



Agenda

Media Working Group meeting

11 November 2020
16:00 – 17:20hrs

MS Teams / Conference Call meeting
(see calendar invite for skype link and dial in details)

UK:
Access passcode/Conference ID:

	Time	Agenda Item	Lead	Details	Per-meeting Notes
1	16:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Intro and WelcomeRefreshed Terms of Reference	-----	HMCTS Comms	Verbal Terms of Reference V2
2	16:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Minutes of 13 JulyActions	-----	HMCTS Comms	Minutes 13 July Actions updated 11 November
3	16:15	Common Platform <ul style="list-style-type: none">IntroductionQ&As	-----	Crime Programme	Verbal Update
4	16:45	Escalation Guidance for Media Enquiries	-----	HMCTS Comms and Operations	Verbal Update
5	17:00	Open Justice and Remote Hearings	-----	MoJ Policy	Verbal update
6	17:15	AOB	-----	HMCTS Comms	Verbal



Media Working Group

Wednesday 11 November 2020

In attendance:

Apologies:

Secretariat:

1.0 Welcome (-----)

- 1.1 -- thanked and welcomed attendees to the meeting. Introductions were made by the Group.
- 1.2 -- referred to her one-to-one meeting with Group members in September and October 2020 and explained that due to extenuating circumstances it had taken longer than expected to arrange this meeting.
- 1.3 -- stated that the refreshed Terms of Reference for the forum, circulated to members with the meetings papers, outlined the ground rules for the Group, including confidentiality, tenure for the 'Chair', list of members and meeting frequency. The latter had not been decided but it could move to two meetings annually but with specific additional meetings or sub-meetings arranged for topical issues. -- added that the forum was one for supporting media access to courts and tribunals and to discuss any impact of modernised reform programme on those processes. It should not be used to reporting individual queries, but systematic issues should be raised and discussed.

2.0 Previous Minutes and Action Log (-----)

- 2.1 Minutes of the meetings on 13 July 2020 were approved.
- 2.2 The action log was reviewed. Of the four outstanding actions (1) AP10/20 – -- to forward details of court (unable to access civil appeal) to -----. Update from --: Member of staff at the BBC who was to forward details of the court has recently left the BBC. No further instances noted of difficulty in contacting courts. Action closed. (2) AP11/20 – -- to look into why journalists only allowed phone access when CVP available. Update from --: Guidance on remote hearings being updated for staff and GOV.UK. Section to be included on media. Operational colleagues and remote hearings/CVP team request examples for investigation. These will be addressed as identified. Action closed. (3) AP12/20 – -- to look into procedure for getting lists and publishing the process. Agenda item at this meeting. --/-- will provide update on development of escalation process for media enquiries. Action closed. (4) AP13/20 – -- to convey to the Extended Operating Hours Working Group, request for court lists for journalists for non-custodial cases if courts are convened at weekends. Update from Secretariat: London Region confirmed that at Collating stage the court does e-mail copies of the Lists to the Press, this is for both Overnight Criminal Cases and cases that are non-custodial and that have been listed over the weekend. Action closed.

3.0 Common Platform (-----)

- 3.1 -- and -- went through a slide deck presentation on Common Platform (CP).
- 3.2 -- provided the background of CP. It is a digital case management system for those working in the criminal justice system (Crown and Magistrates' Courts). It will reduce duplication and improve efficiency by providing a single source of information for CJS partners involved as the case progresses through the courts.
- 3.3 -- is already in use for Single Justice Procedure cases from TfL, TVL and DVLA and subsequent hearings of those cases if they are referred into the Magistrates' Court.
- 3.4 -- added that CP has now gone live in the first early adopter courts for wider criminal cases, Derby Crown Court, Derby Magistrates' Court and Chesterfield Magistrates' Court.
- 3.5 The purpose of the early adopter courts is to ensure that CP is working as expected. The early adopters will also provide lessons learnt and what to expect from introducing CP. The plan is to introduce CP to early adopter courts in each of the seven regions.
- 3.6 This first version of CP will replace the majority of our existing systems, although DCS will remain in place in the Crown Court at this stage. Magistrates' courts will provide two lists – for CP and LIBRA, and a combined list at Crown Courts. In response to clarification sought by --, -- confirmed that both lists would be provided to the media, this will be included in the staff guidance. -- took an action to check the staff guidance. **Action AP14/20.**
- 3.7 -- confirmed that draft lists would continue in Crown Courts. -- asked whether the media could be advised when the lists were available at Derby and for media access to CP. -- agreed to check our guidance as these lists should automatically be issued to the media.
- 3.8 -- asked whether the Court Media Register from the Magistrate Court will be replicated in the Crown Court and whether a UK press card will be sufficient ID. Additionally, -- asked whether it was possible to access anonymously for safety reasons. -- advised that the process would remain, whereby the media should register with the local court to receive the Court Media Register. -- was impressed and pleased to see the CP presentation and could see many benefits to media – -- and -- asked if the media could have access to CP in the future which would avoid courts lists and registers being issued by email. --/-- noted the request for direct access by the media; this will be considered against existing requirements for development of the platform.
- 3.9 The format of the lists was shown on screen – standard, public and alphabetical lists.

