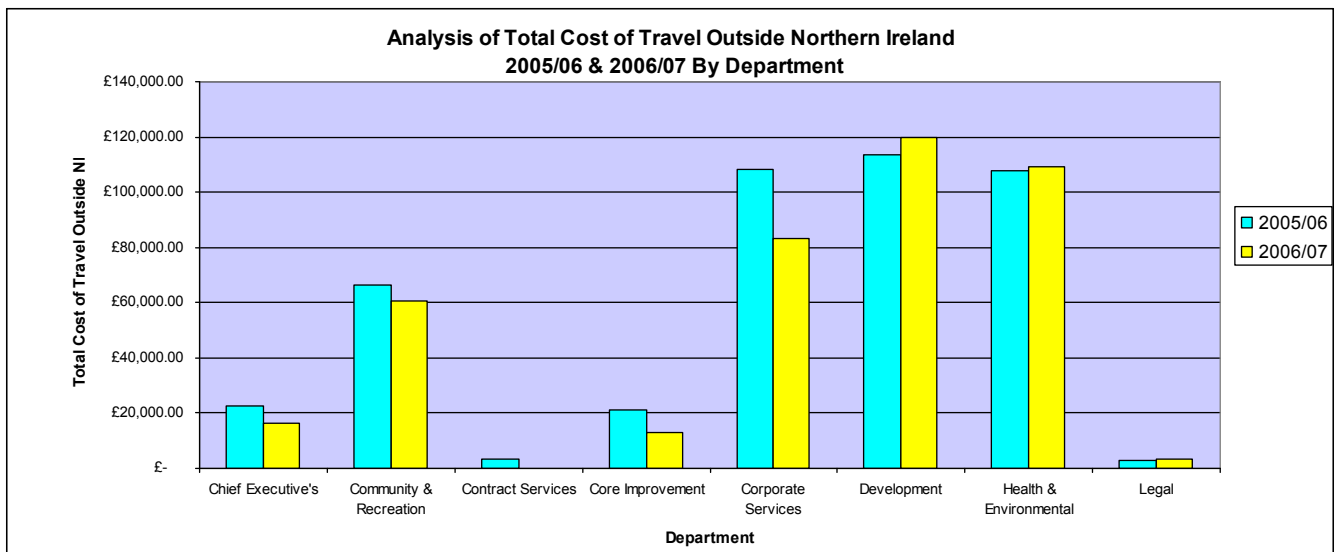
**Detailed Analysis**

3.15 The analysis of the information on staff travel outside of Northern Ireland, as published under the Freedom of Information request, has been carried out under the following headings:

- Analysis of Costs
- Analysis of Numbers of Trips
- Analysis of Numbers of Staff on Trips
- Analysis of Approximate Days on Trips
- Analysis of Destinations

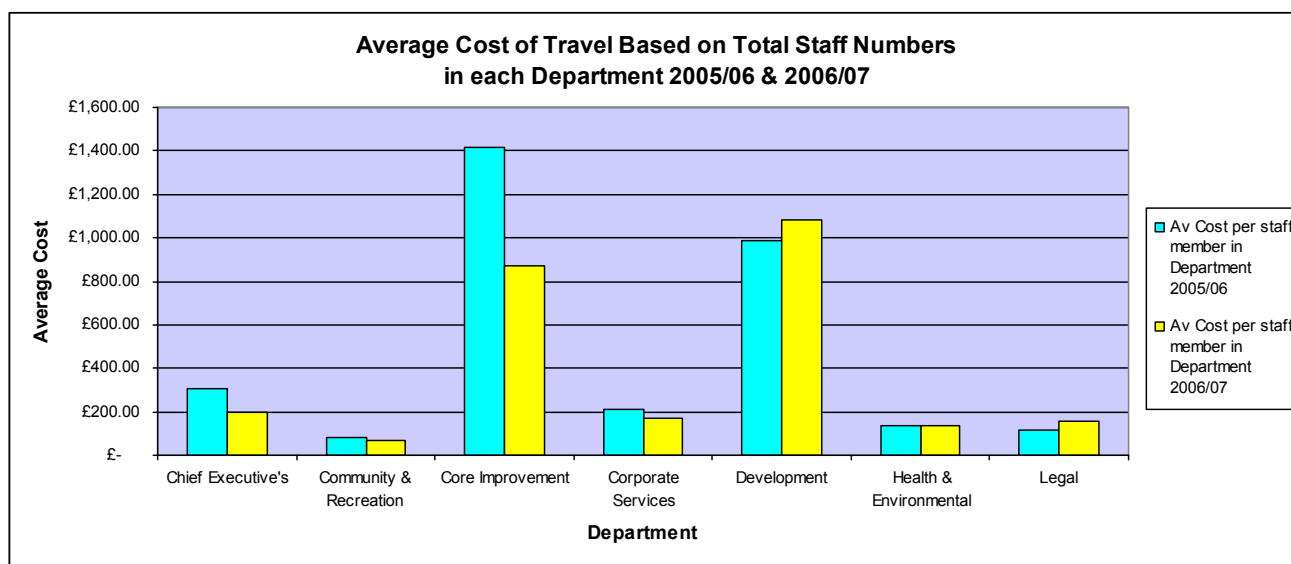
**Analysis of Costs**

3.16 The chart below illustrates the total cost of travel outside Northern Ireland over the period broken down by department:



3.17 While the above chart shows that the Community & Recreation, Corporate Services, Development and Health & Environmental Departments have spent most on travel and trips, this may be due to the fact that these are the biggest departments in the Council in terms of actual staff numbers. When we analyse the cost of staff travel in terms of numbers of staff in each of the department we can see that Core Improvement and Development have the highest average cost of travel based on total staff numbers as illustrated in the chart below.

