

Concern over abandoned house

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HAVING fallen into disrepair due to a lack of occupancy for over a few years, a house belonging to the Department of Public Works (DPW) on Russom Street in Verulam has become more than an eyesore, as it is now allegedly a haven for vagrants, drug use and prostitution.

The house originally belonged to Verulam Primary School, which is situated across the street from the house, but over the years, it was allegedly taken over by SAPS and then eventually left empty which in turn attracted unsavoury elements to the property.

Principal of Verulam Primary School Balan Pather said that when under their care, the house was initially designated for the principal of the school, but it has not been under their care for many

years. As pupils walk past the house to get to the school, Pather worries that its occupants may pose a danger to them.

Hoping that the house will be returned to the school care, Pather said: “There is a critical need at Verulam Primary, [due to the school] being centrally located, that the house is given back to Verulam Primary, we can utilise and make good use of it. It belongs to DPW and originally belonged to the school, and if they can return it to us, we wouldn’t mind accepting it and sorting it out.”

Local councillor Johnson Chetty has on numerous occasions tried to get in touch with the relevant persons to take responsibility of the house, but was met with dead ends.

Chetty said: “This property was home to a SAPS officer who relocated about two years ago. The property is literally a stone’s throw from the police

station, yet ironically its aiding and abetting the crime wave in Verulam. I have addressed this concern repeatedly with the station officer who was tasked to maintain SAPS resources. This officer made every effort to get the provincial office to be accountable, but Province gave her repeated excuses for non-attendance. It has also been established that another abandoned DPW home on the same road has become another nuisance building.”

When queried, Verulam police spokesperson Captain Henry Kisten said that he could not comment on the matter at this stage.

Speaking to the *Weekly*, media liaison officer of the KZN DPW, Mbulelo Baloyi said: The property in question is under the KZN Provincial Government. The Department of Public Works is currently preparing a lease agreement to let out the said property to an NGO.”



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Chairperson of the Brindhaven Civic Association Vischal Dhudibal at the DPW house in Russom Street.