

The news that local employer and retail distributor Palmer & Harvey has entered administration is a devastating blow to all those employed at the Aylesford and Snodland sites in my constituency, especially in the run up to the Christmas period. I found out late on Tuesday night from the TV news with no forewarning at all and I would not be surprised if this is how many of the employees at the site found out too, and now face redundancy at such a difficult time of year.

As soon as I heard about the news I rearranged my diary to make sure I could speak to all the relevant organisations and co-ordinate a joint response to the announcement. My first priority is to make sure those staff affected are given clarity around redundancies and that all necessary support they need is made available to them over the coming weeks.

At the time of writing I have already spoken to the local Jobcentre Plus team and a rapid redundancy team is being set-up to deal with enquiries, similar to when Aylesford Newsprint entered administration, and an information event will be organised next week for all those affected. Over the coming days I will also be speaking with the administrators PwC for clarity on the current situation and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers to offer any support to their members in any way I can. Already local businesses have been in touch to say they have potential vacancies and over the course of the next few days I will be liaising with more local businesses to see what support they may be able to offer those now facing redundancy.

This is desperately sad news for the local community and it is vital that those affected have access to the support they need and I am committed to working with all relevant organisations to make sure this is the case.