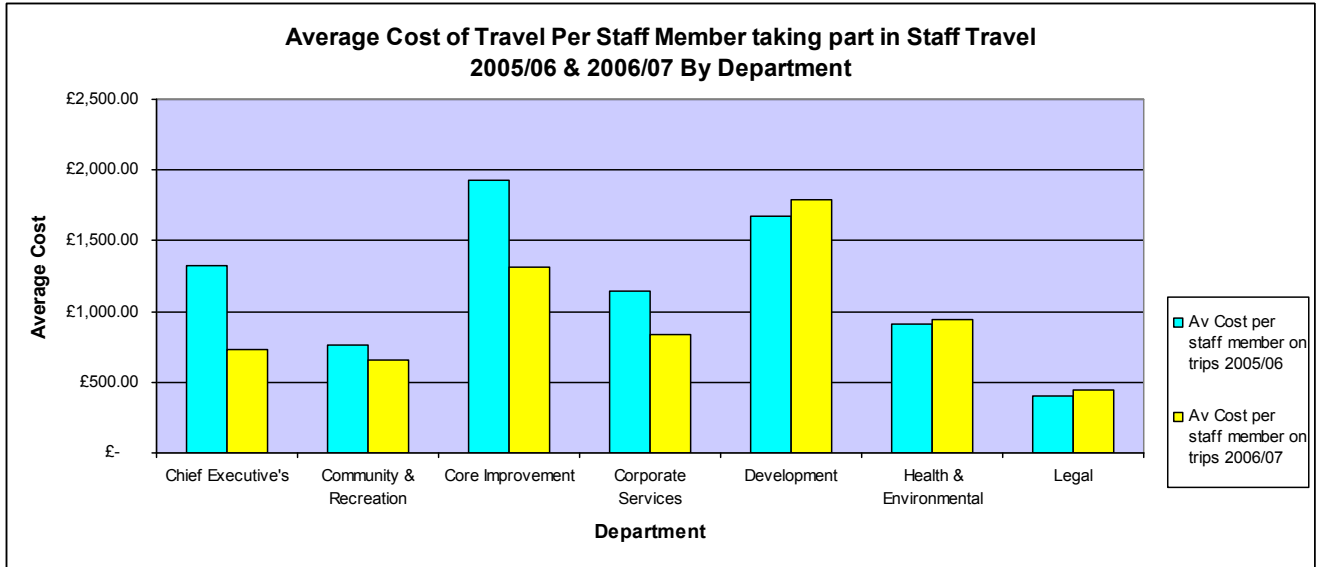
3.18 The average cost of travel per staff member in 2005/06 was £186 while in 2006/07 this had fallen to £168.



3.19 While the above chart shows Core Improvement and Development have the highest average cost of travel based on total staff numbers, it should be noted that

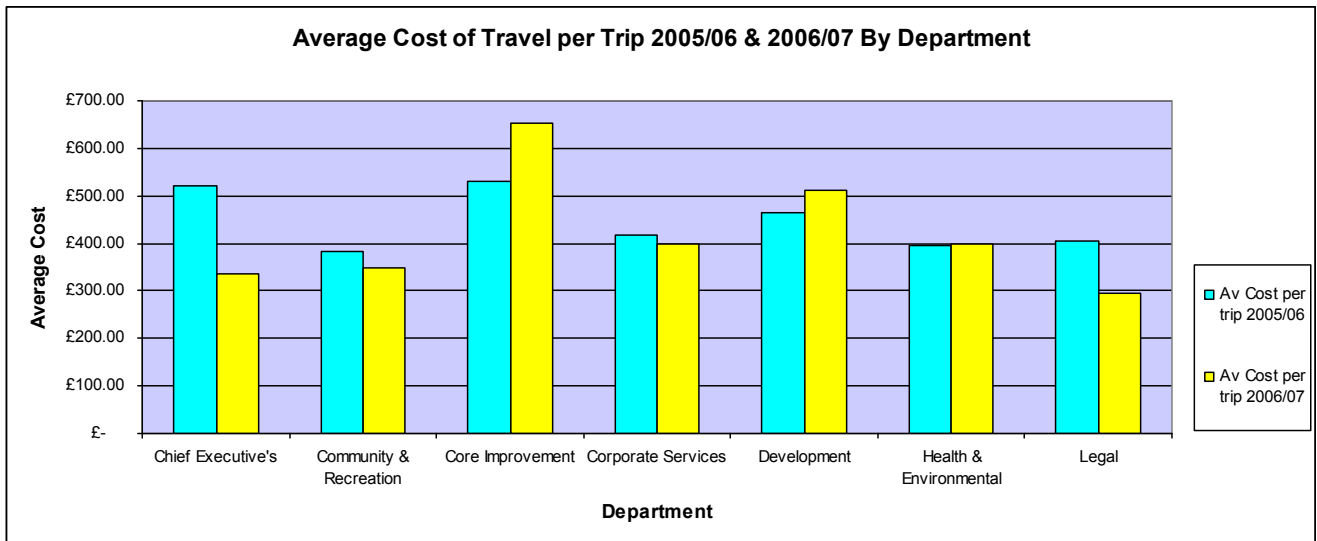
- Core Improvement is a relatively small department with a high proportion of relatively senior staff, whose work, by its nature can involve travel
- Development department are engaged in activities to promote Belfast City and as such this work, by its nature involves travel.

3.20 It can be argued, quite rightly, that not every member of staff in each department took part in staff travel during these periods. The chart below shows the total cost of travel by department, divided by the total number of employees in that department who took part in staff travel (“travelling staff members”). The average cost of travel per travelling staff member in 2005/06 was £1097.78 while in 2006/07 this had fallen to £976.73.



3.21 Again, Core Improvement and Development have the highest average cost of travel, but as stated at 3.19 above, there are reasons for this being the case.

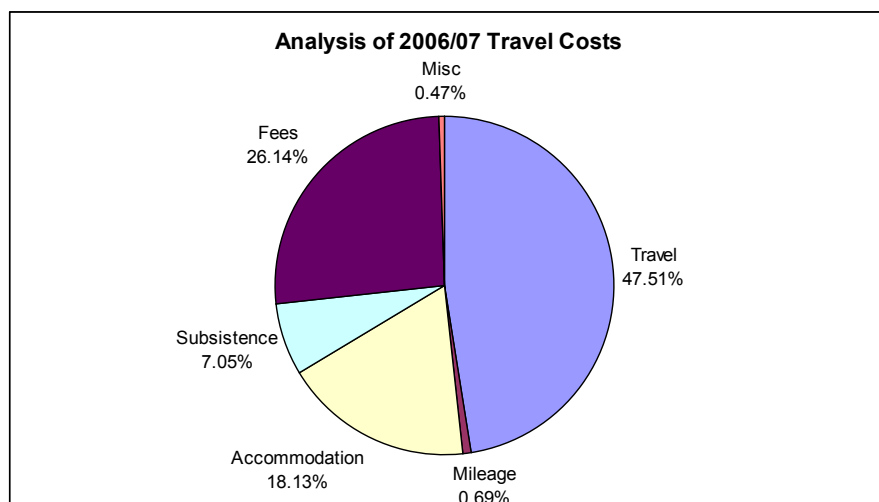
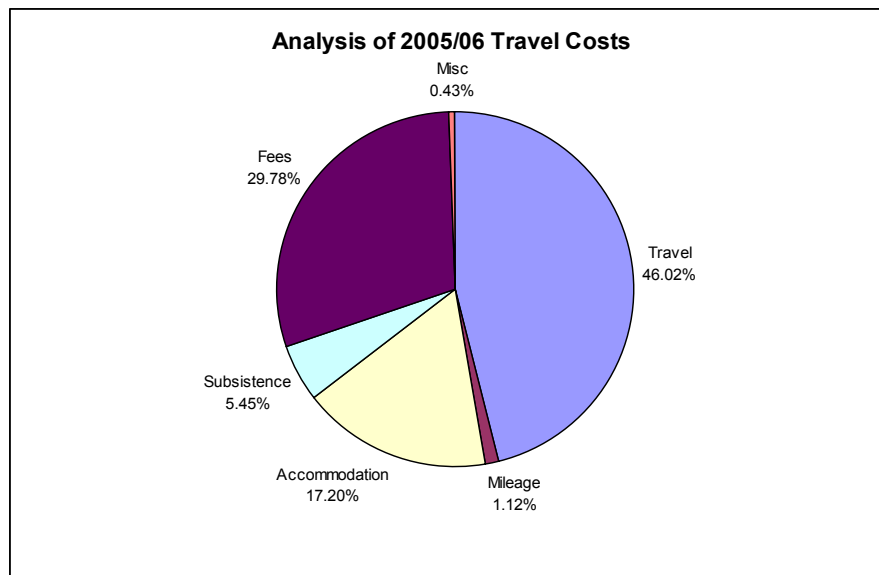
3.22 When we look at the cost of travel per trip then we find that there are less pronounced variations around the average cost per trip, with most departments being in and around the average. The average cost of travel outside Northern Ireland per trip in 2005/06 was £423. This figure fell to £419 in 2006/07.



