

# Online Procedure Rules and Access to Justice

Sarah Stephens, March 2024

**How can we make the justice  
system work better for people?**

# Integrated digital justice system

The vision of the Master of the Rolls:

“...digital justice is an entirely smart system that operates online.. to identify and resolve the issues between the parties...”

Judges, arbitrators or experts will still be responsible for the ultimate decision, but routine or interim processes may be automated and resolved by algorithms, always provided that the parties know what AI is deciding and retain the right of appeal to a human judge.”

# Formation of the Online Procedure Rule Committee (OPRC)

- Established in June 2023 under the Judicial Review and Courts Act 2022
- Charged with regulating online court services in civil court, family courts and tribunals

# Key Functions and Responsibilities

- Develops rules for online court services and sets standards for online dispute resolution providers
- Facilitates seamless transfer of unresolved cases from pre-action space to online court system
- Rules will be for proceedings of a specified kind, so an affirmative SI will be required to confer areas within its remit

# OPRC – 6 Members

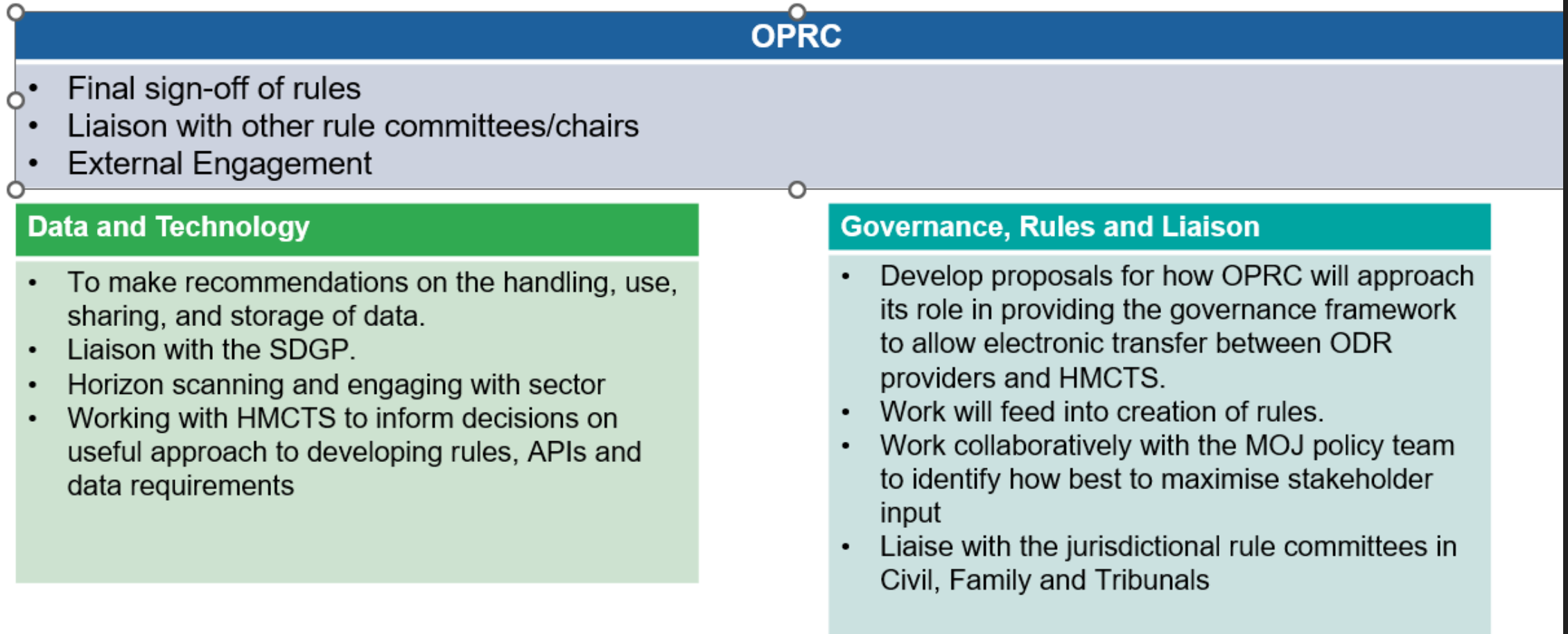
## **3 Judicial Members**

- Sir Geoffrey Vos, Master of the Rolls (Chair)
- Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division
- The Right Honourable Sir Keith Lindblom, Senior President of Tribunals

