

**80th ISTD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES WEDNESDAY 12  
NOVEMBER 2025, 11:00 GMT**

**ONLINE**

**In attendance**

Michael Elliott (Chair), Ginny Brown (CEO), Jeremy Kean, Gemma Matthews, Nikki Stewart, Juliet Diener, Alison Melville-Cline, Louise Molton, Ben Gurney, Lynn Chandler, Christina Fotinaki, Elizabeth Nyman, Emma Stewart, Susan James, Louise Mellin, Beverley Rand, Alison Jenner, Linda Sweetzer, Astrid Sherman, Linda Isaacs, Maria Howse, Frederick Way, Peter Gregson.

**Minute taker in attendance:** Liam Mills

**Apologies were received from:** Mary Cooke, Shirley-Anne Osborne, Peter Meager, Tom Hobden

**Welcome:**

The Society's Chair, Michael Elliott, welcomed those attending and informed them of some housekeeping points and of the agenda that would be followed during the meeting. Mr. Elliott informed the meeting that for agenda item 4, Questions, no questions had been submitted in advance, but attendees were invited to submit questions during the course of the meeting, and he described how questions could be submitted.

**Item 1: Chair's welcome and address**

Mr. Elliott gave an address on behalf of the Board of Trustees (Council) (see **Appendix 1** for a summary) before moving on to the agenda for the remainder of the meeting.

**Item 2: Minutes of the last meeting held on 13 November 2024**

The minutes of the previous AGM held on 13 November 2024 were received. There were no comments made. Mr. Elliott approved the minutes.

**Item 3: To vote on ordinary resolutions**

Mr. Elliott announced the resolutions to be voted on, and the electronic ballot was opened. He announced the four resolutions which were as follows:

- 3.1. To re-elect Lynn Chandler for a third term of office
- 3.2. To re-elect Juliet Diener for a second term of office
- 3.3. To re-elect Peter Meager for a second term of office
- 3.4. To re-elect Frederick Way for a third term of office

A short film was presented, after which voting was closed.

**Item 4: Questions**

Ms. Brown reminded attendees that questions could be submitted during the meeting and added that a further invitation to ask questions or make comments would be made following the presentations.

**Item 5. Chief Executive address**

Ms. Brown delivered the Chief Executive Address (**Appendix 2**)

**Item 6. 2021/22 Accounts presentation**

Ms. Stewart, Director of Finance and Resources, presented the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 and the reports of the charity trustees and auditors. (**Appendix 3**)

**Item 7. Digital Transformation Strategy**

Mr. Gregson, Director of Operations and Digital Transformation, delivered a presentation on the Digital Transformation Strategy (**Appendix 4**), after which he invited Mr. Elliott to present the remaining items on the meeting agenda.

**Item 8. Voting results: Appointment of Charity Trustees**

Mr. Elliott confirmed that the votes had been counted and announced the results as follows:

- 3.1. Lynn Chandler was re-elected for a third term of office
- 3.2. Juliet Diener was re-elected for a second term of office
- 3.3. Peter Meager was re-elected for a second term of office
- 3.4. Frederick Way was re-elected for a third term of office

**Item 9. Faculty Elections**

Voting in the 2024 elections to Faculty Committees had closed on 10 November 2025. The results of the elections were announced by Mr. Elliott as follows:

- **Classical Indian Dance Faculty:**

The following members were elected unopposed to the Classical Indian Dance Faculty Committee:

- Chitraleka Bolar
- Pushkala Gopal
- Nina Rajarani
- Swati Raut
- Urja Thakore

- **Imperial Classical Ballet Faculty**

The following members were elected by ballot to the Imperial Classical Ballet Faculty Committee:

- Ruth Davies
- Sinead Murphy
- Heidi Speakman
- Irela Strachan
- Jackie Styles
- Lorraine Swain
- Tracey Warner

**Item 4a: Questions**

Mr. Elliott informed the meeting that no questions or comments had been submitted during the meeting.

**Item 10. Any other business**

No other business was brought to the meeting.

Mr. Elliott thanked those present for their attendance at, and participation in the AGM, and then closed the meeting.