3.23 The pie charts below show the cost of travel in 2005/06 & 2006/07 broken down by the various types of costs incurred

- Travel (e.g. airfares, train fares etc.)
- Mileage
- Accommodation
- Subsistence
- Course Fees
- Miscellaneous

These charts highlight that in both 2005/06 and 2006/07, the majority of travel costs were incurred in travel costs, course fees and accommodation costs, with only minimal amounts spent on mileage, subsistence and miscellaneous expenses.



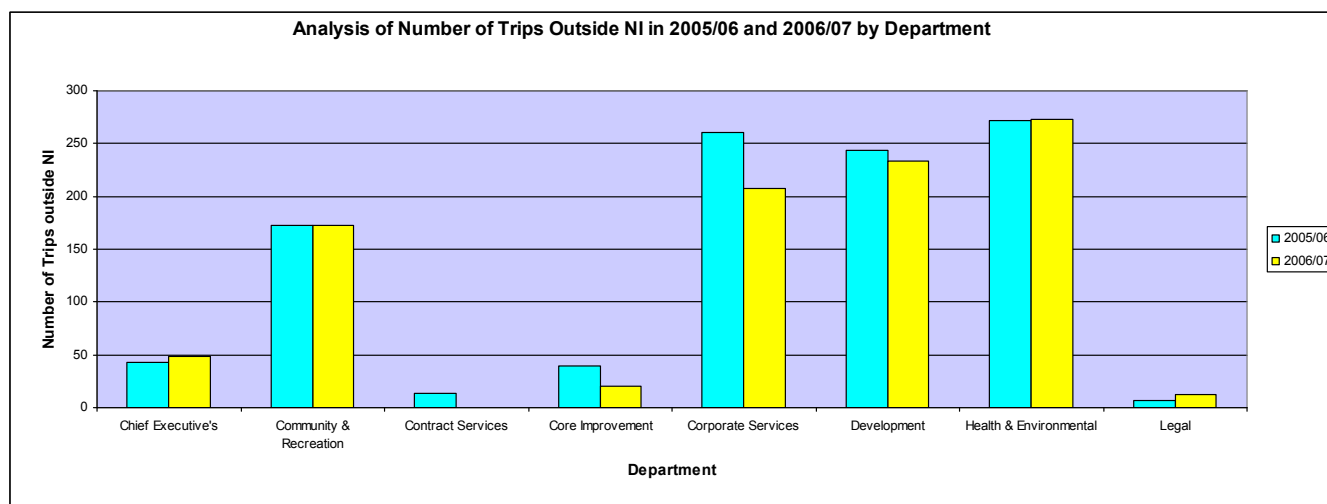
3.24 The main points arising from our analysis of costs can be summarised in the following points:

- Staff travel costs represent a minimal amount of total expenditure in Belfast City Council (approx 0.3%).
- Staff travel costs represent only a minimal amount of District Rates Income (approx 0.4%)
- Total costs of travel reduced in 2006/07 by approximately 9%. In order for this analysis to be meaningful, we would need to study costs of travel over a longer period to see if this trend continued. As we will see in the *Analysis of Numbers of Trips* section below, the fall in costs can largely be attributed to a fall in the numbers of trips undertaken in the second year.
- Cost comparisons between departments can be misleading without further analysis. The reasons for staff undertaking trips may vary widely from department to department e.g. 1

or 2 members of staff moving a large animal to Belfast Zoo cannot be easily compared to staff from another department attending a course, which in turn is not easily comparable to a number of staff attending a study visit in a major European city. Cost comparisons are also made difficult by the availability of different kinds of courses. For example, while some financial type courses are widely available throughout Great Britain & Ireland, other departments may find it necessary to travel further afield and at greater cost to meet their development needs. Further, cost comparisons between departments may be made more difficult as a result of the impact of corporate restructures, where some services are moved from one department to another.

