

I'm often asked if I have to have a thick skin as an MP. The answer is to some extent yes but I always vowed I wouldn't change who I am deep down. I wear my heart on my sleeve and for this past week it has been hard to hide.

The news about Palmer & Harvey going into administration, affecting hundreds of my constituents, was truly devastating, especially so close to Christmas. But it is also infuriating. Reports over the weekend show that millions of pounds was being taken out of the company mere months before it collapsed to pay dividends to executives. This is absolutely shocking and smacks of greed at the cost of the current and future livelihoods for those who have served the company.

I had an opportunity to meet some at a meeting on Monday which was organised to provide some initial advice on financial and employment support. What was clear is that they were being told very little, including, at that point, on what they were owed and when they would be getting it. But even now as I type it is unclear what has happened to employees pensions and when they would get further information. Those I met impressed upon me that many workers were long service employees. People had been at the company for over a decade, and some double that, and therefore their future retirement income was being meticulously planned.

Sadly having been through this with Aylesford Newsprint it is most likely that they will not get what they thought. I shall continue to support ex employees as much as I can but if there is one lesson I have learnt is that we have to stop this immoral behaviour of executives taking money out of companies that they know face financial difficulties.