
From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader
Chris Hespe, Cabinet Member, Local Government Efficiency and Reorganisation

To: Cabinet – 22 July 2026

Subject: DOLGE Draft Strategy

Decision no: 26/00031

Key Decision : Yes – affects more than 2 electoral divisions

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee – 2 July 2026

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: All - Countywide

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: This report presents the draft strategy for DOLGE. The ‘Department for Local Government Efficiency’ was established by the Administration in May 2025. The draft strategy is appended to this report. This report provides the context and rationale for DOLGE moving into its second phase in which it will be named ‘Delivery of Local Government Efficiency’, presents the components of the strategy and outlines the future collaborative nature of the DOLGE effort.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to:

- (a) **APPROVE** and **ADOPT** the Delivery of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) Strategy
 - (b) **DELEGATE** authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency and Reorganisation, to make non-substantive revisions and updates to the strategy as appropriate during its lifetime
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1. Introduction

1.1 The Department for Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) was created by the Leader of KCC in May 2025 through the establishment of a Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency and the identification of two Deputy Cabinet Members who could assist the effort. DOLGE was established to provide a new pair of eyes on KCCs budget and to seek savings and efficiencies where possible. This would be done through interrogating every line of the Council's budget, which had been set by the previous administration, to ensure that money allocated fit with the new administration's priorities, there was no obvious wasteful spending and, as the year progressed, spend and savings were on track to be delivered.

2. Key Considerations

2.1 The production of a strategy at this time is required in order to stress the required collaborative approach that should be taken across the authority in order to continue to drive efficiencies and value for money. The strategy is written in a such a way as to be a living document, able to be amended moving forward. The recommendations within the strategy have been produced to fit with existing corporate structures and processes as much as possible.

3. Background

3.1 The administration inherited an incredibly challenging financial position from the outgoing Conservative administration. The authority had long-term debt of £732 million, was paying £84,000 in debt interest daily, had a savings and increased income target for 2025/26 of £121 million, had to deal with the previous administrations' overspend of more than £20 million and ballooning spend in Adult Social Care. DOLGE was effective immediately in addressing future cost avoidance; making input into the monitoring of spend and savings; working with the Procurement team and overseeing the production of the authority's first Commercial Strategy; working with Adult Social Care to address overspends; addressing with the Chief Executive the introduction of spending controls authority-wide; supporting the Deputy Leader in debt reduction efforts; identifying savings options as part of the budget-build process; proposing the best value option for Local Government Reorganisation to provide savings for Kent residents, and proposing Committee restructuring to enhance both efficiency and effectiveness.

The Second Phase of DOLGE

3.2 With the Administration now managing its own budget, the DOLGE programme can shift to a more collaborative approach. DOLGE will continue to seek economies and efficiencies, identify savings opportunities, and value for money for Kent residents. However, the priorities for the authority necessitate a dynamic process, with the DOLGE concept being 'owned' by all Cabinet Members, other Members of the administration and staff. Senior staff must be involved. DOLGE is about ensuring the culture of KCC is one where all staff are conscious of all spend and the need to do it carefully, fully cognisant that it is residents' money that they are spending. In this

new phase of DOLGE, seeking efficiency and better spend of taxpayers' money can not be seen as solely the responsibility of a small number of core elected Members, but rather be embedded within the organisation and its staff. Cost-consciousness must become embedded in all Directorates. Innovation and creativity must be allowed and encouraged to flourish, as this will provide the ideas and motivate staff to make best use of resources. In the second phase, the DOLGE effort has to be flexible and adaptable. DOLGE will not be about wielding a chainsaw or a salami-slicer, but about helping the authority to find and implement sensible, pragmatic solutions where efficiency is at the core. The draft strategy reflects this reality.

The Draft Strategy

3.3 The draft strategy for DOLGE has been produced to give clear direction and wider understanding of its function and how it will work moving forward. It provides clarity of purpose for DOLGE as it enters its second phase. The first year of DOLGE entailed a small group of elected Members scrutinising each budget line seeking to find waste or inefficiencies with view to making savings and also providing input into savings options as part of the budget-setting process. However, with the administration now having set its own budget for 2026/27, the work of DOLGE will become a collaborative effort between the administration's Members and officers. The draft strategy has been produced to provide the prioritisation for this work and a framework for the authority's efficiency efforts moving forward.

Strategy Components

3.4 The strategy, which aligns with the Strategic Statement, provides the background to the formation of DOLGE and summarises some of the key successes in its first year; a year in which the authority reduced its debt by £122 million; made in excess of £100 million savings; set a balanced budget with increased spending capacity for Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Growth, Environment and Transportation; whilst increasing its net reserves, taking on no additional borrowing and setting a Council Tax rate lower than 89% of County, Metropolitan and Unitary Councils in England.

3.5 In order to inform the second phase of the DOLGE work, analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for DOLGE was carried out ('SWOT'), along with an assessment of political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors ('PESTLE'). Consultation was held with the authority's Leadership, Cabinet Members, the administration's backbenchers, the Chief Executive, the Section 151 Officer and the Corporate Management Team.

3.6 Four strategic areas have been identified, with recommended actions in each. Those strategic areas are:

- Efficiency and simplification
- Ensuring spend and savings are to budget
- Commercial and income generation
- Resilience and Local Government Reorganisation

3.7 A small number of top priorities for action by KCC have been identified from within the four strategic areas.

3.8 In addition, the draft strategy presents a number of 'core principles' for implementation across the authority and used to challenge all spend.