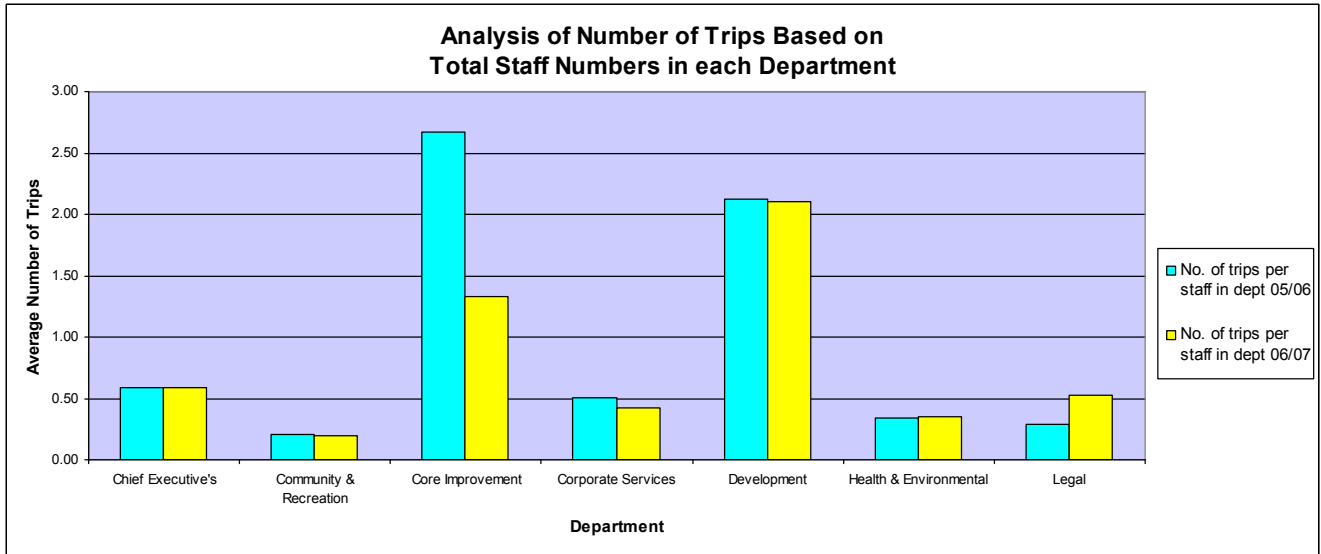
**Analysis of Numbers of Trips**

3.25 The chart below illustrates the number of trips outside Northern Ireland in 2005/06 & 2006/07

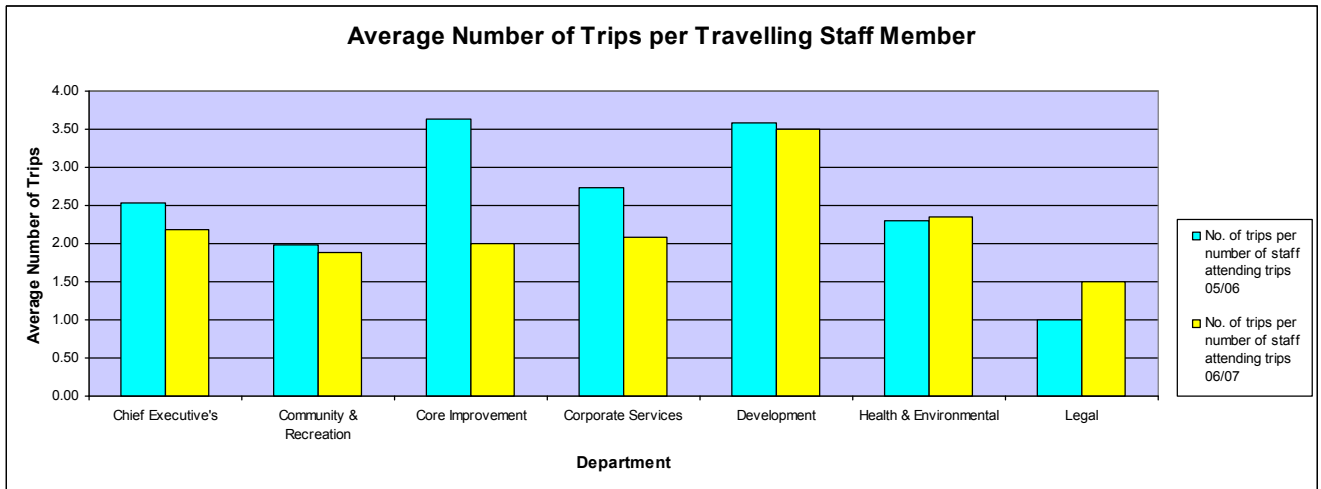


3.26 This chart shows similarity to the cost information presented at 3.16 above. It shows that the Community & Recreation, Corporate Services, Development and Health & Environmental Departments have gone on most travel and trips. As previously explained with the cost information, this is may be due to the fact that these are the biggest departments in the Council in terms of actual staff numbers. Analysing the number of trips undertaken by total staff numbers and by staff numbers attending trips shows similar trends to those identified with the cost information.

3.27 Analysis of the number of trips based on total staff numbers in each department highlights that both Core Improvement and Development are significantly above average in terms of the number of trips per staff member. However, as with the cost information, we need to consider this in light of the kinds of work these departments do and the types of events they need to attend and the locations of these events.

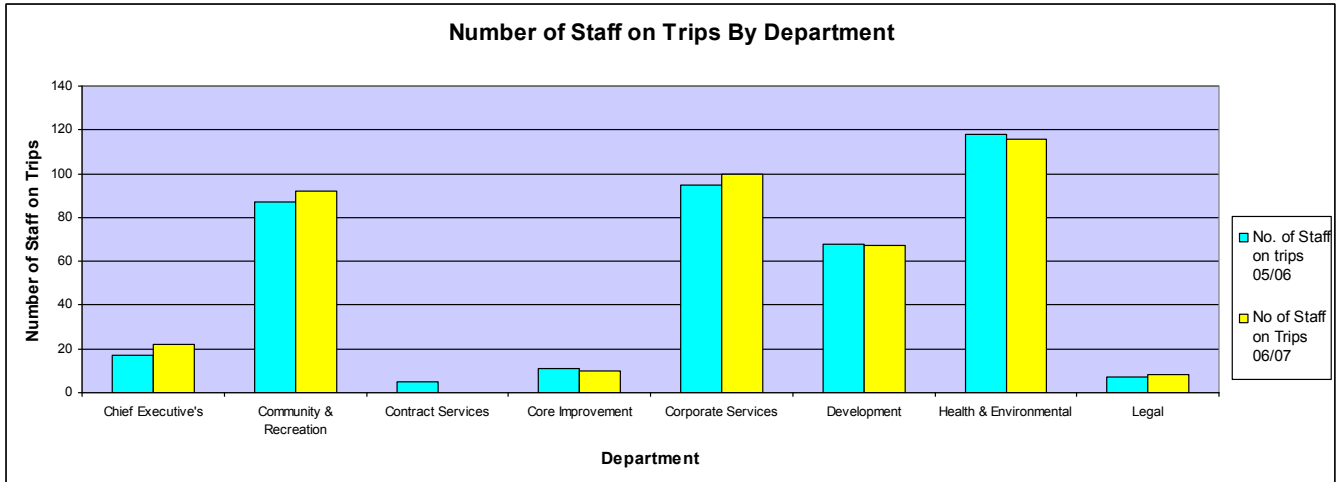


3.28 Analysis of the average number of trips per “travelling staff member” in each department again shows relatively little variation around the average. In 2005/06 the average was 2.6 trips while this figure fell to 2.3 trips in 2006/07. Development department stands out as the department where travelling staff members go on most trips, but as explained at 3.19 above, the nature of the job for many of these staff involves travel.



