



Item 14.a

## Full Council – 18 September 2023

### Amendment submitted by the Labour Group to the Motion for the Non Cabinet Member Debate

*Proposed amendment – To add the wording in red and delete the wording indicated:*

#### Provision of support to deal with cases of RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete) in Brent Schools

##### This Council notes:

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) is a lightweight form of concrete pioneered in Sweden whose use swept across Europe particularly in schools, colleges, and other building construction from the 1950's until the mid-1990s. Used in flat roofing, floors, and walls it offered a cheaper alternative to standard concrete, but its short lifespan means its use in permanent buildings has caused problems. The Secretary of State for Education has clarified, out of 22,500 schools in England, 156 have been confirmed to have RAAC and 52 of these have already got mitigations in place and are dealing with repairs.

To date, it has been identified that **only** one Brent school, although not maintained by the Council, has RAAC. St. Gregory's Catholic Science College discovered it had RAAC in its Maths block in November 2022. Safety measures were introduced, and ~~work is under way which~~ **was completed by Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September** ~~should be completed by Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September~~. The Council was informed by the school's CEO/Headteacher in January 2023 of the discovery of RAAC. There is no current financial impact to the Council as the school affected is **operated by an academy trust** ~~not a community school~~, therefore the local authority is not the responsible body.

Upon notification in January 2023, DfE have supported the school in arranging surveys and discussing the management of RAAC. Since the summer, a dedicated case officer has been assigned to the school from the DfE to manage the next steps of removing RAAC from the school with all costs to be reimbursed by the DfE **as it rightfully should**.

When Brent residents apply for rear building extensions, building control officers demand high quality materials be used. If this RAAC was known to have a recommended 30-year lifespan there must be question as to why it was approved in long term school and civic developments and what reviews were put in place by Building Control to undertake regular checks on its safety?

~~Let's also not get carried away with the way~~ Parents, teachers and pupils across the country have been rightly concerned about the news of RAAC and this has been reflected in how it has been reported. ~~We all remember Gordon Brown's comments about a Rochdale constituent calling her a "bigoted woman" and who later went on to deliver a personal grovelling apology. Never has it been so evident that the journalists of this country lead and dictate the news agenda, something the Secretary of State for Education Gillian Keegan MP should have learnt from~~ is the tenth Conservative Secretary of State for Education since 2010 and showed no sympathy for parents' concerns across the UK in her highly unprofessional behaviour when she was being interviewed by ITV news.

**As a result, this Council recognises:**

- That ~~the Conservative successive Governments of different political persuasions since in the 1980s have all colluded in neglecting capital and infrastructure investment to service~~ despite insatiable public demand for increased revenue spending on vital public services. This has been worsened by the effects of Austerity which decimated the country's public services and de-funded buildings provided for our nation's schoolchildren. People a century ago were truly building schools for the future; today's squabbles are much more about 'Patching Schools for the Present'. The uncomfortable truth is that this really, if anything, has been a pass-the-parcel problem ~~by successive~~ made worse by the current Conservative governments, putting at risk school children and staff.
- ~~That whilst~~ It was a Labour Government that launched ~~may cite~~ the Building Schools for the Future Programme, which was the biggest school building programme since the Victorian times allocating £55billion to rebuild every secondary school in the country. In the first months of the Conservative-led Coalition Government in 2010, then Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove scrapped the scheme and offered no replacement. Gove has later called the cancellation of this programme his biggest mistake in office. ~~there was criticism of the scheme in a National Audit Office (NAO) report and a review of the scheme - commissioned by the government, which found the allocation of funding for school buildings had been "complex, time-consuming, expensive and opaque".~~
- Covid has taught us so many things and lead us to deal with issues that we thought would never be achieved. We will also deal with this: and learn the valuable lesson of investing in our public services to ensure good practice and safety for all of our residents.
- Whilst global events continue, there is also a need to recognise that the safety of our children comes first. The issue of RAAC has been missed ~~by successive governments of all colours, including the coalition,~~ for over 30 years. In 2002 the Labour government first became aware of the deterioration and risks of RAAC via a BRE (Building Research Establishment) report. In 2018 Conservative Minister Damian Hinds ordered an urgent and comprehensive review of RAAC in all schools. It is because of these inspections that we know the extent of the current risks. Senior officials at the Department of Education told the treasury while Rishi Sunak was Chancellor at the time that there was a need to rebuild

300 to 400 schools a year in England, Sunak only allowed funding for 100 schools which was then halved to 50.

**This Council therefore resolves:**

- To request the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools writes to the Secretary of State for Education to call for urgent additional funding to be secured for buildings affected by RAAC in Brent and across the UK, and for her to outline what measures the Government is doing to ensure the safety of our schoolchildren.
- To pledge to support, ~~in any way we can guide and advise~~ St Gregory's Catholic Science College, which is the only Brent schools currently affected with RAAC while also noting that there are limitations to how we as a Council can assist as the school is operated by an Academy and we pledge to support, guide and advise any schools which may become known in future.
- To recognise that school requests for planning permission and other compliance issues from the council should be dealt with expeditiously- **while following the planning and safety legislation that underpins all planning decisions.**
- To work cross party to expedite planning permissions where required for the temporary classrooms and Portacabins schools may require and should they go down this route, to house the classrooms on site or alternatively assist in finding suitable accommodation across the borough. For example, when schools ask for planning permission there should be no complacency in recognising any defects and dealing with them quickly.
- To communicate with the affected schools should they need help with contractors for remedial works.
- In the case of schools which are affected by RAAC but are not the council's responsibility, if the schools are short of funds to remedy the defects the Council to **call on the Government to provide the necessary funding and not rely on already stretched Local Government budgets.** ~~consider providing financial support recognising that the DfE has already committed to refund all costs associated with RAAC.~~
- To continue closely monitoring through building control functions all schools for cases of unsafe materials.

Councillor Gwen Grahl  
Cricklewood & Mapesbury ward