

## Online Procedure Rule Committee

### Minutes of meeting on 17 June 2026 at 4:30pm

Conducted in a hybrid format at the Judge's Lounge, 4th Floor, Royal Courts of Justice, Rolls Building and via Microsoft Teams.

| Members in attendance                                                                                                            | Non-members in attendance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| Master of the Rolls (MR) (Chair)<br>Lord Justice Stephen Cobb (PFD)<br>Sir James Dingemans (SPT)<br>Brett Dixon<br>Gerard Boyers | Mrs. Justice Joanna Smith<br>Lady Justice Cockerill<br>Sarah Rose, MoJ<br>Rosemary Rand, HMCTS<br>Helen Timpson, OPRC Secretariat team<br>Graeme Wood, MoJ<br>Juliana Olaniran, MoJ<br>Alasdair Wallace, drafting lawyer<br>Hannah Fleetwood-Read, MoJLA<br>Elena Birchall, MoJLA<br>Thomas Atfield, JO<br>Heidi Bancroft, JO<br>Nick Lee, JO<br>Tessa Lieven Wright, JO<br>Rachel Tocknell, PS to MR<br>Amrita Dhaliwal, MoJ<br>Steven Chapman, HMCTS<br>Nick Howat, HMCTS<br>Rhona Love, HMCTS<br>Kelby Harmes, MoJLA<br>Shivani Patel<br>Carl Poole, MoJ<br>Vijay Parkash, MoJ |

#### **Item 1 - Welcome, Minutes and Action Log**

1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies from Dr Sarah Stephens and Lord Justice Jonathan Baker.
2. Minutes approved and will be published on the OPRC website.
3. Action log: noted.

#### **Item 2 - Possession Practice Direction**

4. HT introduced the draft Possession Practice Direction, supported by HFR and AW. The Committee was asked to provide steers on the draft, including the approach to references to digital service screens and the Civil Procedure Rules (CPR). It was noted that the drafting team had been assisted by judges experienced in dealing with possession proceedings, who had provided valuable explanation of how proceedings operate in practice.
5. The Committee discussed the extent to which the Practice Direction should refer to the CPR. Members emphasised that the Online Procedure Rules should not recreate the CPR, and that

CPR references should operate as a fallback for specific procedural matters where needed rather than being flagged at the start of the PD. The Committee noted the long-term policy intention that, as Online Procedure Rules are developed, CPR rules should cease to apply to proceedings covered by those rules.

8. The Committee discussed the drafting team's approach to providing enough of a framework to guide users while avoiding unnecessary complexity. Examples discussed included service out of the jurisdiction, costs, allocation to a track, case management powers, applications and evidence.

9. The Committee agreed that any CPR references should be positioned carefully, with relevant provisions placed towards the end of the Practice Direction or included as specific references where they may become relevant.

10. The Committee discussed references to digital service screens. Members were content in principle with referring to relevant screens where those screens can be identified, while recognising that the rules and Practice Direction must provide the procedural underpinning and that the screen design itself cannot make rules.

11. The Committee discussed how material changes to screens should be governed. It was noted that the Property and Possession Working Group had approved the screens on behalf of the OPRC. Future substantive procedural changes should be signed off by the Committee through the Property and Possession Working Group. Minor linguistic or presentational changes would not normally require full Committee approval.

13. The Committee confirmed that it remained committed to working with MoJ and HMCTS to meet the early September implementation date.

14. The Committee noted that, to meet the proposed timetable, the Practice Direction will need to be made publicly available in draft form before all legal checks are fully complete. The Committee was content with that approach in principle. The revised full draft was expected to return to the Committee at the 13 July 2026 meeting.

**Action:** Drafting team to revise the draft Practice Direction in line with the Committee's steers, including the treatment of CPR references, screen references, case management guidance, applications, evidence and verification of information.

**Action:** Secretariat to arrange further consideration of the revised full draft ahead of the next Committee meeting.

### **Item 3 - Requirement 10**

15. RR introduced the Requirement 10 update, supported by Nick Howatt. Requirement 10 is one of the OPRC's agreed requirements for the digital possession service. It provides that it must be possible for anyone to understand how all aspects of the live system work without having to bring or defend a live claim, for example through a separate digital environment, demonstration system, screen bank or other suitable explanatory product. The Committee noted that the product should support prospective users, while HMCTS should also consider what further functionality may be needed to support rule-makers, judges and other professional users in understanding the live process

16. The Committee considered the proposed approach useful, and emphasised the importance of clear, simple language.

17. HMCTS demonstrated a prototype intended primarily for litigants in person. The prototype explains the step-by-step journey with context about why information is requested. HMCTS had not yet tested the prototype with citizens but proposed to do so if the Committee supported the

approach. The Committee noted HMCTS' concern, that a fully clickable mock environment could risk users mistaking the prototype for the live service.