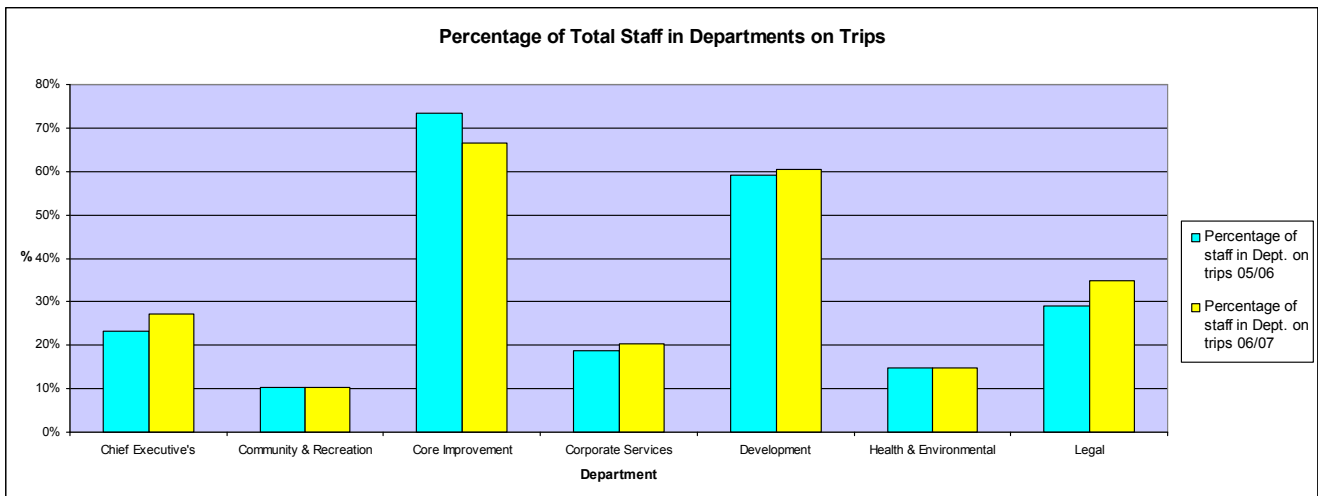
**Analysis of Numbers of Staff on Trips**

3.29 The total numbers of staff on trips outside Northern Ireland in 2005/06 & 2006/07 are highlighted in the chart below:



3.30 As with the analysis on costs and numbers of trips, we can see from this chart that the numbers of staff on trips are highest in the departments where there are most staff.

3.31 The percentage of total staff in each department attending trips is highlighted in the chart below. The average percentage of BCC staff attending trips over the years 2005/06 and 2006/07 was 17%. As we can see, the percentage of staff in each department attending trips in both Core Improvement and Development are significantly higher than average. Once again this can be explained by the fact that the work of a significant percentage of the officers in these departments requires travel.





3.32 The Nolan Show on BBC Radio Ulster focused on cases where multiple attendees attended the same course. The table below shows the numbers of events with multiple Belfast City Council attendees.

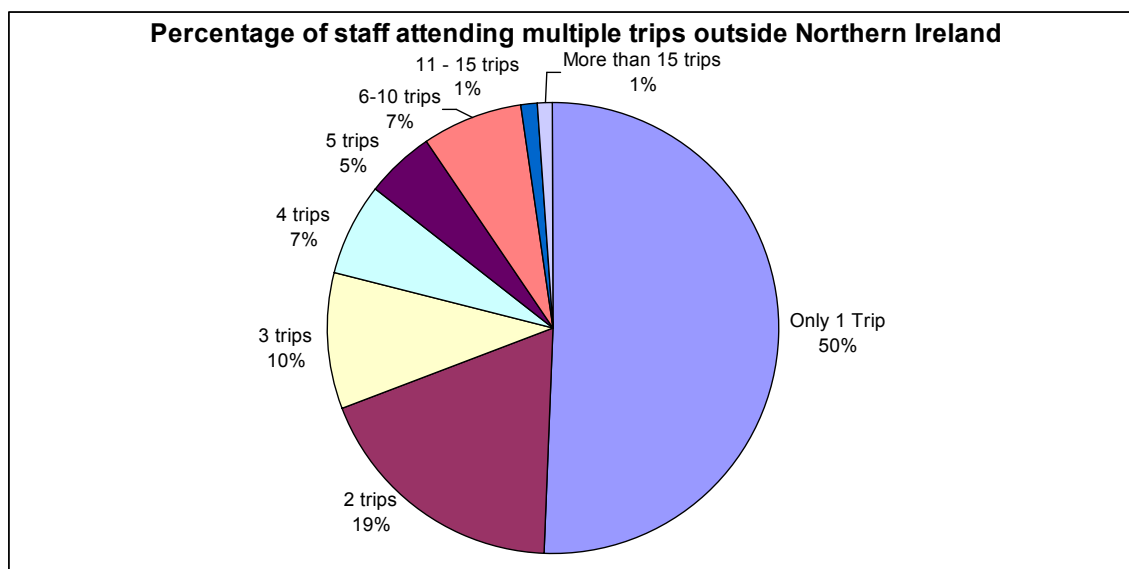
Number of Attendees at events	Number of Events 05/06	Percentage of Events 05/06	Number of Events 06/07	Percentage of Events 06/07
1	421	64.18%	392	64.69%
2	146	22.26%	142	23.43%
3	45	6.86%	33	5.45%
4	29	4.42%	22	3.63%
5	10	1.52%	10	1.65%
6	1	0.15%	2	0.33%
7	2	0.30%	1	0.17%
8	1	0.15%	2	0.33%
9	0	0.00%	1	0.17%
10	1	0.15%	0	0.00%
11	0	0.00%	1	0.17%

3.33 As we can see, approximately 86% of “events” were attended by either one or two BCC staff. Almost 98% of “events” were attended by four or less staff. This highlights the fact that there are relatively few cases where a high number of staff from BCC have attended.

3.34 It is also worth noting that attendance at these “events” was approved by senior management.

3.35 In 2005/06, BCC staff went on a total of 1052 “trips” to attend 656 “events”. For the purposes of this analysis a “trip” is defined as a member of staff undertaking travel outside Northern Ireland. In 2006/07, BCC staff went on a total of 968 “trips to attend 606 “events”.

3.36 The next part of our analysis focuses on officers in the council who attended multiple trips. The results are illustrated in the chart below.



3.37 As we can see, almost 80% of staff who go on trips, go on either 1, 2, or 3 trips per year, with the majority only attending 1 trip per year. Those officers attending more than 3 trips per year tend to be at management, Head of Service or Director level.