4.0 Escalation Guidance for Media Enquiries (-----)

4.1 -- and -- explained the how they had developed an escalation process for the media/press enquiries if unable to contact individual courts or tribunals. It has been confirmed that the dedicated national helpline that was set up during the coronavirus pandemic for support with remote hearings will not be the long-term solution but there are no plans to remove it in the short term. The escalation process involves a three-step approach:

- Step 1 – contact the court/tribunal
- Step 2 – contact the MOJ Press Office
- Step 3 – contact the HMCTS Communications Directorate

-- explained the guidance would be developed over the coming weeks and shared with the MWG for comment before circulation wider. **Action AP15/20.**

Secretary's note: Operational Media Note dated 16 April, circulated to members following the meeting, provides full details of the national helpline contact number.

4.2 HMCTS is looking at a national organisational design and even though at an early stage - the handling of media enquiries could be a central service within this.

5.0 Open Justice and Remote Hearings (-----)

5.1 ----- stated that the current pandemic had set an unprecedented challenge to accessing courts and tribunals. The Coronavirus Act allowed for remote hearings to continue and this was viewed to be paramount.

5.2 MOJ and HMCTS are looking at how to improve current arrangements and to take this forward with the judiciary. This may include new technology where it may not be appropriate for a remote hearing. There may be an impact on legislation.

5.3 In response to a query from --, ----- stated that the current legislation has a sunset clause, but this can be extended. Arrangements for remote hearings were discussed with the judiciary.

5.4 There followed a discussion around new ways of working, due to current circumstances, in respect of remote hearings. -- stated there were different considerations for barristers and journalists. ----- undertook to explore SH's proposal for journalists to be consulted in the process **Action AP16/20**. -- undertook to provide a note to -- re private hearings, an open justice issue **Action AP17/20**.

6.0 AOB (--)

6.1 -- informed the meeting that PCU WiFi is being removed and will no longer be available in HMCTS buildings from 15 January 2021.

Secretary's note: details were circulated to members following the meeting.

6.2 -- stated that unless there were any specific requirements by members, it was proposed to discontinue using Basecamp as a means of communication by this Group.

6.3 -- stated it was apparent that not all journalists were aware of the dedicated national helpline contact number for remote hearings. -- asked that this was cascaded by members to their respective organisations. The Operational Media Note was circulated to members after the meeting (para' 4.1 refers).

6.4 -- agreed to investigate an issue highlighted by -- that editors are saying it was difficult to get court listings. **Action AP18/20.**

6.5 In response to -- around space for public and the press in hearing rooms, and public occupying spaces for the press, the Group was advised that a new meeting legislation and policy was due, but no date set at this time.

6.6 -- thanked members and presenters for attending and stated that the next meeting would be set in due course.

ACTIONS:

AP14/20 – -- to check staff guidance that CP and LIBRA lists will be provided to the media.

AP15/20 – -- to draft an escalation process guidance for the media (complete and attached – Annex 2).

AP16/20 – ----- to explore proposal for journalists to be consulted in the process (arrangements for remote hearings).

AP17/20 – -- to provide a note to -- re private hearings.

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AP18/20 – -- to look into difficulty for media to get listings from courts.