

Online Procedure Rule Committee

Minutes of meeting on 22 May 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)
- Brett Dixon
- Lord Justice Stephen Cobb (PFD)

Non-members in attendance

- Lord Justice Baker
- Mrs Justice Joanna Smith
- Lady Justice Cockerill
- Lord Justice Dove
- Sarah Rose, MoJ
- Graeme Wood, MoJ
- Elena Birchall, MoJ
- Hannah Fleetwood-Read, MoJ
- Alasdair Wallace, drafting Lawyer
- Steve Jarman, MoJ
- Rosemary Rand, HMCTS
- Rachel Tocknell, PS to MR
- Steven Chapman, HMCTS
- Bee Ezete, JO
- Oscar Rushton, MoJ
- Joshua Gibson, JO
- Thomas Atfield, MR's DPS
- Heidi Bancroft, SPT's Private Office
- Antonia Shakesby, JO
- Rachael Peters, HMCTS
- Dominic Scott
- Amrita Dhaliwal

Item 1 - Welcome, Minutes and Action Log

1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting; Apologies received from Dr Sarah Stephens.
2. Minutes: Approved. Secretariat to publish minutes on the OPRC website.
3. Action log: Noted.

Item 2. Core Online Procedure Rule proposed amendment

4. The Committee considered a late agenda item concerning feedback on the drafting of rule 3, particularly the reference to publication of technical specifications and data standards on GOV.UK. Members discussed concerns about futureproofing and the

scope of materials captured by the provision, as well as the importance of transparency and clarity for users.

5. Members emphasised that the existing wording set an important minimum standard of transparency and that removing the reference to GOV.UK risked creating ambiguity about whether the relevant materials would in fact be made available.
6. The Committee expressed a clear preference to retain the existing wording and not to replace it with more open-ended language.
7. The Committee indicated that the rule was intended to reflect the making available, on GOV.UK (without precluding publication elsewhere), of material that needs to be shared to facilitate interaction with the system. Members were clear that the rule as currently drafted already allowed for discretion as to what must be published.
8. The committee **agreed** that the existing wording to be retained

Item 3. Possession Practice Direction – scope, timing and relationship with the CPR

9. The Committee discussed the current draft Practice Direction (PD) for possession claims, including the ambition that the PD be drafted with reference to the screens for the digital service.
10. Officials summarised the paper presented noting that for Release 1A of the Digital Possession Service to be released in July as planned, the Committee would need to sign off the PD in early June with very little opportunity for iteration. This would likely require a drafting approach that relied heavily on the Civil Procedure Rules.
11. Members considered the statutory role of the Committee and expressed concern about producing a PD that relied too heavily on replicating or incorporating CPR provisions.
12. Members confirmed that the PD should feel like a product of the OPRC, clearly identifying when the CPR applies and when OPR-specific provision governs.
13. The Committee discussed the balance between ambition and practicality for the initial rollout and the implications of timing and funding pressures, given the current aim to implement the PD for a July rollout.
14. Officials highlighted a key delivery risk if the Committee decided not to adopt the suggested approach. Failure to meet the July rollout would create downstream impacts on the programme timetable, potentially jeopardising completion of the digital possession service by April 2027, when current funding is due to end, with a risk of leaving the programme only partially implemented.
15. Committee members stressed that statutory obligations and the quality of the rules remained paramount. It was **agreed** that further detailed work was required before decisions could be reached and the Committee accepted the risks this decision could have on delivery.

Actions:

Secretariat to continue to engage on the drafting of the PDs

DHCJ to identify judiciary with extensive possession hearings experience to assist with review of PD decisions

Further analysis of how and when the PD may need to rely on CPR provisions to be reviewed by the PPWG.

Item 4. Inclusion framework and early resolution model next steps

16. Gerard Boyers presented a paper on the work to date of the sub-committee Technology workstream. Members discussed the statutory vision for online pre-action dispute resolution and the implications of technological developments, including AI.
17. Members discussed next steps, including the wider digital environment and data standards, and the possibility of trialling online provision of free legal advice by lawyers.
18. **Consideration of the item was adjourned** to the next meeting, and the Committee recorded thanks to Gerard for the paper.
19. It was **noted** that further discussions with ministers were pending and that it was premature to reach firm conclusions at this stage.

Actions: No actions arising

Item 5. Any other business and close

20. The Committee **noted** a request from the Family Procedure Rule Committee for cross-jurisdiction engagement on AI-related procedural issues. Members agreed on the importance of coordination to avoid duplication and supported exploring a joint forum involving relevant rule committees.
21. Members also discussed the possibility of a wider meeting involving the existing rule committees and suggested inviting Mr Justice McKenzie to speak as part of that work.

Action:

MR's office to explore options for engagement across on the rules committees on AI.

6. Date of next meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 17 June 2026 at 4.30 pm.