**Analysis of Days spent on Travel/Trips**

3.38 The next part of our analysis focused on the Audit Panel’s request for information on days “lost” through staff travel. It may be misleading to refer to days spent on travel as days “lost” for the following reasons:

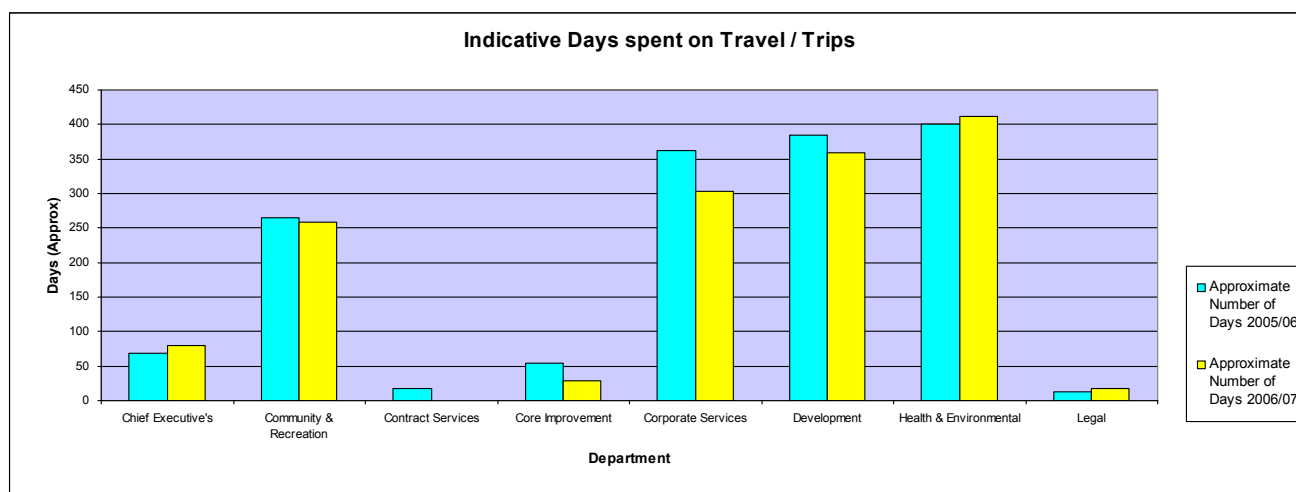
- Staff who travel do so on council business, either to promote Belfast City, to represent the Council at courses and conferences or for operational reasons.
- It is not unusual for staff to travel to courses and conferences in their own personal time
- There are several benefits associated with staff travel which are detailed at section 4.

It is more precise to try to consider days spent on staff travel

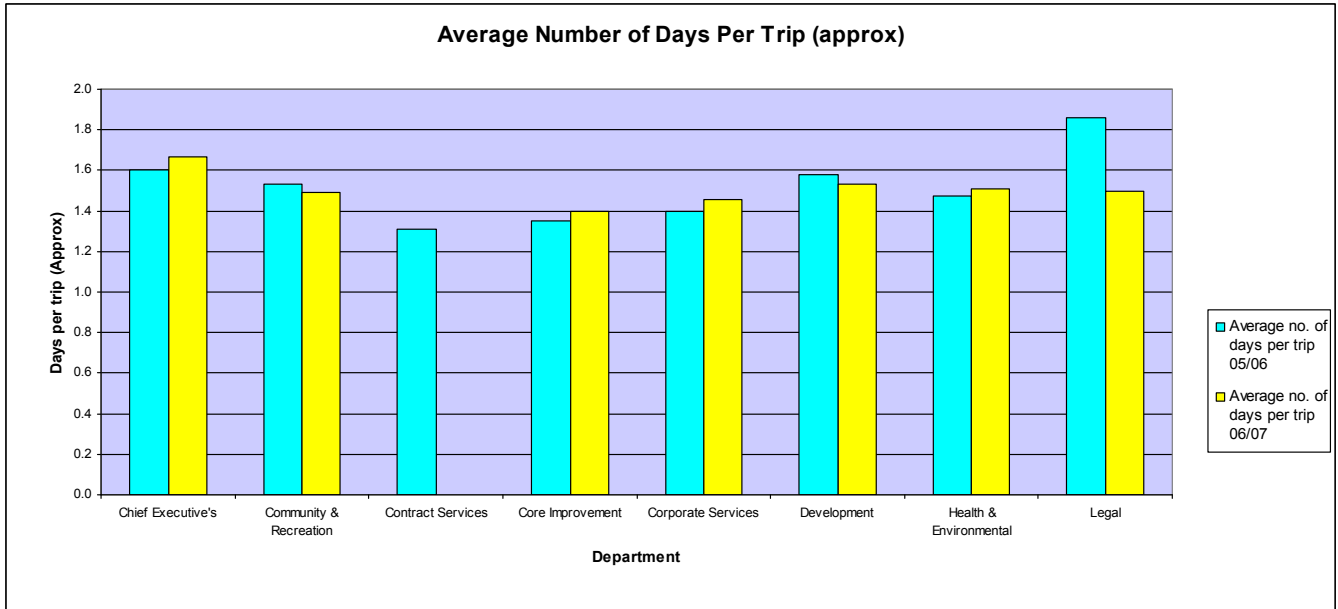
3.39 The current T1 forms and information systems in the council do not capture information on days spent on travel. The travel group set up to examine how processes and procedures could be improved are working towards capturing this information in any new/revised system.

3.40 As the information is not currently available, AGRS has approximated the number of days. For trips with no accommodation cost, we will assume that it has been a 1 day trip. For those trips with accommodation expenses, we will assume that these are on average 2 day trips. This will facilitate an analysis of approximate days spent on travel.

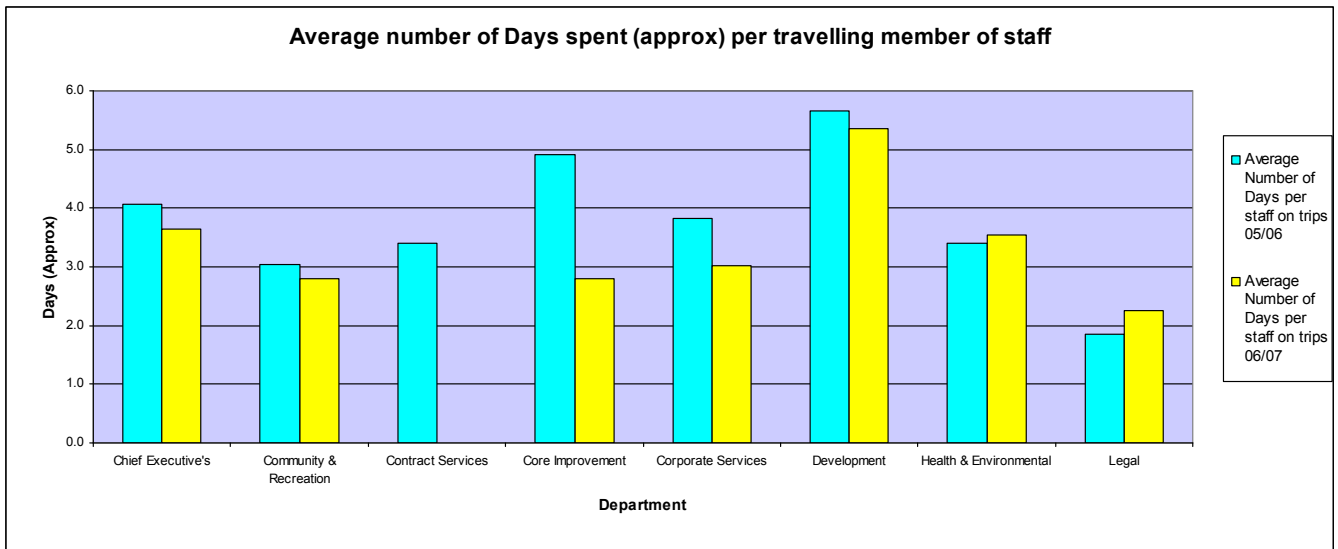
3.41 The approximate numbers of days spent on staff travel outside Northern Ireland in 2005/06 and 2006/07, broken down by department, are displayed in the chart below:



3.42 Not surprisingly, it is the same four departments who stand out in terms of days spent on travel as those who stood out in terms of costs, number of trips, and numbers of travelling staff. The chart below however demonstrates that most departments are around average when we look at the average number of days spent per trip. Obviously these indicative figures are based on the assumption outlined at 3.40.



