

Birthday delight as residents celebrate

MUSIC, afternoon tea and memories all featured when a Sevenoaks care home celebrated a quarter of a century on Friday.

Gloucester House, on Lansdowne Road, opened in 1991 and has since supported hundreds of the area's elderly.

The celebration also included a visit from Sevenoaks MP Michael Fallon who was invited after Gloucester House residents read a recent column in the Chronicle about the importance of local, well-loved NHS services.

He said: "I was very pleased to help the staff and residents of Gloucester House to celebrate this anniversary.

"Speaking to the residents, it was clear that they have happy, fulfilled lives at the home thanks to its hardworking staff.

"That local, tailored approach is vital and we need to replicate it as much as possible."



PIECE OF CAKE: The Gloucester House anniversary party



TEA: Another cuppa please



ENTERTAINER: Singer Chase Aitch

Scores of jobs go in flour firm failure

Worker: We were kept in the dark until last minute

By Gabriel Shepard

gabriel.shepard@sevenoakschronicle.co.uk

A LONG-ESTABLISHED Sevenoaks business has closed leaving 49 workers jobless.

BFP Wholesale, based on the Vestry Road Estate, supplied ingredients such as flour and sugar to everyone from independent family bakers to high street giants including Greggs.

But the firm, which employed 165 staff across four sites in the UK, has now gone into administration, with the Sevenoaks depot ceasing trading completely.

It followed what administrators KPMG described as a "sustained period of declining revenues", exacerbated by the withdrawal of its credit insurance.

Part of the business has been sold to Glasgow-based Kent Foods Ltd but the Sevenoaks and Highbridge depots are now

closed creating 74 redundancies in total.

A former employee, who the Chronicle agreed not to name, said there had been plenty of demand for its services – but the lack of credit insurance had seriously impacted the ability to get the required stock.

"We were a family – that's how we saw ourselves," she said. "You've got people who'd worked there for 20 years. Their whole working life was at BFP.

Depleting

"You could tell something was wrong in January when stock levels started depleting. We went to the management to ask what was going on but they said everything was fine and that we needed to be positive and talk up the business to our customers.

"The last month was absolutely awful. The orders kept

coming in but we had to phone up customers to say we haven't got any stock. It was embarrassing, we've had customers for 30 years and we've got a really good relationship with them.

"Then at the beginning of April a customer told us that they had heard we had gone into administration. When we asked the management we were told this was categorically untrue."

Administrators were officially appointed last Tuesday and on Monday this week it was confirmed that the Sevenoaks base would not be saved. Staff will be given the opportunity to apply for redundancy via the government scheme but fear they will not get as much as they would have been entitled to had the company not gone into administration.

"We worked so hard, doing extra hours to try and make

things work but I think we've been treated very badly overall," the former employee added.

Of the 49 staff set to lose their jobs include lorry drivers, sales staff, accountants and management.

Believed

Most are believed to live locally. Mark Tuvey, Chairman of the Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce said: "BFP were not Chamber members so we do not know the organisation well. It is always a shame to hear of a Sevenoaks based company in trouble particularly when business is thriving in the area. It is a great shame that so many jobs will be lost."

In its most recent accounts for the year ended 31 December 2014, BFP blamed food price deflation on a £3.1m decline in turnover to £73m and an operating loss of £1.6m.



TROUBLE: BFP Wholesale on the Connections Industrial Estate

41 jobs to go as polythene factory moves north

A SEVENOAKS polythene factory is set to close, putting 41 jobs under threat.

British Polythene Industries announced the proposed closure of its BPI Films plant in The Moor Road on Tuesday.

The move is part of a plan by the plastics PLC to move production to its site at Bromborough, Wirral.

It comes despite a £2million investment in a new production line in November 2012.

Business director Dave Beale said: "We are disappointed that we have had to announce the proposed closure of the Sevenoaks site. Market pressures on plain film on the reel products mean that we need to

minimise production costs and maximise manufacturing outputs. Our Bromborough site has advanced technology which will improve operational efficiency and help us to remain competitive in these markets."

The company has entered into redundancy consultation with employee representatives for a period of 30 days and say

every effort will be made to find alternative employment.

Mr Beale added: "We are committed to finding alternative jobs where possible for affected employees within BPI or outside of the group."

BPI is regarded as a high tech leader in its field. The Sevenoaks base was visited by Prince Andrew in 2009.



What makes our legal advice some of the best available?

300 years of practice

This landmark practice has been in Sevenoaks for nearly 300 years. Today our specialist team offer private and commercial clients an extensive range of legal services.

To find out more, call

01732 459931



www.knocker-foskett.co.uk

Knocker & Foskett
SOLICITORS

The Red House, 50 High Street, Sevenoaks, TN13 1JL