



# Fly on the wall ...



Mark Surgeon

*"All persons who are able to work from home must do so".*

Quoth The Law. Even for "Adjusted Alert Level 1". Fly has learnt, over the last almost exactly one year, that it is impossible for him honestly to deny that he is most certainly a person "able to work from home". In fact, it has been nothing short of amazing to what extent this has been possible. Fly is aware of his relative luck in this regard, as in other regards. But that is not the subject of the story.

Fly's Siblinghood, both at the level of abstraction of "Bar", or "Association", and at that of Group, has had, for yonks, as a kernel of its character, the keeping of, and practising from, chambers. Not mere offices. Chambers. Note and imbibe the numinous quality in the appellation. This phenomenon is coincidentally considered in a piece written about it in this very issue. Take it as read.

Now, this kernel of the character of the Siblinghood, on the one hand, and a duty to work from home if one can, on the other, are clearly in conflict. This has been a conflict that has not sat well with Fly. His chambers, and his Group, had, for some 22 years, been at the centre of Fly's professional daily life. It entailed just the

right balance of interaction and solitude that Fly found most approximated the perfect level of such opposites one could possibly hope for in one's daily professional life. Then came "*all persons who are able to work from home must do so*". And soon, Fly's occasional visits to what used to be his daily working space, to pick up some or other piece of paper or do one of the incredibly few things that could not perfectly adequately be done "*from home*" (digitally empowered), suggested to him that this was actually quite a nice and pleasant looking atmosphere in which to work, something he ought perhaps to give a try every now and then. That would at the very least somewhat ameliorate the notion of keeping what had become rather overpriced storage facilities. But "*all persons...*".

Let's just wait until this is over, stay healthy, do one's bit to avoid harm to loved ones and strangers, and then, well, those storage facilities can once again metamorphise into The Place Where I Work, and the building once again become The Place Where I Interact with My Colleagues. But then dawns the awakening. Yes, there is a vaccine. In fact there are quite a few. But it is going to take a long, long time before it has been

sufficiently administered in Fly's poor old land to make an appreciable difference to the way things are. Even assuming B1.351 or similar horrors don't win the race. And what will be left of that kernel of the character of the Siblinghood by then?

Don't get me wrong. Fly can take to laziness as easily as the next chap, and some things are ridiculously more convenient and less schlepmy this way than before. But, a sense of grief has set in – a mourning, as for a lost life, and with it a reasonable apprehension of irreparable harm that may befall The Way It Was.

It seems Fly may, and perhaps must, start believing in a case that, for his Siblinghood, "working" entails more than just "working", and that he may advance a case with reasonable prospects of success in favour of saying the kind of "working" that he needs to do, for it to make the kind of sense it should make, simply cannot be done entirely from home. Not without altering it into some other, lesser, form of "working".

At least not all the time.

And so, Fly shall squeeze into those suits again, wipe off the dust, and, perhaps by degrees, resume a semblance of What Was. For now. 