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Date: 14 July 2025

Dear Member

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WEDNESDAY, 16 JULY 2025

Please find enclosed, for consideration at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on Wednesday, 16 July 2025, the report for item C3 that was unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda Item No

C3 Progress of the Kent Department of Local Government Efficiency (Pages 1 - 6)

Yours sincerely

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel

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From: Matthew Fraser Moat, Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency
To: Scrutiny Committee – 16th July 2025
Subject: Progress of the Kent Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE)

Status: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

- a. This report is prepared to provide an introduction to the work of the Kent DOLGE and the priorities of the administration to seek efficiencies and improvements to provide value for money for Kent residents.
- b. The report follows from comments made by the Leader of the Council in her speech to County Council on 10 July 2025 which set out some of the initial findings and work of the DOLGE. The report also seeks to address the issues raised by way of questions by Members of the Committee.
- c. As the Leader made clear to full Council, it is understood and planned that there will be decision-making in accordance with the Council's governance which will be brought forward to Members in the coming months as the project moves forward.

2. Overview of the Kent DOLGE

- a. Members of the Scrutiny Committee have asked a number of questions as to what the Kent DOLGE is and how it is intended to operate.
- b. Matthew Fraser Moat is the Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency who has been tasked by the Leader with the Cabinet responsibility for working across all Cabinet portfolios to find efficiencies.
- c. Mr Fraser Moat is supported by two Deputy Cabinet Members:
 - Christopher Hespe - Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Cross-Cabinet Activity
 - Paul Chamberlain - Deputy Cabinet Member for Corporate and Traded Services
- d. The Kent DOLGE team has been tasked by the Leader to look at KCC policies, procedures and processes with the specific aim of increasing value for money when providing services for the benefit of Kent residents.
- e. It is important to clarify that the similarly named DOGE project at Reform Head Office is a separate initiative. Similarly, statements provided other than by elected

Members within the administration were addressed as part of the County Council Questions on 10 July 2025.

- f. As the Leader explained to County Council on 10 July 2025, the Cabinet has been working with the DOLGE team to identify areas where savings can be made. The initial phase of work has identified over £40million of potential savings which can be considered as part of the important work necessary to ensure that the Council remains able to operate within its budget and continue to provide the services that residents value most and those required to be delivered by law.
- g. The program of activity undertaken by the DOLGE will be reflected both in the forthcoming strategic statement and in key decisions that the administration will take.
- h. The DOLGE programme is directed, designed and delivered by elected Members of the administration and their deputy Cabinet Members under the leadership of the Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency, who in turn reports to and takes direction from the Leader and Deputy Leader.
- i. Information has been provided to the Kent DOLGE team in accordance with the usual provisions of information sharing to elected Members and training has been provided to Cabinet and Deputy Cabinet Members who both understand and have been advised on the basis of information sharing. The information has been provided and used exclusively to develop policy proposals to inform and identify opportunities for savings such as those discussed in outline form at County Council.
- j. To inform the work of the Kent DOLGE, information and briefings have been provided by officers to help the team understand the way in which the Council operates so that any decisions around changes are taken in an informed way. At the same time, the DOLGE team is exploring all of the options in relation to the decisions and future activities that could help provide the best possible value and outcomes for Kent residents.
- k. Members of the DOLGE team, in addition to a range of briefings have particularly concentrated on reviewing the financial accounts, management accounts and budgets of the council; the way in which the Council structures itself and uses commissioned services and the contracts that underpin this; IT systems and infrastructure; the way in which the Council structures its financial coding and understanding the existing arrangements for the management of assets.
- l. This work has sat alongside an ongoing review of a range of service activity which has been mentioned in Council meetings during this cycle and includes areas such as Home to School Transport and the future of buildings on the Maidstone campus.
- m. Members of the Committee have asked whether and how they can be provided with the information reviewed. Further to paragraph (i) above, the information has been provided with clear guidance around not being shared onwards, so officers will be asked to support this request.
- n. As one of the questions from the Committee anticipates, the General Counsel can provide Members with an update in exempt session at the meeting in relation to the legal advice sought and provided. However, it is important to state (albeit obviously and again consistently with what was said by the Leader at County Council) that the

administration understands and is committed to ensuring the Council complies with its legal obligations in the delivery of this and other activity.

