
From: Matthew Fraser Moat – Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency

To: Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee – 13 November 2025

Subject: Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) – Strategy, Remit, Governance & Decision-Making Update

Decision no: N/A

Key Decision: No

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: Not Applicable

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Is the decision eligible for call-in? N/A - not key decision

Summary: This paper outlines the strategy, remit, governance, and decision-making mechanisms for Kent County Council's Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) and sets out the proposed way forward for consideration by the members of the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee.

Recommendation(s): The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to **DISCUSS** this update report and **NOTE** the direction of travel.

1. Introduction

1.1 Kent County Council's Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) was established by the Leader in May 2025. Following discussions at Scrutiny Committee, this paper formally sets out the strategic intent, remit, governance, and decision-making arrangements for the programme, so this is understood by residents, Members, staff, and other stakeholders.

1.2 DOLGE's strategy seeks to identify efficiencies and savings opportunities to ensure that value for money is provided to Kent residents. The intention of the programme is to provide a relentless focus on controlling costs and ensuring

opportunities for efficiency are prioritised, resourced, and delivered. Dedicating political and officer capacity to the opportunities most capable of impacting the Council's budget in an objective, commercial, and cost-conscious way will help contribute to the financial challenge that the Council and sector generally faces.

1.3 It is also acknowledged that much good work continues throughout the whole authority to identify and deliver savings opportunities as part of the budget and spending controls. DOLGE has been working and will continue to work closely with both Members and Officers to identify areas for investigation, associated opportunities to realise efficiencies, develop business cases, and make recommendations to the respective Cabinet portfolio holders in their capacity as decision makers. The intention is to provide a dedicated engine to support those efficiency projects and ensure the opportunities are better realised.

1.4 The overarching ambition of DOLGE is to ensure that the people of Kent receive quality and cost-effective services which align with the priorities of the proposed new Council Strategic Statement.

1.5 A relentless focus on efficiency is a good thing. Politically and operationally, this is about the whole organisation delivering the services that are required providing exceptional value to the residents of Kent. It is about finding out opportunities where things could be done differently or better, with a particular focus on finding savings. For Members and Officers alike, that is not about retaining or criticising the past, it is about looking at opportunities that can improve the future.

1.6 Given the importance and significance of this activity to the County Council and Kent residents the governance and reporting arrangements must be clear. Whilst the immediate work of DOLGE does not constitute a key decision, recommendations made may result in key decisions being taken by individual Cabinet Members or full Cabinet moving forward. DOLGE should be regarded as a driver of change for the organisation who will support the improvement of the financial position.

1.7 The Scrutiny Committee received a report on 16th July 2025 updating on DOLGE progress and it was clarified that the similarly named DOGE project at Reform Head Office is a separate initiative. This was a valuable discussion, and it was helpful to update on and clarify the remit of DOLGE to Members at early stage.

2. Key Considerations

2.1 The financial position of Kent County Council remains extremely challenging year on year given the increased demand levels and costs for services. Without a stronger and additional focus on the identification and delivery of efficiencies and savings it is likely that the existing relative position will continue to worsen.

2.2 A focused and objective view of the opportunity areas and challenges for the whole organisation is needed from a Member perspective, so decision makers have all available information to evaluate options and make the best value for money decisions for the county. The importance of professional and specialist

Officer advice continues to be highly regarded and will be carefully considered as DOLGE moves through the ongoing programme of work and any specific deep dive areas.

2.3 Working closely with Officers, DOLGE will continue to provide advice to Members and form recommendations to support the delivery of savings, future cost avoidance, different ways of doing things, and income generation. This type of dedicated approach is essential to ensure that Kent County Council's financial position can positively improve.

2.4 It is important that Kent County Council can leave a fit for purpose financial legacy and delivery model(s) for any newly shaped local authority structure that could be created through Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), and the work of DOLGE will support the achievement of this. Whilst the exact LGR and business case detail continues to be worked through, KCC must continue to play its part to ensure that any new local government structure in Kent has a smooth transition and there must be minimal disruption to Kent residents.

3. Background

3.1 KCC's Department of Local Government Efficiency was formed as a new portfolio when the new Administration was appointed in May 2025. A Cabinet Member is in place who is supported by two Deputy Cabinet Members (Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance & Cross-Cabinet Activity and Deputy Cabinet Member for Corporate and Traded Services) to deliver the required activity.

3.2 The DOLGE team are researching opportunity areas across the organisation and sharing outputs with Cabinet Members who are then accountable for the development and decisions where specific proposals for their portfolios to realise efficiencies or savings can be taken forward. The vastness and the complexity of the organisation and its remit is acknowledged and therefore the DOLGE team are mindful that a carefully planned approach is required.

3.3 The individual Cabinet Members are responsible for exploring recommendations in detail and addressing these with Corporate Directors and services. Dependent on the viability of proposals Cabinet Members may seek to progress key decisions to secure a policy change, service efficiency, saving, or work with Corporate Directors to progress a specific operational activity in instances where the key decision threshold is not met. The County Council's governance and due diligence requirements will be adhered to and the implications of any proposed decisions thoroughly considered. The distinction between the role of Members and Officers will continue to be regarded, and DOLGE activities will continue to be directed, designed, and delivered by elected Members of the administration.

3.4 DOLGE will challenge all budgetary spend to ensure expenditure is necessary and provides value for money for Kent's residents. This will support the continued adherence to the existing spending controls which were introduced by KCC's Corporate Management Team.

The work of the DOLGE team so far has focussed on several areas including:

- Achieving immediate savings
- Future cost avoidance
- Identification of areas for deep investigation
- Doing things differently (especially in regards to contracts and procurement)

3.5 Productive conversations have taken place with Officers on topics such as the procurement process and training on commercialisation in contracts; discussions continue in multiple different areas. The DOLGE team wish to sustain this positive dialogue as a whole organisation approach is required.