3.9 The DOLGE concept of seeking efficiency and value for money will be embedded in the organisation and championed by Members and senior staff, who will be responsible for implementing the strategy and its principles. The strategy builds upon existing and previous work in efficiency within KCC and the recommendations are designed to fit with existing monitoring and budget-build processes wherever possible. From immediate effect, the acronym 'DOLGE' will stand for 'Delivery of Local Government Efficiency'.

Proposed Way of Working

3.10 DOLGE will continue to seek economies and efficiencies, identify savings opportunities and value for money for Kent residents. However, the priorities outlined in the strategy necessitate a dynamic process within the DOLGE concept being 'owned' by all Cabinet Members, other Members of the administration, and understood and delivered by staff. DOLGE is about ensuring that the culture is one where all staff are conscious of all spend and the need to do it carefully, fully cognisant that it is residents' money that they are spending. In this second phase of DOLGE, seeking efficiency and better spend of taxpayers' money cannot be seen as solely the responsibility of a small number of core elected Members, but rather be embedded within the organisation and its staff. DOLGE will not be about wielding a chainsaw or a salami-slicer, but about helping the authority to find and implement sensible, pragmatic solutions where efficiency is at the core.

3.11 Although the draft strategy lays out clearly the priorities for the authority in seeking enhanced efficiency and effectiveness moving forward, due to the dynamic and ambitious nature of the DOLGE effort, work has already commenced on implementing a number of its recommendations. These include establishing a 'Star Chamber' with senior Members and Adult Social Care staff; exploring the establishment of an account management process for major suppliers and contracts, and considering further Artificial Intelligence options for the authority. In addition, financial provision has already been made for a scheme to recognise staff who come forward with successful income generation or cost-saving ideas, and for seed-corn funding for Directorate income generation projects.

Reporting on Progress

3.12 DOLGE will report on progress and plans to staff, the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, Cabinet (and Full Council, where appropriate).

Resourcing Required

3.13 The collaborative approach, via the second phase of DOLGE, will involve all Cabinet Members and be supported by all Reform UK Members in the authority. At its helm will be the Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency and Reorganisation and the Deputy Cabinet Member, Local Government Efficiency and Reorganisation, who both authored the draft strategy. Currently, there is no additional resource requirement identified to carry out the DOLGE work or the priorities in this report, as the DOLGE concept will become a core part of the authority's overall work.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

4.1 Consideration was given to building Local Government Efficiency arrangements, as referenced in the Strategy, into operational level processes and activities only, utilising existing regular Executive oversight and policy direction processes. This was rejected as the logical progression for the DOLGE effort is to move the programme to a formalised, authority-wide and collaborative format via a substantive Cabinet approved Strategy.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Currently, there is no additional resource requirement identified to carry out the DOLGE work or the priorities in the strategy, as the DOLGE concept will become a core part of the authority's overall work.

6. Legal implications

6.1 There are no legal implications associated with the proposed adoption of the strategy.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 An EqIA has been undertaken for this proposed decision and whilst no impacts have been identified, any direct decisions that may follow from the DOLGE Strategy would still be subject to relevant and separate decisions and EQIAs as necessary.

8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 A DPIA screening has been undertaken concluding that a Data Protection Impact Assessment is not required at this time.

9. Other corporate implications

9.1 The four strategic areas, the selected top priority actions and the core principles that the strategy recommends, are relevant for all parts and levels of Kent County Council. The strategy will guide senior officers and the Administration's Members in order that sound decision making on specific programmes and projects can be taken using appropriate governance routes.

10. Governance

10.1 The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee endorsed the proposed adoption of the Delivery of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) Strategy by majority on 2 July 2026.

10.2 At the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee meeting on 2 July 2026, some Members questioned whether the draft DOLGE strategy proposed significantly substantive change to the way in which the authority had previously sought to

achieve savings and budget compliance. However, the draft strategy pulls together and adds coordination and prioritisation for the first time to a range of efficiency and transformational work; only some of which had been operating previously. Some Members believed that the proposed strategy was simply a branding exercise, although it was clarified that the second phase strategy was appropriate for the 'delivery' of local government efficiency now that the administration had set and was controlling its own budget.

10.3 This report seeks Cabinet approval to adopt the Strategy and to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency and Reorganisation, to make non-substantive revisions and updates to the Strategy as appropriate during its lifetime.

10.4 Any significant amendments or changes with substantive policy or resource implications will require further formal decision-making.

10.5 It is not expected that the strategy will have significant impact upon the Officer Scheme of Delegation, as the core recommendations and principles will be implemented prior to the appropriate decision-making routes being followed. Any specific decision emanating from the implementation of the strategy will go through existing governance routes.

11. Conclusions

11.1 In its first year of operation, DOLGE was successful in scrutinising spend, making savings and identifying opportunities for greater efficiencies in KCC. With the Administration having set and now managing its own budget, the work of DOLGE will move to a second phase, where its work will require a collaborative approach and have wider 'ownership' within the authority amongst staff and Members of the administration. This paper is presented to support the draft strategy for DOLGE's work as it enters the second phase.

Recommendation(s):

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12. Background Documents

Equality Impact Assessment (included as Appendix C)

[Reforming Kent 2025-2028](#)

13. Appendices

Appendix A Proposed Record of Decision (26/00031)

Appendix B Draft Delivery of Local Government Efficiency Strategy

Appendix C Equality Impact Assessment

14. Contact details

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