## **Appendix 1: Summary of Chair's address given by Michael Elliott**

Mr. Elliott welcomed attendees to ISTD's 80<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting, noting that it was one year on from the Society's 120th anniversary.

Mr. Elliott said It had been a year in which priority was given to strengthening ISTD's relationship with its members, to equipping the Society to meet members' contemporary needs and extending the Society's commitment to support and champion the dance sector and dance education.

Mr. Elliott summarised some of the primary activities in which the Society had been involved over the past year, aided by its President, Shirley Ballas, to whom the Society awarded an Honorary Fellowship in October 2024, and the appointment of its two Vice Presidents, Anthony Van Last and Shobhana Jeyasingh in January of this year:

- The Society published its advocacy document *Dance for All: Extending Our Commitment for Dance*, supported the *Let's Dance* campaign led by Angela Rippon, a Grand Council member, and presented its case for action on dance in schools to the Schools Standards Minister in June this year.
- Meanwhile, the Society:
  - conducted a major review and overhaul of its qualification development strategy,
  - completed the discovery phase of its digital transformation strategy and appointed a Director of Operations and Digital Transformation and recruited the Director of Technology Strategy and Insights of Informa plc to the Board of Trustees.
  - got the subsidiary companies – ISTD Academy and ISTD Enterprises well underway,
  - began a new Level 4 exemption partnership with Trinity Laban to the benefit of students completing the new Level 4 Diploma in Teaching Community Dance.
  - started consultations with the Faculty Committees on their role in meeting the current and future needs of the Society.

Mr. Elliott expressed thanks to his fellow Trustees, the CEO Ginny Brown, the ISTD leadership and staff teams for their remarkable dedication and achievement in the face of the enormous global and national societal, economic and educational turmoil that is challenging us all to adapt and change at an ever-increasing pace - the Society and its members included.

Mr. Elliott added that whatever the challenges going forward, the Society remained committed to supporting progression and the highest possible standards in the development of its qualifications; to supporting its members and their businesses; and to campaigning for greater access, equity, diversity and inclusiveness in dance and dance education.

## **Appendix 2: Chief Executive address given by Ginny Brown.**

It was a pleasure to meet so many members throughout the year at our 120th anniversary celebrations, including at Theatre Congress, our residential Summer School and the BLS Congress, where we launched the President's award.

2024/25 was a challenging year for Theatre exams in the UK apparently driven by a pattern of bi-annual shows and exams adopted by some members.

However international exams continued to recover, following a significant drop during the pandemic. Consequently, we conducted a total of 84,352 examinations globally (down from 91,469 in 2023/24).

We were pleased to see UK exams recover towards the end of the financial year and this trend has continued into autumn 2025.

Despite the resultant income shortfall, the increases in membership and the number of learners enrolling for, and achieving, an initial teaching qualification are positive indicators of future growth.

To support teachers and their learners, we began introducing a suite of new qualifications that are accessible, attractive and relevant to current teachers and learners.

These are supported by an extended range of assets available in the member resource hub with templates for posters, social posts, letters and flyers that can be personalised to promote the benefits of examinations and ISTD's mark of quality.

To future proof our examination services, we also embarked on a recruitment drive, training 32 new Examiners in Modern Theatre, Tap, Imperial Classical Ballet and Street.

### **Future plans**

Looking to the future ...

In a time of great societal and technological change, we remain committed to advocating for the value of dance for all and the importance of learning with a qualified teacher.

Towards this end, we will continue developing qualifications that meet the current needs of learners, and which are accessible to all.

Building on the success of the Modern Theatre class exams, we will introduce Tap class exams and performance awards designed to work alongside, and enhance, performances and competitions.

To ensure the Society is accessible to all, we are developing new routes into membership, starting with those at the beginning of their teaching career.

We also plan to roll out the Diploma in Teaching Community Dance to other approved Centres and to expand our CPD offer through online courses and partnerships with complementary organisations.

Lastly, to future proof our services, in 2024 we began a project to transform the organisation's digital capabilities and business processes by undertaking a discovery phase.