3.6 The DOLGE team continue to develop a register of areas of exploration and plan to update members of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on a bi-annual basis about the work underway.

3.7 The initial work of DOLGE over the last six months has very much been exploratory throughout the organisation and as recommendations are considered and accepted, they will be monetarised, so the financial impact and benefits of this activity are clear. It is recognised and accepted that some recommendations may be discounted by Cabinet Members, but the appetite to progress different options will nevertheless still be tested.

3.8 The new strategic statement for KCC will provide DOLGE with a firm foundation to ensure that activities undertaken are underpinned by the priorities and ambitions of the organisation. 'Reforming Kent 2025-28' will guide and prioritise the areas of exploration.

3.9 DOLGE are ambitious and are keen to see positive shifts within the organisation's financial position and explore how things can be done more efficiently and differently to achieve positive change for the county's residents. A meaningful difference must be seen and felt.

3.10 DOLGE wish to evaluate how systems and technology can best support the County Council's activities and support the ambition to realise further savings and efficiencies to deliver best value for money for Kent. Data will also be used as an evidence base to support the recommendations made.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

4.1 DOLGE will have an initial specific focus on the delivery of 2025/26 in-year savings but also, the medium-term savings for 2026/27 and beyond to ensure a planned and sustainable approach. Given the immediate and significant financial challenge faced, there is little option than to place further attention on cost-saving opportunities across the authority and DOLGE will be the vehicle by which the required focus will be delivered. The Leader has appointed a Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency to specifically drive forward and co-ordinate this activity.

4.2 The risk of not progressing a targeted approach to the identification of efficiencies and savings would have a detrimental impact on Kent County Council's financial resilience and the ability to sustain the delivery of quality services to Kent residents

that provide value for money and respond to statutory duties. DOLGE will support cross portfolio thinking so strategies are not developed in a siloed way, and any replication is identified and removed as appropriate. The right links must be made and maximised across the whole organisation.

4.3 All are requested to work together to deliver the DOLGE strategy, without this connectivity there is a risk that opportunities for positive change will be missed or delayed. It is hoped that new thinking, different perspectives, and constructive challenge will be welcomed by all.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 As a priority, the DOLGE team are working with services and Cabinet Members to identify and develop savings that will be used to balance the 2026/27 budget and also to support the delivery of the in-year savings profile. Given the financial position of Adult Social Care & Health, it is recognised that there must be a specific focus in this area and discussions with the relevant Cabinet Members and senior managers continue to ensure a shared understanding of the current situation.

6. Legal implications

6.1 Any proposals will be subject to appropriate legal advice to manage risk and ensure legal compliance. The programme recognises the existing statutory framework that the Council operates in and will explore opportunities in all areas where the Council is providing services in excess of that statutory minimum. The programme will use legal advice to understand and underpin opportunities for transformation in all areas of the Council, including statutory services.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 As and when Cabinet Members consider and subsequently progress recommendations made by the KCC Department of Local Government Efficiency, Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) will be conducted on a subject-by-subject basis and appended to the required committee reports for consideration by Members.

8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 The DOLGE Team will review only anonymised data in adherence with Data Protection principles. Any review activity will be undertaken with supporting guidance and advice from appropriate Officers.

8.2 Information will continue to be 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.

9. Other corporate implications

9.1 This activity will touch upon most aspects of the County Council's work, and the specialist and professional advice of Officers will be required to assess and validate the feasibility of DOLGE's recommendations. It is envisaged at this stage that legal, financial, and commercial and procurement support will specifically be required as options are explored and evaluated, but all directorates will also be engaged in and requested to support this activity.

10. Governance

10.1 The importance of cross-party political oversight of the financial position is acknowledged and for this reason, the regular monitoring reporting will continue, and the process will be unchanged. The Cabinet Member of Local Government Efficiency also recommends providing bi-annual progress updates to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.

10.2 DOLGE will report to appropriate Cabinet Committees in conjunction with the relevant Cabinet Member(s) on specific proposals which necessitate policy change or wider support.

10.3 Full Council will consider any organisational cultural shift issues from a political perspective that affect potential savings.

10.4 DOLGE will lead cross-party meetings of the Contract Review Group to review two significant contracts every six weeks.

10.5 Each Cabinet Member will appropriately progress any proposed key decisions in line with their functions and responsibilities as set out in KCC's Constitution.

10.6 Officers will continue to deliver the operational response in line with the Schemes of Delegation.

11. Conclusions

11.1 There must now be a specific and further emphasis on the identification of efficiencies and savings opportunities to guarantee that value for money is provided to Kent residents. This has never been so important given the increasing pressures placed on the authority and the continued challenging financial position. The whole organisation is requested to work together with DOLGE to deliver the required change, and support is welcomed to maximise opportunities and further innovate services.

11.2 DOLGE will advise and make recommendations to KCC's Cabinet Members in their capacity as the decision makers for each portfolio. Progress and proposed key decisions will be reported and considered through the authority's existing governance channels with the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee receiving bi-annual overarching updates.

11.3 'Reforming Kent 2025-28' will support and underpin the prioritisation of the areas which will be explored by the DOLGE team. The delivery of in-year savings and the balancing of the 2026/27 will also be a key area of focus.

Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to **DISCUSS** this update report and **NOTE** the direction of travel.

12. Background Documents

Strategic Statement – Reforming Kent (County Council report 6 November 2025)
[County Council report Strategic Statement.pdf](#)
[Reforming Kent - Draft Statement - Nov 2025.pdf](#)

13. Appendices

Not Applicable

14. Contact details

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