

# Accountants reach agreement on political row

By Peta Firth

THE bitter row within the Hong Kong Society of Accountants (HKSA) over whether or not the society should give its backing to candidates in district board elections ended at last night's annual general meeting.

Two motions put forward by accountant and Liberal Party member Edward Chow challenging the society's right to support outgoing HKSA president Eric Li in his district board election campaign were withdrawn.

A partner at KPMG Peat Marwick, Nicholas Etches, who was last night elected as next year's HKSA president, said the motions were withdrawn because they were based on incorrect legal premises and could not have been passed.

The row blew up because Mr Li received vocal backing from the HKSA for his district board election campaign, in which he subsequently went on to defeat Mr Chow.

Mr Etches said that in future the society would not back individual candidates.

"My position is that I would not

wish to get involved in the society supporting any platform."

At the same time, Peter Wong, who currently holds the accountancy profession's functional constituency seat in the Legislative Council, announced his intention not to contest next summer's Legco election.

Mr Etches said no new candidate had thrown their hat into the ring to replace Mr Wong, and they were unlikely to do so until closer to next year's elections.

He said he had no plans yet to enter the race himself.

Meanwhile, the society is also

drawing up plans to scrap its current examination system, which is based on British standards, and replace it with an exam system tailor-made for Hong Kong.

The plan is intended to improve prospects for better collaboration with mainland accountants by making the course that accountants study more relevant to China.

The society will draw up a consultation document by the end of the first quarter next year to thrash out the best way of putting its plans into action.

Mr Etches said top priority would be given to making sure that

the new examinations still met tough international accountancy standards.

China's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office has given the HKSA its assurance that it wants it to develop parallel with, but separate from, the Chinese Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Mr Etches said there would be no plans for the two to amalgamate after 1997. Instead, there would be cross-fertilisation of training and ideas.

The society is also planning to bar non-graduates from entering the profession.

