

Accountants want Patten to press on with reform

By Mary Binks

ACCOUNTANTS have cast their vote in a survey on political reform and urged Governor Chris Patten to implement his democracy blueprint as soon as possible — but in a revised form.

The survey was conducted by Legislative Councillor Peter Wong — the Liberal Party member who branded Mr Patten the worst governor in the history of Hong Kong.

Some 79 per cent of the Hong Kong Society of Accountants membership polled last month supported the partial reform bill now before the legislature.

A quarter of those polled opposed the abolition of appointed membership to district boards and municipal councils. And 16 per cent opposed lowering the voting age from 21 to 18.

About two-thirds wanted reforms to be pushed regardless of China's opposition and the political fallout post-1997.

China vowed to disband the three tiers of Hong Kong government if Britain acts on constitutional reform without their consent. But only 34.9 per cent of respondents insisted reforms should not begin without Beijing approval.

A majority, 63.9 per cent, opted for compromise when asked which they prefer — Mr Patten's original reforms or revised versions offered by Britain during China talks.

Mr Wong said results were pragmatic but only a general indicator because the survey sample size was small.