

Online Procedure Rule Committee**Minutes of meeting on 27 April 2026 at 2pm****via Microsoft Teams**

Members in attendance	Non-members in attendance
Master of the Rolls (MR) (Chair) Lord Justice Baker (on behalf of the President of the Family Division) Brett Dixon Gerard Boyers Sarah Stephens	Upper Tribunal Judge Sean O'Brien Sarah Rose, MoJ Harriet Ainsworth-Smith, MoJ Helen Timpson, OPRC Secretariat team Irram Khan, OPRC Secretariat team Graeme Wood, MoJ Alasdair Wallace, drafting lawyer Hannah Fleetwood-Read, MoJ Thomas Atfield, JO Heidi Bancroft, JO Simon Block, Judicial Office Amrita Dhaliwal, MoJ Elena Birchall, MoJ Rosemary Rand, HMCTS Steven Chapman, HMCTS Lorna Horton, HMCTS Rhona Love, HMCTS

Item 1 - Welcome, Minutes and Action Log

1. Apologies were received from Sir James Dingemans (SPT), DHCJ, Dove LJ and Joanna Smith J.
3. The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2026.

Item 2 - Draft Core Online Procedure Rules SI

4. MR noted that the follow-up drafting meeting agreed at the March meeting had taken place. Those attending considered that most outstanding issues had been resolved.
5. Alasdair Wallace confirmed that the revised draft reflected the notes from that meeting, and the points taken away for further drafting.
6. The Committee considered paragraphs 8 to 10 of the explanatory note. No objection was raised to the resolution described in paragraph 8.
7. On rule 16, the Committee agreed to retain "shall". AW explained that "will" would suggest futurity rather than obligation, while "shall", "must" or "are to be" would all indicate obligation. No member objected to retaining "shall".
8. On rule 21, the Committee agreed that "will" was appropriate, as the provision describes the consequence that follows once the relevant condition has been met.

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9. On rule 29, the Committee confirmed that it was content with the drafting presented. It was noted that the wording reflected discussion at the previous drafting meeting, including input from Lord Justice Males.

10. SS asked whether rule 12, which requires online proceedings to be designed and maintained so as to be "usable by all", went far enough. MR considered the wording clear and robust, and the Committee agreed to retain it.

11. GB queried the interaction between rule 12 and rule 19, which provides for information to be supplied by other means where a person cannot use the digital service. MR and RR noted that the rules should be read together.

12. The Committee noted the importance of continuing to test and improve services so that accessibility is achieved in practice and reliance on non-digital routes does not become the default.

13. Feedback from the SPT was relayed on rule 4. The Committee agreed that "resolved using digital means" was preferable to "resolved by digital means", to avoid suggesting that disputes are resolved by technology rather than by judges.

14. HMCTS asked to clarify the Committee's intention on a small number of technical points, including references to publishing technical standards. SR noted that questions should be raised directly to the Committee, with secretariat support.

Decision: the Committee approved the draft Core Online Procedure Rules SI, subject to the agreed drafting changes. The Committee agreed that HMCTS clarification questions should not delay approval.

Action: AW to reflect the agreed drafting changes, including the rule 4 wording and the rule 21 update, in the final draft rules.

Action: Secretariat to circulate the final approved draft rules to all Committee members, including those not present.

Action: HMCTS, supported by the Secretariat, to seek clarification on technical points about Committee intent, including on publishing standards, without delaying approval.

Action: MoJ and the Secretariat to progress the SI towards laying in Parliament, subject to the parliamentary timetable.

Item 3 - Any Other Business and Close

20. The Committee noted that this will be HAS final meeting and thanked her for her contribution and support to their work.

21. HAS updated the Committee on Requirement 10. The Committee had previously agreed that users should be able to understand how the whole system works without needing to bring or defend a live claim, and that a clickable end-to-end prototype was the preferred long-term solution.

22. HMCTS has been progressing this work and will seek formal agreement from the Committee in May on the direction of travel for meeting Requirement 10.

24. An engagement session will take place with the DHCJ and SS, before the May meeting, to review the work undertaken so far.

25. The Property and Possession Working Group will also be updated so that judicial members involved in related work are aware of the proposed approach.

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26. BD asked to be included in the Requirement 10 discussions, noting its relevance to the Damages and Money Claims Working Group.

Action: HMCTS and the Secretariat to arrange pre-OPRC engagement on Requirement 10 and include Brett Dixon in the relevant discussions.

Next meeting: 22 May 2026.

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