

Online Procedure Rule Committee

Minutes of meeting 10 June at 14:00

Members in attendance

- Sir Geoffrey Vos, Master of the Rolls (MR)
- Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division (PFD)
- Sir Keith Lindblom, Senior President of Tribunals (SPT)
- Sarah Stephens (SS)
- Brett Dixon (BD)
- Gerard Boyers (GB)

Non-members in attendance

- Lord Justice Baker
- Harriet Ainsworth-Smith, MoJ
- Helen Timpson, MoJ
- Graeme Wood – Secretariat Cover
- Sarah Rose, MoJ
- Nick Lee, Judicial Office
- Bee Ezete, PFD's PO
- Shane O'Reilly, SPT's PO
- Grace Hodges, MR's PO
- Rosemary Rand, HMCTS
- Judge Nishimura (observer)
- Alasdair Wallace, MoJ
- Amrita Dhaliwal, MoJ

Apologies

- Lord Justice Birss, Mrs Justice Smith

Item 1 Welcome, Apologies & Introductory Remarks

1. MR opened the meeting by highlighting the need to discuss the impact of the general election announcement on the work of the committee.
2. Minutes of last meeting approved.
3. Secretariat provided an update on an action arising from minutes of last meeting regarding priorities for the sub-committees and this would be discussed under Item 5. A sub-committee meeting will take place on 24 June where priorities will be discussed.
4. Judge Nishimura, visiting from Japan, observing proceedings of meeting (as agreed at last meeting).

Item 2: MoJ Update

5. Sarah Rose (SR) explained how the pre-election period will impact on existing work. On digital delivery, the Private Family Law and civil contracts have been entered into with external contractors and work will continue. There will be limitations on the external engagement with key stakeholder groups although some lower-level engagement will continue.
6. The MR stressed the importance of the work in civil (family and tribunals) justice.
7. The new Director, Sally Parkinson, is very focussed on ensuring the department pulls together the story of civil justice, including telling the human story.

Item 3: Statutory Work programme discussion

8. Helen Timpson (HT) updated on the impact of the General Election timings for the SI. She drew the committee's attention to the paper providing an indicative timetable the team anticipate following. Advice to ministers most likely October/November and, assuming agreement for SI received from ministers, then the SI could be laid in draft in February 2025.

9. The MR highlighted that although the Renters (Reform) Bill had not received Royal Assent, both main parties have indicated the need for some form of renters' reform, so the decision to focus on property still feels the right choice.
10. HMCTS are continuing with work to design and develop a digital court possession service, ensuring there is no loss of momentum and full readiness to work with new government following the election.
11. The Committee agreed to keep Property and Financial Remedies as the focus of the work programme.

Item 5: Sub-Committee Induction Event

12. The event has been rescheduled and will now take place on 15 July.
13. GB was keen to clarify the focus of the sub-committees and understand how to make the sub-committees most effective in driving the work forward. He suggested identifying a number of workstreams with one sub-committee member leading on each area. Areas not nailed down but suggested as:
 - Technical Standards
 - Inclusion (to include digital exclusion)
 - User Experience
 - Communications & Liaison
 - Participation and membership of the DJS
 - Rules – e.g. how the rules are written
14. The committee discussed the need to remember the property work and family money work will need to be included in the workstream and stressed inclusion and digital literacy needed to be brought to the fore and supported as a priority.
15. It was agreed that this would be discussed further at the next sub-committee meeting (on 24 June) ahead of the induction event.
16. Secretariat confirmed there is an agenda item on this in the induction meeting. A welcome pack is being produced to include bios, photos and details of workstreams. The meeting will also include short introductions and panel discussion.

Item 6 AOB

17. OPRC to meet next on 15 July followed by sub-committee induction event.
18. A mission statement will be circulated to members for comment.
19. Secretariat to circulate DJS policy programme dashboard.

Actions

- Bios and photos for OPRC members to be sent to Helen Timpson or Iram Khan for inclusion in induction pack.
- JO to send draft OPRC mission statement to secretariat who will circulate to the committee.
- MR to speak to members at sub-committee induction so they have a full understanding of the work OPRC is engaged in.
- Secretariat to circulate most recent dashboard and papers.
- Meeting with MR and Gerard to be arranged to allow for a discussion about workstreams prior to the induction event.