3.43 If we analyse the average number of days spent on travel per travelling member of staff (below), we can see that Development department is slightly above average. Once again, this may be attributed to the fact that staff in the Development Department travel to Europe more often than staff in other departments as part of their work, and as such will attract a greater number of overnight stays.



**Analysis of Destinations**

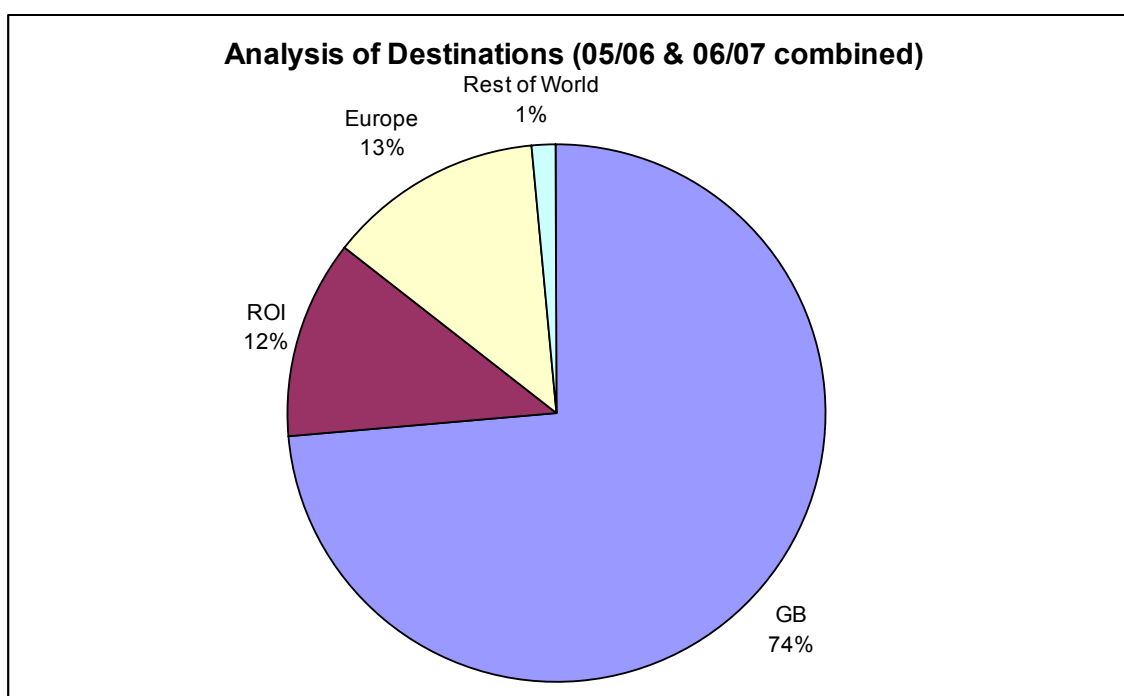
3.44 The tables and chart below show an analysis of the destinations of staff travel outside Northern Ireland in 2005/06 and 2006/07. As we can see from this information, the majority of staff travel destinations were in Great Britain and Ireland. In fact, on average over the period 2005 – 2007, 86% of staff travel was within Great Britain and Ireland, with 13% to Europe and 1% to the rest of the world.

2005/06

Department	GB	ROI	Europe	Rest of World
Chief Executives	30	7	5	1
Community & Recreation	116	36	20	1
Contract Services	7	5	1	0
Core Improvement	36	4	0	0
Corporate Services	216	40	4	0
Development	134	26	76	8
Health & Environmental	237	17	18	0
Legal	3	4	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>10</b>

2006/07

Department	GB	ROI	Europe	Rest of World
Chief Executives	33	10	5	0
Community & Recreation	121	22	24	6
Core Improvement	18	0	1	1
Corporate Services	166	33	9	0
Development	117	25	83	9
Health & Environmental	240	11	22	0
Legal	12	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>707</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>16</b>

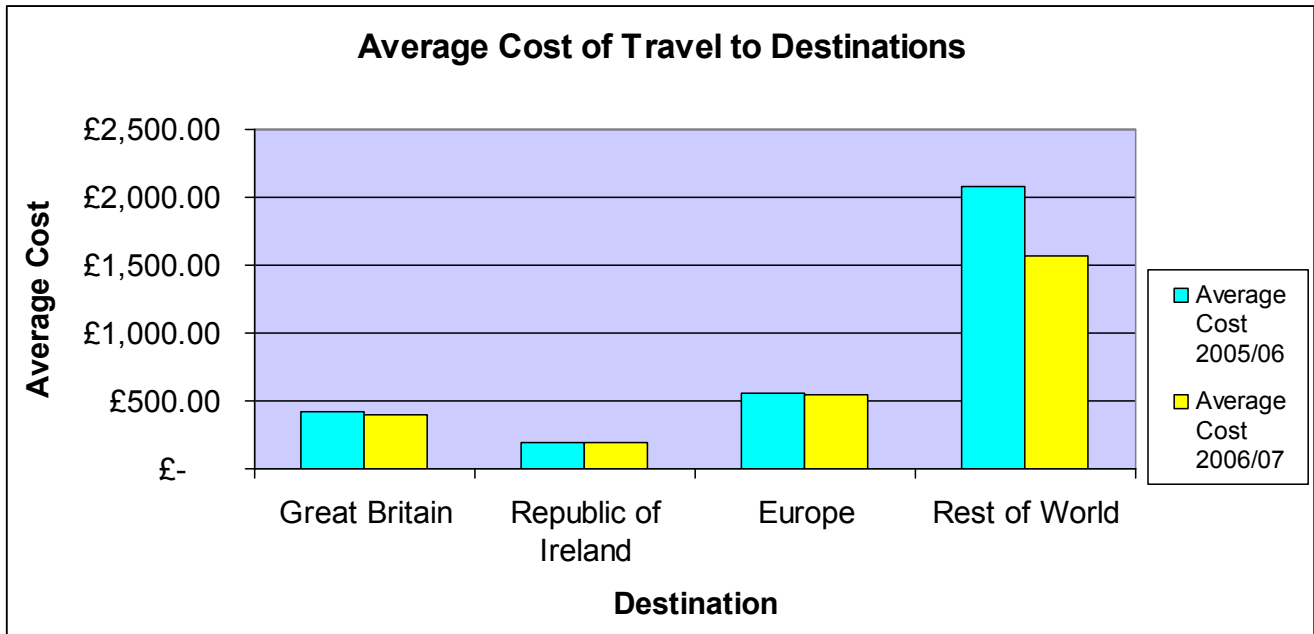


3.45 Over the period, BCC staff have visited 35 different countries. Numbers of trips to these destinations are included in the table below:

