# Reform UK sparks controversy with doge-style council audit pilot in Kent



Reform UK is set to launch a controversial pilot initiative in Kent County Council aimed at examining council spending, drawing inspiration from Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency. This approach, branded as a "Doge-style" scheme, will be spearheaded by a team that includes prominent figures such as Brexit contributor Arron Banks and cybersecurity entrepreneur Nathaniel Fried. As part of its strategy, Reform UK has warned that council officers could face charges of "gross misconduct" if they obstruct the scrutiny of financial records, reflecting the party's stringent oversight measures.

The initiative has prompted significant backlash from local authority leaders and opposition figures, who have labelled it as “political theatre.” Robert Hayward, a Conservative peer and pollster, expressed concern about the implications of volunteers working under potential ethical grey areas. In a letter to the Electoral Commission, Hayward argued that such volunteer staff should be scrutinised under political donation rules to prevent any undue influence over election processes.

Reform claims that its team will employ artificial intelligence and forensic auditing techniques to identify wasteful spending and suggest actionable reforms. Zia Yusuf, the party chair, stated that the initiative aims to ensure taxpayers’ money is not misallocated, emphasising a mandate for change that resonates with many voters frustrated by rising taxation accompanied by diminishing local services. Notably, Nusrat Ghani, the parliamentary under-secretary for local government, has also voiced skepticism regarding the initiative's efficacy amidst pressing financial constraints faced by councils.

However, critics argue that the initiative may be ill-suited to address the deeper systemic financial issues encountered by local authorities. For instance, Cllr John Merry, deputy mayor of Salford and chair of the Key Cities group, noted that councils are grappling with significant pressures in essential service areas, particularly in special educational needs and adult social care. Merry underscored the need for a commitment to long-term funding reforms rather than cursory cost-cutting measures that may not yield substantial benefits.

As Reform UK steps into the realm of local governance, having recently taken control of ten councils across England, it must navigate a host of financial challenges. Many councils are currently facing significant budget shortfalls exacerbated by rising costs and inflation, particularly in children's services. While the Spending Review scheduled for June 11 will be critical in shaping future funding allocations, the party’s aggressive promises to eradicate waste may not be enough to address the underlying challenges facing local authorities.

Moreover, Reform UK's recent ventures into cryptocurrency may signal a broader ambition to engage younger voters and innovate fiscal strategies. The party has revealed plans to accept cryptocurrency donations and advocate for tax payments in digital currency, a move that aligns with its aspirations to modernise public finance.

As the Party engages in these bold initiatives, the true impact of its proposed measures on council efficiency and public service delivery remains to be seen, especially as it grapples with a precarious financial landscape and the diverse concerns of its electorate.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/02/reform-uk-to-pilot-doge-style-scheme-to-examine-council-spending), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/02/reform-uk-to-pilot-doge-style-scheme-to-examine-council-spending)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/02/reform-uk-to-pilot-doge-style-scheme-to-examine-council-spending), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/9d5f7c54-44f7-43d8-8dbb-d6b55c818e83), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/c3b25079-f394-4a40-84af-2c11fa0f6338)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/ef262672-eeca-4af4-9d73-15faea4012c6), [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/9d5f7c54-44f7-43d8-8dbb-d6b55c818e83)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2025/04/14/nigel-farage-calls-for-doge-teams-to-root-out-waste-in-english-councils/), [[6]](https://www.ft.com/content/c3b25079-f394-4a40-84af-2c11fa0f6338)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/76958f18-b079-4625-a407-476191630d8f), [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/ef262672-eeca-4af4-9d73-15faea4012c6)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/02/reform-uk-to-pilot-doge-style-scheme-to-examine-council-spending> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/02/reform-uk-to-pilot-doge-style-scheme-to-examine-council-spending> - Reform UK has announced plans to implement a 'Doge-style' efficiency unit, inspired by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, to scrutinise council spending in Kent County Council. The initiative, led by figures such as Arron Banks and Nathaniel Fried, aims to identify and eliminate wasteful expenditures using advanced data analysis and forensic auditing techniques. Council officers have been warned that obstructing this process could result in charges of 'gross misconduct'. The move has faced criticism from local authority leaders and opposition politicians, who view it as 'political theatre'.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/9d5f7c54-44f7-43d8-8dbb-d6b55c818e83> - Following Reform UK's takeover of several local councils in England, including Kent, the party confronts significant financial challenges. Councils are grappling with budget constraints due to rising costs in children's services and adult social care, compounded by inflation and limited government support. Reform UK's promises to cut costs are met with scepticism, given the limited discretionary control over most council budgets. The upcoming Spending Review on June 11 will be pivotal in determining whether local governments can break the cycle of unsustainable budgets and initiate regeneration in neglected areas.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/76958f18-b079-4625-a407-476191630d8f> - Reform UK has begun accepting cryptocurrency donations as part of its strategy to integrate digital currencies into public finance. Party chair Zia Yusuf announced plans to enable tax payments in cryptocurrency and establish a sovereign wealth fund composed of crypto assets, aiming to appeal to younger voters. Leader Nigel Farage pledged to reduce capital gains tax on crypto from 24% to 10% and create a national bitcoin reserve, positioning himself as a British counterpart to U.S. President Donald Trump's pro-crypto stance. These initiatives could raise crypto-related tax revenues from £220 million to £1 billion.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/ef262672-eeca-4af4-9d73-15faea4012c6> - In May 2025, Reform UK, led by Nigel Farage, assumed control of 10 local authorities across England, marking its first foray into local governance. The party faces significant financial challenges, including projected shortfalls and high social care costs consuming a large portion of budgets. Initial actions include abolishing climate committees and removing certain flags, aligning with their national agenda. However, internal variations exist, and the party confronts challenges such as sudden council resignations and systemic issues like deficits and special education crises in several counties.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/c3b25079-f394-4a40-84af-2c11fa0f6338> - Reform UK, a right-wing populist party led by Nigel Farage, gained control of ten English councils and two metro mayor positions in the 2025 local elections. The party promotes anti-immigration, anti-net zero, and anti-'woke' stances, advocating for leaving the European Court of Human Rights and offshoring the processing of illegal immigrants. Economically, it supports a small-state model, including cutting corporation taxes for SMEs and scrapping inheritance tax. Locally, Reform promises aggressive cost-cutting, audits to reduce wasteful spending, elimination of DEI initiatives, and opposition to housing asylum seekers in hotels.
7. <https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2025/04/14/nigel-farage-calls-for-doge-teams-to-root-out-waste-in-english-councils/> - Reform UK leader Nigel Farage has called for a DOGE team to be deployed in every local council in England to save taxpayer money by reducing waste and inefficiencies. In three weeks, voters will select new representatives to fill over 1,600 councillor seats across England. This will be the first significant electoral test for Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer’s left-wing Labour Party government since coming to power last July. The elections will also represent the first major national test for the Reform UK party in its poll-leading era as it seeks to compete with the establishment parties at the next general election. Consistently polling in either first place or tied with Labour, the upstart populist party is hoping to secure council victories upon which it can build a national campaigning infrastructure. Speaking to the BBC on Sunday about the prospect of Reform possibly taking control of some councils in England for the first time, party leader Nigel Farage highlighted a desire to root out waste and inefficiencies locally to save taxpayer money and deliver better services.