

## Mark gives supermarkets food for thought

Mark Lancaster has given supermarkets food for thought by pressing them to help a local charity.

Inspired by a visit to the Food Bank, the MP for Milton Keynes North has written to the city's seven leading stores and suggested ways they could assist the project.

The Stacey Bushes-based warehouse distributes food parcels to residents in crisis through four outlets, giving out 2,700 so far this year.

Although it has an ad hoc arrangement for usable products that would otherwise be thrown away with Tesco in Fenny Lock, Mr Lancaster believes there is more scope to work with other chains.

After a tour of the warehouse, Mr Lancaster discussed ideas with manager Sue Wall, suggesting ways they could formally acquire unwanted, but usable goods from Waitrose, Marks and Spencer, Tesco, Morrisons, Asda, Sainsbury's and the Co-Op.

One key idea was for online shoppers to be able to add an additional item to their virtual basket which would be automatically given to the Food Bank. The option for shoppers to donate loyalty points to the charity was also mooted.

Mr Lancaster said: "Food parcels are something we associate with the third world, not Milton Keynes. But there is a very real need for a service like this. The charity really strikes a chord with the Harvest Festival mentality - offering something small that will directly help someone else. But there are ways of pushing this further and involving bigger players, and I want to help the charity explore those options."

Sue Wall added: "Getting support from the leading supermarkets with unwanted but usable goods would make a massive difference to our sustainability, as would a permanent, visible collection point in store to enable their customers to buy an item and easily donate it. This worked extremely well at Sainsbury's during our time as their local Charity of the Year."