- o. Both KCC and Reform UK's DOGE have also confirmed that they are fully committed to complying with their legal obligations and will ensure GDPR compliance in any data processing. The Cabinet Member can also personally confirm to the Committee that all information that has been supplied to him has been treated as confidential and also as per the member's code of conduct.
- p. The work of the Kent DOLGE has started at pace over the past six weeks and in that time the team are pleased to advise the Committee that KCC Officers have responded appropriately and professionally to the requests made. The DOLGE project is designed to help all the residents of Kent and if individual Members have ideas or thoughts, then the Kent DOLGE team would be delighted to meet with them to discuss further, with a particular focus on items that will make a material difference to the Council's budget and to Kent residents.

3. Reform UK DOGE

- a. Members of the Committee have asked a number of questions about the Reform UK DOGE. The Leader confirmed in her speech that we have had the support of the DOGE team who have reviewed a range of data including spending information and purchase card information which is on the Council's website. Subject to governance, legal compliance and need, the administration will utilise support where it deems necessary and appropriate from the Reform UK DOGE to make savings that benefit Kent residents.
- b. Appended to this report is a reply from Reform Head Office to some of the questions from the Committee about announcements not made by elected Members at KCC.

4. Conclusion

Further details will be provided through the formal governance of the Council and the Cabinet Member is happy to keep the Committee updated on a regular basis as the programme progresses.

5. Recommendation

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to NOTE the progress of the Kent Department of Local Government Efficiency.

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APPENDIX (as supplied by Reform Head Office)

TV Licences

Zia's tweet:

Kent County Council is using taxpayer money to pay for TV licenses for asylum seekers.

Remember that next time you are asked to pay for yours.

- What Zia uncovered here is a national scandal.
- Whilst we understand that this money has come from the Home Office and is distributed through KCC, we firmly believe this is a waste of taxpayer's money.
- Of course, we will follow our legal obligations on this matter, but we would hope that an incoming national Reform UK government would put an end to this waste of money.

£450k KCC audit

Zia's tweet:

If you're furious about the way Kent County Council are spending your money, take solace in the fact that their 'external auditors' charged the taxpayer £450k for their services.

They'll charge even more this year.

What a racket.

- This is exactly what the DOGE programme is for. Identifying and querying potential waste and seeing where efficiencies can be found.
- In this case, after Zia queried the spend it was revealed that it was nuanced.
- Such large sums of money should always be questioned.
- I'm glad this was brought to our attention and we are now armed with the full facts.

£350m recruitment services

Zia's tweet:

Wow. Kent County Council tendered a contract for recruitment services for £350 million over 4 years.

That's £87.5 million per year of taxpayer money being spent on "advertising vacancies" and "interviewing" people.

That's a staggering 22% of their annual payroll.

What a racket

- Zia never claimed this was discovered by DOGE, but used this as an example of concerning spending.
- This is exactly what the DOGE programme is for. Identifying and querying potential waste and seeing where efficiencies can be found.
- In this case, after Zia queried the spend it was revealed that it was nuanced.
- Such large sums of money should always be questioned.
- We are glad this was brought to our attention, and we are now armed with the full facts.

Fraud allegations

Zia's tweet:

Kent Council has already admitted to £2.8 million of confirmed fraud last year alone.

They paid £63,000 of taxpayers' money to a care provider for someone who had already died.

And that's just the start.

£190k stolen on a council card

£150k claimed through fake grants

£30k paid to care providers fraudulently.

Council tax fraud, procurement scams, blue badge abuse

It's a broken system with no grip on public money. How much more taxpayer money is being stolen? How deep does it go?

- This is an unacceptable amount of money to lose through fraud. We are grateful to Zia for uncovering this.
- We are also grateful to the council staff for their reassurances that much of this money has been recouped in one form or another.
- Taxpayers expect their money to be handled with the utmost care, and under this administration we will clamp down on money lost through fraud and do everything in our power to recover what has already been lost.