

'A politician with conviction'

ONE of the country's most colourful and outspoken female politicians visited *Times Territory* this week – in typically bullish mood, writes Ross Logan.

Conservative MP Ann Widdecombe, who will be retiring at the next general election, joined members of Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce for a lunch at Beales Hotel, in Comet Way, Hatfield.

Her visit followed the appointment of fellow Tory John Bercow as the new Speaker of the Commons – a position she had contested herself.

Speaking to the *WHT*, Ms Widdecombe said she would be supporting Mr Bercow, despite criticism from senior Conservative figures who suspect him of having Labour sympathies.

"He [John Bercow] was not my first choice, but the Commons has made its decision and it's now our job to rally behind him," she said.

Speaking at the lunch, Ms Widdecombe accused the Government of over legislating, saying it had a detrimental effect on businesses and individuals alike and criticised its leaning towards political correctness.

She also spoke out about recent calls for MPs to be excluded from having outside inter-

ests, (in the wake of the expenses scandal) arguing it was unreasonable to expect MPs not to have interests outside of politics.

Doing so, she reasoned, would introduce more MPs with little experience of the real world.

Chamber chief executive Tim Hutchings said: "It was great to hear from a politician with conviction.

"Many of the points she raised had had resonance with the businesses present and all found her to be well informed and entertaining.

"It's a shame she is retiring at the end of this Parliament. It will be considerably less colourful for her going."