In January 2025, Peter Gregson joined the Society as Director of Operations and Digital Transformation to lead the next stages of the transformation programme. Peter will be reporting on the digital transformation strategy in agenda item 7.

I would like to take this opportunity to remember some key ISTD members who we lost over the past year:

**Gail Clifford**

Gail was a steadfast advocate for the ISTD. As a dedicated Local Organiser for Mexico, Gail played a key role in expanding many of the faculties. She worked tirelessly to raise the standard - always seeking improvement and encouraging teachers to develop their skills.

**Margaret Connon**

Margaret was a well-respected and loved multi-faculty Dancesport examiner and served for countless years on the Ballroom Faculty Committee. She was one of the initial teachers who started area competitions for our members and remained an area organiser for the Southend competitions until she became unwell.

**Nicola Gaines**

Chair of the Historical Dance Committee.

**Martha O'Reilly Togno**

Martha's connection with the ISTD started in 1975, when she introduced the Imperial Classical Ballet syllabus to her school, which marked the beginning of generations of ICB dancers and teachers in Mexico.

**Margaret Gajewski-Harrison**

A long term ICB teacher who was a staunch member of the ICB faculty who trained over 400 teachers across the years.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank our assessors, examiners, lectures, representatives and staff for their on-going dedication, hard work and commitment to the Society.

I am also hugely grateful for the exceptional support and guidance offered by our faculty committees and the board of trustees under the wise leadership of Michael Elliott.

## **Appendix 3: Presentation of the Annual Accounts by Nikki Stewart, Director of Finance and Resources**

### **Financial performance**

For the year ended 31st March 2025, the Society reported a total income of £5.46 million, broadly consistent with the previous year's figure of £5.45 million.

While growth was modest, this stability demonstrates the continued demand for our core services — particularly examinations, membership, and professional development — in a year that also saw significant investment in our digital transformation programme.

Our primary income stream, examinations, generated £3.9 million, representing a small decline of around 2% compared to the prior year. This was largely the result of a reduction in the number of UK exam days, though this was partly offset by strong recovery in international entries and growth in other areas.

We saw a 21% increase in income from Continuing Professional Development and events, driven by the success of the Chichester Summer Programme and the expansion of ISTD Academy's training offer.

Membership income rose by 4.5%, and retail income from the ISTD Shop increased by 13%, reflecting strong engagement from our members throughout the Society's 120th anniversary year.

Total expenditure for the year was **£6.23 million**, up from £5.96 million the previous year. This increase reflects targeted investment to strengthen the Society's long-term capacity — including new examiner training, syllabus development and a significant CPD and events programme.

It's important to note that these are strategic, future-focused costs, not annually recurring pressures, and they will underpin improved efficiency and growth in the coming years.

As a result, the Society recorded an operating deficit, further impacted by an unrealised investment loss of £121,000, compared with a gain of £271,000 in 2024. While this represents a challenging outcome, the deficit reflects deliberate investment in the Society's strategic priorities — in particular, the digital transformation programme and the development of ISTD Academy and ISTD Enterprises.

### **Funding Position**

At the close of the year, total funds stood at £10.1 million, compared with £13.4 million in 2024, largely due to the revaluation of the Society's head office property to reflect current market conditions.

At 31 March 2025, the Society held designated reserves of £7.37 million and free reserves of £2.73 million.

Following review, the Trustees reaffirmed their Reserves Policy, maintaining a minimum level of £1.8 million in unrestricted reserves — equivalent to six months of planned overhead expenditure. This ensures that the Society remains financially resilient and able to respond to unexpected changes in income or operational costs.

We also continued to support our subsidiaries: a grant of £53,000 was made to ISTD Academy during its first full year of operation to help establish and grow its training provision.

While the financial year closed with a deficit, the Trustees are confident that the actions taken — to invest in digital infrastructure, strengthen our qualifications offer, and diversify income through ISTD Academy and Enterprises — will deliver long-term benefit.

Early trends in 2025/26 show encouraging signs of higher demand for UK examinations. The Society remains on a sound financial footing with prudent reserves, a diversified income base, and a clear strategic plan.

