

Durker Roods Public Meeting – 19th June 2023, 6.00pm

Six local councillors and two representatives each from the police and Kirklees Council attended the meeting.

Cllr Noon opened the meeting highlighting the purpose of this, is to set a level of expectation and what is happening now and moving forward.

Cllr Noon stated Meltham Town Council cannot legally do anything at this point, but the focus should be on maintaining the fabric and integrity of the building.

He advised the group Michael McMohan owns the building and does not yet want to sell, but he has sold off many rooms to investors – we have contact with some of these, but they are worldwide and not easy to get in touch with. One member of the public is in contact with Mr McMohan and that is why we know he doesn't want to sell.

As there isn't one sole owner it is very difficult to obtain a compulsory purchase order due to the number of investors as mentioned above, but it is being looked at.

Crime has been highlighted on the building and the public advised what is currently being done to help prevent this... ground floor and basement access points boarded up.

Intruders are still getting in, Kirklees Council advised that Environmental Health did have dialogue with Mr McMohan up to April 2022 then this dialogue stopped.

Since this a section 16 was served and never returned, it was even served to another one of Mr McMohan's company's – again no reply.

As of the 19th of June, a section 29 has been served to secure access via the fire escape and potentially other second floor access points such as the windows raised in this meeting.

Mr McMohan has 7 days to respond, or Kirklees Council can then secure these areas.

The Police advised they have attended 99 calls relating to crime at Durker Roods, but cannot always be there quickly as their calls are risk assessed and they must work in the priority order given to them.

The Police also stated that the building is now too dangerous to enter, so wouldn't pursue any suspects entering in there as there are minimal floorboards and floors themselves aren't secure.

The public asked what the duty of care is to the children going in there. Response was that it wasn't just children, young adults also but it is currently the responsibility of the owner to ensure their property is secure.

It was asked if an official presence could talk to the school children about this and it was widely agreed that this needs to happen in some capacity.

Cllr Crankshaw offered to visit the property when the children/young adults were there, hopefully to explain why they shouldn't be entering the building on the grounds of safety and trespassing.

Public question asked as to whether the building is listed wondering if this would help speed up securing it. It is not and were advised it is not worth pursuing due to issues with purchasing the property down the line.

Meeting advised there are no public rights of way through the property.

Question asked if Kirklees could maintain the grounds of the property, advised that again as it is privately owned it is difficult for them to do so.

As the road is private Kirklees cannot concrete block the entrances to stop trespassers entering the land.

A WhatsApp group has been created for volunteers to help maintain the grounds.

Kirklees Council have advised that they will get pest control to sort the rat issue.

Cllr Noon advised that moving forward clear communication will be given as to the progress of this unfortunate situation.

Cllr Greaves ended the meeting to explain in more detail of the difficulties in dealing with the owner, stating that lock down masked quite a lot of the issues as it wasn't unusual for hospitality to be closed in this period.