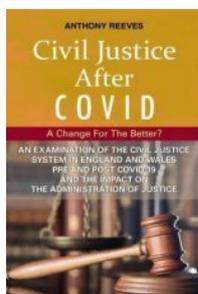




Book Review

Civil Justice After COVID – A Change for the Better?



Anthony Reeves
Straightforward Publishing Ltd
27 Lodge Lane, Spondon, Derby, DE21 7GE.
200 pages. £10.99 paperback.

ISBN: 978-1-913776-08-4

Straightforward Publishing http://straightforwardco.co.uk/emerald/emerald_bookshop_law.html#covid

Amazon <https://amzn.to/3K72Qhz>

Mention law books and many an executive's eye will glaze over. Often seen as dry and uninspiring, most legal books will be the ideal cure for insomnia. Not so Anthony Reeves' book *Civil Justice After COVID – A Change for the Better?* Written in a straightforward, no nonsense way, Reeves brings the legal system and its players to life.

By his own admission, Reeves is seen as an innovator who is not afraid of sharing his views on how the whole civil justice system needs to adapt to the change of operating in a more efficient post-COVID world. In some cases, there needs to be a radical reform: the need for the removal of Costs Budgeting is one area in particular that Reeves feels strongly about, and we find the chapter 'We are Not Accountants' particularly interesting. In it Reeves describes a system well past its prime. As Reeves says, "Costs budgeting is a perfect example of a process that has little benefit to the court user and only serves to waste valuable judge time having to decide issues they should not be involved in ... a classic example of where there is a problem it is always assumed that there needs to be a complicated solution. In this case, the solution is worse than the mischief it was designed to cure."

Follow this up with a chapter on Pre-Action protocols, and Reeves revealing how there needs to be more action, less pre-action and you know you are going to be getting an interesting read particularly when he says, "current system of pre-action protocols has spread like Japanese Knotweed ... once you have it, it is difficult to get rid of ... it's long overdue for a significant pruning."



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After all, the overriding objective in the civil procedures rules is to resolve disputes justly and efficiently at proportionate costs but what is generally accepted is that it has front-loaded costs in civil litigation, says the author.

Disclosure and how much parties reveal to each other is an interesting aspect of its own. “Disclosure depends on the integrity of those involved in litigation,” says Reeves. “If a party thinks there is something missing from the opponent’s disclosure, then they can always make an application to the court, hopefully before the shredding machine has been switched on!”

For every sector and industry, technology has stepped up to the mark and delivered during COVID and the remote workplace has become the norm. Even in the court system, judges have had to wake up and make greater use of online technology to conduct hearings.

Debates will continue whether virtual hearings will have a place post-COVID, and whilst “giving evidence in the comfort of your own home may be less stressful,” says Reeves, “but do the Proceedings have the same formality and seriousness if you are at the kitchen table in your pyjama bottoms?”

Likewise, junior barristers and lawyers have been known to discuss client’s business in public places. As Reeves says, “You never know if your opposing lawyer is sitting in the same railway carriage. When you hand your Skeleton Argument to the other advocate at the Court building and he says, ‘I already know this from your conversation this morning on the 7.20 from Guildford,’ you know you have been rumbled.”

Post-COVID there is a lot that needs to change in the legal system. In *Civil Justice After COVID – A Change for the Better?* Reeves has something vitally important to tell us – and it is a message that needs to be heard by every business that uses the court system.

To many of his counterparts, Reeves might seem maverick in his approach. In *Civil Justice After COVID – A Change for the Better?* not only does Reeves demystifies the legal system, but he reveals its long thought of ‘elite’ players for what they really are.

Every business will be thanking Reeves for writing this book. Highly recommended.