Dear Councilor <INSERT NAME>,

I am a member of Townswomen’s Guilds (TG), one of the UK’s largest women’s organisations whose members campaign on a wide range of topics. I am writing to ask you for more information about the management of asbestos in schools in <INSERT AREA>. I am asking this because I am concerned about the safety of both the children and the teaching and support staff at the school. In recent months there has been an increasing number of stories in the press about problems with asbestos in schools and I am keen to understand how this problem is dealt with locally.

The latest research in the UK shows that over 86% of schools in the UK do currently contain asbestos, putting over 7 million pupils at regular risk of exposure. A survey by the NUT in 2015 found that only 46% of teachers knew if there was asbestos in their school. This lack of knowledge puts them and their pupils directly at risk.

Mesothelioma has a very long latency meaning that many victims are diagnosed with the illness 30 to 40 years after their exposure. 249 school staff have died from mesothelioma since 2001. In 2016 alone 32 teaching professionals died. Children are particularly vulnerable to developing mesothelioma. A child first exposed at age 5 is five times more likely to contract mesothelioma than someone first exposed at age 30. It is estimated that between 200 and 300 people are dying each year as a result of exposure to asbestos when they were at school. 2 million asbestos fibres can fit on a pin head and can pass through the smallest gap or crack.

At our 2018 AGM, TG members voted to support the motion that, ‘*every establishment that contains asbestos must produce an annual report for staff, pupils and their families. This report must explain how asbestos can affect health, where asbestos is present and how it is being monitored and maintained’*. As part of our ensuing campaign, I would like to learn more about the situation in my local area, and would be grateful if you could please answer the following questions:

**My questions**

Has an up to date asbestos survey been carried out for schools in <INSERT AREA>? Is there asbestos present and is there an ‘asbestos management plan’ in place for each school?

If there is asbestos please can you tell me:

1. Which local schools contain asbestos? How much there is? What condition is it in? What plans are in place for it’s management and removal? Do you have sufficient budget to remove asbestos from local schools?
2. Have there been any recorded instances of asbestos disturbances in local schools?
3. Is training provided to all school staff about asbestos in their schools? Do all teachers, support staff and volunteers (including staff on temporary contracts) in <INSERT AREA> know where the asbestos is and what actions to take if they see any damage to the asbestos?
4. Will <INSERT AREA> commit to require all local schools to produce an annual report for all parents and school staff reporting on the extent and condition of asbestos in the school and the plans in place for it’s management and removal?

You are probably aware that the HSE currently recommends that asbestos in schools is classified as ‘low risk’ as long as it is undisturbed. However in 2012 MPs in the All Party Parliamentary Group on Occupational Health and Safety concluded that, ‘It is unjustified to classify schools as a “low-risk environment.” Even low levels of exposure to asbestos can cause mesothelioma. The Department of Health’s Committee on Carcinogenicity have found that a five-year-old is five times more likely than an adult of 30 to develop mesothelioma, a type of cancer linked to asbestos, if they are exposed to it at the same time. The HSE reported that there have been almost 200 reported asbestos disturbances in schools in the last five years. There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos.

I’d be grateful if you could respond to this request by writing to me at <INSERT ADDRESS>.

With best wishes,