



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Please reply to:  
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Mr Alex Knight  
Chief Executive  
Samworth Brothers  
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Leicestershire  
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Our Ref: SO/SAMW01001/01160274

10 May 2016

Dear Mr Knight

**Re: Samworth Brothers employee contract changes**

I recently held a meeting with around 60 staff at Samworth Brothers in my constituency to discuss changes to their employee contracts. This was one of the busiest meetings I have ever held as a local MP.

The workers told me that premium rates for night shifts, weekend and bank holiday working and overtime have been cut and in some cases would ultimately be phased out. Each and every one of the workers present was deeply concerned that they would end up worse off as a result of these changes, despite recent increases in the national minimum wage.

In addition, virtually all of the employees who attended the meeting said they had felt forced into signing the new contracts because if they didn't, they would lose their jobs – despite the fact that some of them have worked for Samworth Brothers for 15 years or more.

I subsequently met with your Group Executive Board Directors, Mr Paul Davey and Mr Ian Fletcher, to discuss my serious concerns about this issue.

At the meeting Mr Davey and Mr Fletcher did not deny that the changes to employee contracts were at least in part influenced by the impact of the higher minimum wage. They confirmed that around 15 percent of the 2000 people who work at your Bradgate Bakery site will be worse off – that is 300 people in total.

Mr Davey and Mr Fletcher said that these employees would on average 'only' be worse off by around £200 a year. I requested an urgent update on the precise amounts your employees will lose each year, but this information has so far not been forthcoming.

Mr Davey and Mr Fletcher outlined a range of 'reward schemes' that the company is putting in place which they said would help staff, such as vouchers for supermarkets, occasional bonus payments, and private medical insurance. I made it very clear that I do not believe that such

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reward schemes make up for cuts in annual salaries on which people's mortgages and bills depend.

As a result of my meetings with your employees and executive directors, I would now like answers to the following questions.

First, it was clear by the strength of feeling amongst staff who attended my meeting that the various reward schemes that are being put in place at Bradgate Bakery are simply not enough to offset the reduced wages people will face as a result of the employee contract changes. These staff need to be compensated for their losses and I want to know what more can be done to smooth the transition and ensure they do not lose out.

Second, I am deeply concerned by the reports from your staff of being bullied by their managers into signing the new contracts. This sort of behaviour is completely unacceptable and I want to know exactly what action will be taken to address this very serious issue.

Third, I strongly urge Samworth Brothers to recognise the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union, who have been supporting a number of your employees at Bradgate Bakery. Collective bargaining is by far the best way to address issues of staff pay, terms and conditions. I understand that voluntary recognition is being discussed at your site in Melton Mowbray and I believe this would be the best way forward at your Bradgate Bakery site too.

I want to emphasise how extremely concerned I am that at least 300 people who work for Samworth Brothers in my constituency will be worse off, when they should be getting a pay rise because of increases in the national minimum wage.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

With best wishes

Liz Kendall MP  
Member of Parliament for Leicester West