<b>Destination</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>Destination</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>
Australia	0	1	Austria	8	2
Belgium	23	15	Canada	1	1
China	0	1	Cyprus	0	1
Czech Republic	0	2	Denmark	0	3
England	692	637	Estonia	0	4
Finland	4	1	France	14	22
Germany	6	16	Guernsey	4	0
Hungary	1	2	Ireland	139	101
Isle of Man	1	0	Italy	8	12
Japan	0	2	Latvia	1	0
Lithuania	4	2	Luxembourg	0	1
Malta	4	0	Netherlands	20	16
Norway	0	2	Poland	1	5
Portugal	2	2	Scandanavia	0	5
Scotland	51	54	Spain	10	22
Sweden	15	9	Switzerland	1	0
Turkey	1	1	UAE	0	1
USA	9	10	Various European Cities	1	0
Wales	31	15			
<b>Total</b>	<b>1052</b>	<b>968</b>			

3.46 As before, it is difficult to analyse destinations of staff travel in isolation. Any analysis of destinations and indeed of costs, numbers of trips, numbers of staff on trips etc needs to be analysed in conjunction with the reasons for the trips and bearing in mind the types of work the various departments in the council undertake.

3.47 The chart below shows the average cost of travel to each of the destination areas during 2005/06 and 2006/07. The average cost of travel to Europe is £549 as compared to the average cost of travel within Great Britain (£412) and Ireland (£195). Not surprisingly, average cost of travel to the rest of the world (£1,765) is more expensive.



## 4.0 Benefits & Risks

### **Potential Benefits of Staff Travel**

- 4.1 One of the issues highlighted from this analysis is that the Council's processes for capturing the benefits of staff travel need to be more robust. At present, our information systems do not capture information on the benefits of each instance of staff travel. The proposed new T1 form, currently being devised by the Travel Task Force and the related development of a database will capture this information, both as part of the business case to be prepared by staff seeking approval for travel, and also as part of the post event evaluation.
- 4.2 One of the areas which is difficult to assess on the basis of information available corporately, is the impact of travel. As the information is not currently captured by BCC's information systems, AGRS has prepared a list of perceived benefits of staff travel:
- Staff attending courses, conferences or study visits can gain access to a skill set which they previously didn't have and were unable to find within Northern Ireland.
  - Improved skills gained at training courses, conferences or study visits can be used to help staff to do their job better and more efficiently, thus improving the services offered by the council.
  - In some cases staff who acquire improved skills from courses, conferences or study visits can then transfer these skills to other staff in the council. In so doing, this may reduce the need for other staff to attend similar events.
  - Study visits to other Councils, particularly similar sized councils in Great Britain, help BCC staff to identify "best practice", which in turn may help BCC staff to improve the services they provide.
  - Comparison with similar sized local authorities is generally only possible in Great Britain.
  - Staff travelling outside Northern Ireland in order to promote Belfast help to bring investment and tourism to the city
  - Attendance at events can be used by staff as a networking opportunity which can give staff further access to skills outside the council

### **Potential Risks Associated with Staff Travel**

- 4.3 AGRS has compiled a list of perceived risks associated with staff travel
- The main risk to the council associated with staff travel revolves around damage to the council's reputation. The main way in which this risk could materialise is if the

Council is unable to demonstrate value for money and ensure that the benefits of staff travel are in evidence and well understood by senior officers and members alike. The proposed improvement in the travel policy and procedures will help to address this issue, as would periodic analyses/reports on the impact of staff travel.

- There may be a risk of excessive staff travel if controls are not effectively applied. (Note: AGRS did not undertake an evaluation of controls in place as part of this analysis and as such cannot express an opinion as to whether controls are being effectively applied across the Council. AGRS will perform an assurance review of staff travel when the new processes and procedures have been introduced and have been operational for a reasonable period e.g. 6 months).
- There is an inherent risk in travel to courses and conferences that the quality of these may be poor. This is largely outside the control of the council but is managed by officers researching courses and conferences before booking and ensuring that they evaluate events attended and this information is used to inform the applications of other officers.

4.4 The risks stated in paragraph 4.3 above are risks related to staff travel. However, it should also be noted that there is a risk associated with being too restrictive on staff travel, thereby stopping the council from accruing the benefits of staff travel. For example if ISB were procuring a system and this necessitated travel outside Northern Ireland to view a demonstration, it may be prudent to send more than 1 member of staff to ensure that the full range of relevant technical skills are brought to bear when viewing the product and assessing the technical implications for BCC's network.



## 5.0 Conclusions / Recommendations

### **Conclusions**

- 5.1 Staff travel on average represented approximately 0.3% of total BCC expenditure in 2005/06 & 2006/07.
- 5.2 Comparison of staff travel between departments is difficult for a number of reasons, highlighted at paragraph 3.24 above.
- 5.3 Belfast City Council may gain many benefits from staff travel but there are also inherent risks related to staff travel which should be borne in mind. These are detailed in section 4 above.
- 5.4 There is scope for improving the policy and controls around staff travel in Belfast City Council. AGRS is providing input into this process through representation on the Travel Task Force, set up to examine how existing processes and procedures could be improved.
- 5.5 Part of the work of the Travel Task Force includes the development of a new database to better capture information on staff travel. The data captured in the new database should facilitate similar analysis to that presented in this report being provided to management and members alike in the future. Indeed, given the range of information being captured in the new database, it may be possible to generate even further analysis than that presented in this report.

### **Recommendations**

- 5.6 There is a need for revised policies and procedures to be documented, approved, communicated to all staff and reinforced by management. This process is underway at present.
- 5.7 There is a need for periodic evaluation of and reporting on the impact / benefits of staff travel.
- 5.8 There is a need for periodic reviews to be performed to assess the levels of compliance with the policy and procedures
- 5.9 Staff travel may be published alongside details of Members' Travel as part of the Council's Publication Scheme.