

VILLAGE

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Village Magazine promotes in its columns the fair distribution of resources, welfare, respect and opportunity by the analysis and investigation of inequalities, unsustainable development and corruption, and the media's role in their perpetuation; and by acute cultural analysis.

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Whistleblowing until your cheeks lock and you have to sit down

The Irish media and national politicians are facilitating cover-ups of a range of issues – from the issues missed by feeble tribunals to Sugarman, Ansbacher, CRH and planning in Donegal

VILLAGE AIMS TO promote equality, sustainability and accountability/transparency. Not being so ideological the accountability/transparency agenda is often perceived as dry. The Cinderella.

While many countries have their political weak spots in these fascist-tickling post-truth times, unserious Ireland runs a particularly fragile regime when it comes to impropriety. One of the intended purposes of *Village* magazine is to get to the bottom of many of the corruptions that other media, lazy, conservative or sometimes beholden, keep from public view.

This magazine considers that the political process has abjured action on the biggest corruption issues of our time. Report after report, inquiry after inquiry has been celebrated by the media though the reports rarely nailed

THERE ARE a few minor scandals that *Village* has highlighted that attracted extraordinarily little interest elsewhere. These issues are mostly of interest for what they symptomise.

- The mistreatment by the Law Society of complaints against its members, including the unduly zealous undermining of solicitor Colm Murphy. *The Phoenix* and *Sunday Business Post* gave some space to Murphy's case. Nothing elsewhere.
- Difficulties dating back thirty years at the Irish Red Cross which has been run amateurishly and in the shadow of one dominant volunteer have been suppressed by the national media.
- The overpayment and conflicts of interests of the former CEO of the Royal **Institute of the Architects** of Ireland, John Graby, have not troubled the national discourse. *The Irish Times* and *Sunday Business Post* gave it a little, unexcited coverage but nothing elsewhere.

What unites these issues is that the media are well disposed to the stalwart institutions complained of, and so underreport the issues.

This also explains why the series of articles published by *Village* in 2010 about **conflicts of interests** for then **Councillor Oisín Quinn in Dublin City Council** were downplayed and distorted in the media. Quinn is a presentable and progressive pro-business Labour

the truth, and even more rarely generated comprehensive remedial action. From **Morris** to **Smithwick** to **Fennelly** to **O'Neill** to **Cregan**, investiga-

tions of our delinquent Garda if not abortive have uncovered bits and pieces but rarely the whole picture and clearly the follow-ups have been nugatory. From the **Beef Tribunal** report, which was tailored to advance its judicial author's career, to the **Moriarty Tribunal's** defanged findings on Denis O'Brien, to the vastly discredited **Planning Tribunal**, our major non-Garda investigations too have been **skewed, indefinite** and **unreforming**.

Party barrister from a wealthy family with an agenda attuned to those of our conservative media. Quinn had not seen the importance, for ethics and ethics legislation, of absenting yourself from discussions on matters the determination of which affects your material interest. Quinn's failure was concededly a minor breach and the actions were not in bad faith. What was extraordinary is the absence of interest from the press, some of which went to great lengths to sustain misreports of the findings of the Standards in Public Office in the matter.

A not dissimilar case figured in the last edition of *Village* where **Councillor Fiona O'Loughlin in Kildare County Council** voted money for a worthy organisation established in memory of her father and chaired by her brother. The entire Council rallied around the Fianna Fáil Councillor. When another Councillor, Fiona McLoughlin Healy, raised the issue of a conflict of interest she suffered a series of disavowals, including from her own Fine Gael Party, that has resulted in her quite outrageous suspension from the party. The local press can't see the issue. The national press have taken no interest.

These issues define a certain media laxity. For *Village* though there are several enormous issues we have covered that have entirely escaped political accountability. They are on a different scale. These are **Sugarman, Ansbacher, CRH** and **planning in Donegal**.