## Appendix 4: Report on the Digital Transformation Strategy Presented by Peter Gregson, Director of Operations and Digital Transformation.

Hello, I'm Peter Gregson, I'm the Director of Operations and Digital Transformation and I've been leading on the development of our digital strategy and transformation



I'll start with the big picture... hopefully this diagram will be familiar to you from our five-year business strategy where we set out our ambition to

- Broaden access to dance
- Increase participation in progressive training
- Grow a diverse membership

Our business plan has three main objectives...

- Protect our existing business, retaining our current, loyal membership
- Diversify our income streams to become less dependent on UK Theatre exams
- And expand into new markets to broaden our reach and fulfil our mission

And underpinning everything is our digital strategy. Digital isn't an add-on. Accessible digital services and content **are the enabler** to maintain our current business and pursue new opportunities for growth.

There is **growing demand for digital** services driven by generational shift. And digital gives us an opportunity to extend our reach and access, especially internationally.

We need to **understand and meet the needs of our customers**, who want more personalisation, not one-size fits all. And members expect the seamless experience, convenience and ease-of use they get with other digital services. There is a low tolerance for poor user experiences.

**Digital skills have become essential**, for example in the use and interpretation of data.

And new technology and tools present new opportunities for ISTD along with new threats.

Finally, we all continue to face **cost** pressures, so we need to prioritise our resources on the most impactful work

We've created 6 streams of activity to power our digital transformation

- 1. Data & insights:** about making smarter decisions, faster
- 2. Digital products & resources:** innovating what we offer and expanding the way we deliver
- 3. Customer experience:** making member interactions seamless and satisfying
- 4. Cyber security & GDPR:** protecting trust in your data
- 5. Efficiency & automation:** streamlining for speed and scale
- 6. Technical expertise:** empowering our people in a digital world

These are some of the changes you will be seeing:

### Data & insights

- We will create a new data and reporting capability supported by a small Data team
  - The team will provide centralised, accurate reporting that makes life simpler for operational teams
  - It will generate insights we need to better understand our members, anticipate and meet their needs



- And we will build the data backbone that can power AI, smarter workflows, and our next leap forward
- We will roll out our existing customer relationship management (CRM) system to other areas of the organization
  - To improve data accuracy and the relevance of our communications

#### Digital Products & Resources

- We will experiment with new digital products for CPD and the syllabi and try new ways to make them available
  - Helping us to ensure our content stays relevant in a digital-first world
  - And extend the reach of our services
- We will bring in a new solution for recorded exams
  - To make it easier for teachers and examiners to submit and manage recorded exams, and opening up opportunities for our international business

#### Customer experience

- We will launch a redesigned website and member portal
  - It will be streamlined for ease of use, helping you find the most important content, with a better user experience
  - And we will bring together our physical and digital online shops into a single shop with a modern look-and-feel
- We will introduce single sign-on across our services, starting with the member portal, to simplify access and join up our systems
- We will find a new solution for exam-booking making it faster and easier for teachers to book exams with us

#### Cyber security & GDPR

- The work on cyber security never stops. We will continue to invest to protect our members' and learners' data
- And we will expand the training we provide to staff on cyber security and GDPR

#### Efficiency & automation

- Our Exams teams will conduct a review of their processes to simplify and standardise where appropriate, with the goal of having smooth and efficient processes
- And we'll experiment with the automation of routine internal processes, for example financial workflows, to improve productivity, enabling us to do more

#### Technical expertise

- We will invest in Microsoft and AI skills for employees
  - To grow our confidence in working with technology, pushing us to the front of the field with our competitors
  - Find smarter ways of working, speeding up

#### How we will deliver

- It's important to state that this is a **multi-year strategy** and transformation
  - We're being ambitious and we won't be able to deliver everything at once
- We will be **agile**
  - Which means we will prioritise, experiment and learn as we go - so that we deliver what matters most, faster
- Where we can **we will leverage what we've already invested in**
  - Microsoft 365 apps, and Microsoft Copilot
  - And our existing Customer Relationship Management system

With these six streams of work we will transform the Society, laying the digital foundation for the next iteration of ISTD.