18. The Committee discussed the balance between giving users full information and keeping the product accessible, including for users with lower digital confidence and users of screen readers. Members also discussed whether embedded screenshots or links to a screen bank would be helpful.

19. The Committee noted that there was more than one group of people who may need access to a Requirement 10 product: prospective users of the service and those involved in rule-making and system design. HMCTS explained that the immediate design focus was for claimants and defendants, while recognising a wider need to support rule makers and others who need to understand how the process works.

22. The Committee discussed the need to keep any explanatory product, screen bank and live service screens aligned. HMCTS agreed that material screen changes would need to trigger review of all related published artefacts, and that change management processes should prevent inconsistency.

23. The Committee agreed that HMCTS should proceed with the Requirement 10 work, taking account of the points raised by members. The Committee noted that this work should be developed in a way that meets Requirement 10's wider purpose, including supporting both prospective users and those who need to understand how the live service operates for rule-making, judicial and operational purposes.

**Action:** HMCTS to continue to develop the tool, taking on board feedback from the discussion, and report back following user testing

#### **Item 4 - Core Online Procedure Rules SI**

24. The Committee considered the Core Online Procedure Rules SI. The agenda noted that the SI had cleared legal checks and that MoJ was preparing to send it to Ministers to be signed and laid in Parliament, with laying planned for 30 June 2026 and commencement on 7 September 2026.

25. Committee members present approved and signed the SI. It was confirmed that copies had been emailed to members attending online for signature.

26. The Committee recorded thanks to officials and members for bringing the rules to this stage.

**Action:** Secretariat to collect any further signatures from members attending online and progress the SI towards laying in Parliament.

#### **Item 5 - Inclusion Framework and Early Resolution Model Next Steps**

27. The Committee considered next steps for the Inclusion Framework and Early Resolution Model following consultation. The paper invited the Committee to agree to progress work towards an updated Inclusion Framework, development of data and AI standards, a programme of engagement, and a short public statement setting out the direction of travel. It was agreed that the public statement should be accurate about current constraints while preserving the Committee's ambition.

28. The Committee emphasised its ambition to support a digital justice system which encourages out-of-court dispute resolution, enabling people to move between providers, obtain advice and information at appropriate stages, and communicate with the court system through APIs in due course.

30. The MR noted his forthcoming meeting with the Lord Chancellor and Minister of State. Legislation and AI were expected to be discussed, and understanding the government's position would be important before some aspects of the work could be taken forward in a settled way.

31. The Committee noted related work on digital exclusion by other justice bodies, and that liaison may be needed with the Civil Justice Council, Administrative Justice Council, Family Justice Council and others where issues fall beyond the direct remit of the Core Group or OPRC.

32. The Committee discussed the concept of a list or accreditation mechanism. Members emphasised that users need to be able to identify reliable sources of advice, information and dispute resolution, while recognising the need for careful language and consideration of the government's role in relation to signposting.

34. The Committee supported the Core Group continuing to develop the inclusion and technical standards. This would include engaging with relevant industry and advice-sector stakeholders on how those standards might operate voluntarily or through self-certification for the time being.

35. The Committee discussed the role of AI in the future digital justice system. Members supported developing the vision in the context of increasingly capable AI and noted that expert assistance may be needed. It was suggested that suitable people should be identified and that further discussion should be arranged with the subcommittee.

38. The Committee agreed that the public-facing work could proceed, The Committee noted that the public statement was one of the key areas on which the Core Group was seeking a steer and may need to be reviewed following the forthcoming meeting between MR and MoJ Ministers.

**Action:** MR's office to consider liaison with the CJC, AJC, FJC and other relevant bodies, and to consider what expert AI input may be needed.

#### **Item 6 - Any Other Business and Close**

39. The Committee noted the information paper from MHCLG on implementation of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 and its procedural implications. No immediate changes to the CPR were recorded as required, and members noted the need for continued coordination with the digital possession service and Online Procedure Rules as implementation progresses

41. Next meeting: 13 July 2026 at 2pm.