**Friday 23 January 2026**

**Meeting Opening: Welcome and apologies**

The Chair formally opened the meeting, welcoming all attendees, including regular council members, guest speakers, and new participants. Master of the Rolls announced his retirement after ten years of judicial leadership. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

**Register of Interests**

Members were reminded to update their interests, which will be published following the public announcement of new appointments. This ensures transparency and accountability within the Council. Members were encouraged to contact the Secretariat with any updates to the register of interests.

**Updates on Council's Current Work**

**Costs Working Group**

Council received an update from the Costs Working Group who are currently reviewing three recommendations from the 2023 Costs report: 1) Retention of Guideline Hourly Rates; 2) Considering a new solicitors' band for complex litigation; 3) introducing Guideline Hourly Rates for barristers.

The group are collecting data from Business and Property Court judges handling high-value cases, and continue to seek data from the Bar Council. Statisticians have analysed the data including by reference to seniority and kinds of work undertaken. It was agreed that an interim report would be provided for the April meeting.

**Civil Work in the Magistrates Court**

A working group is being set up to monitor Civil work in the magistrates' courts. Council heard that working party membership is still to be finalised, and chairs are awaiting MoJ data and evidence to determine next step. The MoJ are conducting an internal review and

the Minister is expecting to write to the MR when this is completed. Council heard that Citizens Advice Bureau had raised some concerns about the proposed work.

**Solicitors Act**

The MR introduced a major CJC project reviewing reforms to Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974. Council heard that the Working Group met earlier in January and that the consultation draft on reforms to the Act was nearly ready. It was proposed that the consultation should be published in February / March, and members were encouraged to provide feedback.

**HMCTS**

HMCTS gave a general update including preparing for Renters Rights implementation in May, and progressing the digital possession project. Council was invited to give views on the new format of the HMCTS performance data.

Council heard reports of a sharp rise in demand on the HMCTS, at least partly as a result of AI. There was discussion about the still-analogue parts of HMCTs, which are being weeded out where unnecessary but provide an alternative / nondigital route for those who need it.

HMCTS reported that a review of automatic mediation referral was underway, with a report due summer 2026.

**MoJ**

Council heard an update from MoJ including Implementation of the Renters' Rights Act and Awaab's Law; that a post-implementation Whiplash reform review will be forthcoming in summer 2026; that the Government accepted two key recommendations from the CJC's review: reversing *PACCAR*, and creating light-touch regime for LFAs. MoJ also outlined their work on ARAUS compliance, and work on enforcement: namely, looking at improving availability of claimant data, updating the Taking Control of Goods procedure, statutory bailiff regulation, and updating Traffic Enforcement Centre rules.

The MoJ reported on preliminary analysis of the County Court track limits, and invited the CJC to collaborate on reform in this area. It was suggested that County Court and High Court tracks be investigated together. Further discussion on this work included a note that review was already taking into account different case types to avoid treating all small claims alike.

**Legal Aid**

A paper update was sent via apologies from the chair, and Council were invited to share any questions on the paper with the secretariat.

**CPRC**

Council heard that the CPRC is consulting on proposed amendments to Welsh language provisions. The CJC Enforcement report will be considered by the CPRC in February.

## AI in the preparation of Court Documents

Chancellor of the High Court and Joanna Smith J were thanked for their interim report on the CJC's working group on the use of AI in the preparation of Court Documents. Council discussed the report, including the fact that it does not currently require the declaration of AI use (as per the working group's Terms of Reference).

Specific areas that need to be safe-guarded against AI were noted including AI-drafted witness statements, and restrictions for experts' reports. Council noted the distinction between AI use by lawyers (covered by ethics) and AI use by witnesses/experts.

Council also noted the limits of the working group's jurisdiction: this consultation was set up to make legible current issues in court. Its aim is not to restrict proper AI use, nor to reform broader professional standards (which is for SRA and others).

### Spending Review Update

Council heard that the spending review concluded last year. The publishable results are: increases in civil sitting days, and increased funding for CE file.

### National Forum

Council discussed the paper from the working group on the National Forum and discussed theme, keynote speakers, and the possibility of tech demonstrations. Council were encouraged to send ideas to the Secretariat. It was suggested that a two year gap since the last National Forum of 2024 mean that there had been a huge shift in technology that was worth engaging with. At the same time, too niche a thematic focus (including only focused on AI) could have an alienating effect on audiences.

A session on housing was proposed given recent legal changes to renters rights. Further ideas would be discussed at the CJC Strategy meeting in February.

## MOJ Guidance on Litigants in Person

JSC made a recommendation for MOJ and CJC to publish guidance for Litigants in Person. The MoJ plan to form a working group and invite colleagues from the CJC to collaborate. The formal involvement of the CJC would be necessary.

However it was also noted that some of this work overlaps with that of the DJS and OPRC, and it was important not to duplicate work.

Secretariat members agreed to connect CJC members by email to the MoJ to advance this working group.

## AOB

### Mazur Update

Council had previously requested an update on the Mazur Case (regarding the idea that only 'authorised' persons can 'carry on the conduct of litigation'). The update was that CILEX have appealed the High Court's judgement, and the appeal was listed for 23-26 February.

### Meeting Outside of London

Birmingham, Manchester and Cardiff were mentioned as possible meeting places for the next Council Meeting. It was suggested that somewhere more rural with connections via charities, firms, or professional networks to the CJC would also be beneficial. The CILEX connection to Cornwall was also discussed.

Council were encouraged to send suggestions to the Secretariat, who would compile and put before the Executive Committee.