## **3 Expert Members**

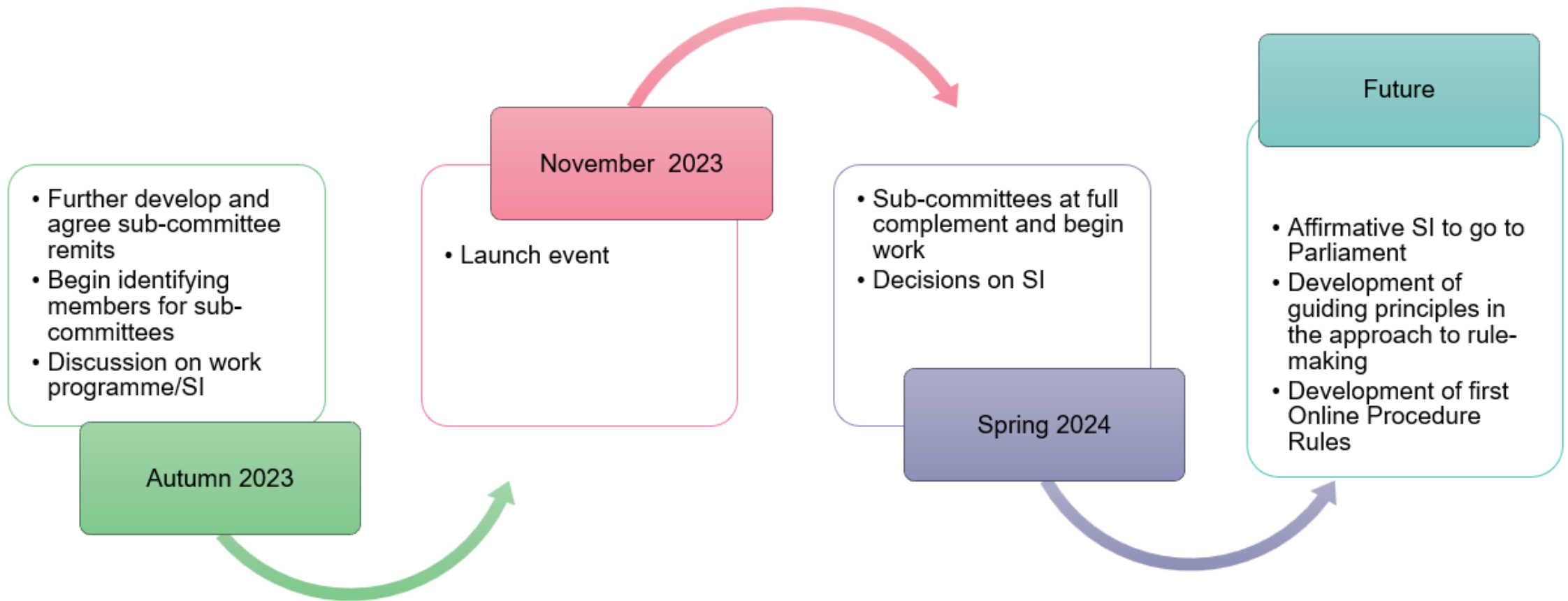
- Brett Dixon, legal expert
- Sarah Stephens, lay advice sector expert
- Gerard Boyers, technology expert

## OPRC Sub-Committee structure\*





## OPRC Indicative Timelines\*





# Discussion: OPRC and Access to Justice

- Unintended consequences?
- Additional barriers to justice?
- What is the problem for which a digital portal is the answer?
- Is the problem the same for all user/potential users. How does the proposed solution meet the needs of different user groups with varied challenges and capabilities.
- Can/ will technology bridge the capability gap?
- People seeking to resolve legal issues have interconnected issues and journey. See this interactive map can be accessed here: <https://moj.kumu.io/civil-family-and-tribunal-ecosystem>

# Thank you!

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