

Online Procedure Rule Committee

Minutes of meeting on 16 February 2026

Conducted in a hybrid format at The Royal Courts of Justice, and via MS Teams

Members in attendance

- Sir Geoffrey Vos, Master of the Rolls (MR)
- Sir James Dingemans (SPT)
- Gerard Boyers (GB)
- Sarah Stephens (SS)

Non-members in attendance

- Lord Justice Baker
- Mrs Justice Joanna Smith
- Lady Justice Cockerill
- Lord Justice Dove
- Sarah Rose, MoJ
- Irram Khan, OPRC Secretariat
- Harriet Ainsworth-Smith, MoJ
- Graeme Wood, MoJ
- Elena Birchall, MoJ
- Jennifer Tugman, MoJ
- Alasdair Wallace, Drafting Lawyer
- Abdul Huson, MoJ
- Steve Jarman, MoJ
- Rawfiah Choudry, MoJ
- Marcia Williams, MoJ
- Rachel Tocknell, PS to MR
- Ravi Patel, Legal Advisor to MR
- Nick Lee, JO
- Joshua Gibson, JO
- Thomas Atfield, MR's DPS
- Heidi Bancroft, SPT's Private Office
- Antonia Shakesby, JO
- Tessa Lieven Wright, JO
- Carl Poole, CPRC Secretariat
- Rosemary Rand, HMCTS
- Emma Petty, HMCTS
- Amar, Morjaria HMCTS
- Sam Platt, HMCTS
- Kerry Greenidge, HMCTS
- Rachael Peters, HMCTS
- Tom Matley, HMCTS

Item 1 - Welcome, Minutes and Action Log

1. Apologies: President of the Family Division, Brett Dixon.
2. Minutes: Approved. Secretariat to publish minutes on the OPRC website.
3. Action log: Noted.

Item 2 - Draft SI for the expansion of the OPRC's specified proceedings

4. The Committee discussed possible routes to inclusion of Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT) rules, which currently remain with the Lord Chancellor due to limitations of Tribunal Procedure Committee resource to take on and amend.

5. The Committee **agreed** the drafting should use a broad umbrella referring to “*all proceedings in relation to employment claims*” so that the OPRC has rule making powers over the full range of employment matters.
6. The Committee **agreed** that the SI should not be limited to damages and money claims, given the possibility that OCMC and Damages Portal could have broader scope in the long-term. Wording should be along lines of ‘*all claims dealt with on the money and damages platforms to be included*’.
7. **Action:** Tribunal Policy Team to discuss options around transfer of EAT rules.
8. **Action:** Drafting to be taken forward on basis of OPRC steers, Secretariat to send the final version of the SI to OPRC members once ready for review.

Item 3 - Summary of responses to draft Core Rules Consultation

9. The committee **agreed** to the publication of the summary of consultation responses to be published on the ORPC website.
10. **Action:** Secretariat to take forward publication

Item 4 - Draft Core Online Procedure Rules

11. OPRC discussed a paper seeking steers from the Committee in 3 areas: (i) the extent to which rules should place obligations on non-parties, including HMCTS; (ii) Whether a definition of online service provider is required; and (iii) edits made in relation to definition of online proceedings and take any further steer from the Committee.
12. **Action:** Committee agreed that MR, SPT, DHCJ, Joanna Smith J to meet with AW and JT before the next meeting to review rules and address points raised in the paper.
13. GB flagged three other points for consideration as part of this process: (i) whether wording should cover data transfer via API as well as by completion of online form; (ii) whether rules need to be specified acceptable forms of non-electronic communication; and (iii) whether rules should state parties must provide all information required (rather than requested) as there may be non-mandatory information fields.
14. **Action:** RR requested meeting between HMCTS and drafting lawyers to discuss the drafting in relation to HMCTS, to ensure clarity around HMCTS status as executive agency, existing statutory and other responsibilities, and ensure no unintended contradictions or tensions between these and draft OPR.

Item 6 (taken out of order) - Digitisation of Property in Civil and Tribunals

15. The Committee considered a paper from MoJ Policy and HMCTS on digitalisation of possession claims and certain cases in the Property Tribunal. Members expressed dissatisfaction with the apparent building of two digital services for different types of property-related cases.

16. NL queried whether MHCLG conditions did require building of two different services and whether OPRC could state that it would not make rules for two different online processes.
17. OPRC confirmed despite members views on development of two services, the intention was to be pragmatic and support work of government/HMCTS in its rule making and would make rules for two services if required.
18. HMCTS outlined their work to date on digitisation of the Property Chamber. OPRC members had not been aware the proposal was for digitisation of only those case types impacted by the legislation and expressed concerns about workflow for judiciary and staff.
19. Members queried modelling of potential volumes, and HMCTS and MoJ Policy explained that the modelling had been agreed with MHCLG and outlined work underway on other possible DR approaches, including the Valuation Ombudsman.
20. Members expressed concern about digitising the analogue processes. HMCTS explained they would work with the OPRC PPWG and policy colleagues on the service design.
21. The Committee asked HMCTS to consider whether there were any approaches that would enable full, rather than partial, digitalisation.
22. The Committee **approved** proposal in the paper for MoJ Civil and Tribunal Policy to undertake mapping process identifying options for fulfilling Requirement 9, working with HMCTS colleagues to describe user journeys and interoperability/join-up implications and report back to OPRC.
23. **Action:** Nick Lee will confirm the position for judicial members regarding the scope of the MHCLG funding for the digitalisation of property work in the County Court and the Property Chamber.
24. **Approved:** OPRC confirmed the definition of requirement 9 in paper 7 and setting up a working group with the PPWG.
25. **Action:** Rosie Rand/Amar Morjaria to confirm funding allocations relating to APIs and update the Committee

Item 5 - Draft Possession Service SI (Paper 6)

26. The Committee discussed the draft possession rules and agreed need to review the style and content to ensure they are easily understandable for users.
27. **Action:** As part of the meeting agreed at point 12, this discussion will be expanded to cover the style and content of the PD.
28. **Action:** A follow up meeting between policy, lawyers and HMCTS to progress the drafting in parallel to the Committee's consideration of the style and content.
29. **Action:** Committee members to submit written comments on Paper 6 ahead of the Property & Possession Working Group meeting on 4 March.

Item 7 - Sub-Committee Updates

30. Sub-Committee leads provided updates on the progress of their workstreams.

31. **Approved:** Mrs Justice Joanna Smith sought OPRC approval to contact John Sorabji about supporting the Communication workstream stakeholder roundtables and confirmed Secretariat they could assist with the issuing of invites.

32. **Action:** GB to prepare a paper to present at the April meeting summarising the work of the Technology Group and setting out next steps.

Item 8 - Any Other Business and Close

33. Any other business: none recorded.

34. Next meeting: 23 March 2026.