

**78th ISTD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2023, 11:00**

VIA ZOOM AND AT 22-26 PAUL STREET, LONDON EC2A 4QE

In attendance

Attended in person: Michael Elliott (Chair), Ginny Brown (CEO), Lynn Chandler, Juliet Diener, Tom Hobden, Jeremy Kean, Karen King, Gemma Matthews, Alexandra Barnes, Peter Meager, Nikki Stewart, Elisabeth Swan, Frederick Way, Mary Cooke, Alison Melville-Cline, Louise Molton, Liz Dale, Ben Gurney

Attended remotely online: Alison Jenner, Peter Hard, David Ryan, Teddy Van Der Ham, Lucia Corsa, Lisa Harrison-Jones, Shirley-Anne Osborne, Penny Meekins.

Minute taker in attendance: Liam Mills

Apologies were received from: Mary Stassinopoulos, Fiona Rutherford, Teresa Jay, Sho Shibata, Christina Fotinaki, Keith-Derrick Randolph, Penny Triggs, Yvonne Taylor Hill and Leanne Brown.

Welcome:

The Society's Chief Executive, Ginny Brown, welcomed those attending and informed them of some housekeeping points and of the voting process that would be followed during the meeting. Ms Brown then introduced the Society's Chair, Michel Elliott.

Item 1: Chair's welcome and address

Mr Elliott, on behalf of Board of Trustees, welcomed participants to the 2023 AGM and gave an address (see **Appendix 1** for a summary of Mr Elliott's address) before moving on to the agenda for the remainder of the meeting.

Item 2: Minutes of the last meeting held on 23 November 2022

The minutes of the previous AGM held on 23 November 2022 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 and closed for each resolution in turn. For those attending the meeting in person, voting slips were distributed and collected. The resolutions were as follows:

- 3.1. To re-elect Tom Hobden for a second term of office
- 3.2. To re-elect Jeremy Kean for a third term of office
- 3.3. To re-elect Keith Derrick Randolph for a third term of office
- 3.4. To elect Mary Cooke
- 3.5. To elect Christina Fotinaki

Item 4: Questions

Questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting by Kate Simmons and answered at the meeting by Ginny Brown as follows:

Q. I am constantly worried about decisions being made by ISTD that really are not faculty based. Will the system change when Liz Dale retires - as it doesn't seem that her position will be filled?

A. With Liz Dale's planned retirement, I have decided to realign responsibilities by:

- Forming a Qualification Development team led by Julie Campbell
- Combining Faculty Events with CDP and
- Reallocating Examiner training to the Director of Examinations

The Heads of Faculty Development are the first point of contact for the Faculty Committees. In most instances these people are highly qualified in the genre that they represent, and many are also Examiners. I do, however, recognise that there has been some confusion around lines of communication, and we have been working with representatives from the Faculty Committees to clarify both communication and responsibilities.

Q. I also want to ask if we will ever go back to face to face meetings for examiners and committees? It has lost the cohesive feeling of the Society and doesn't have a positive vibe.

A. I understand that both Examiners and Committee members miss in-person meetings, and providing regular opportunities to connect in person will be a priority for us next year. However, we do need to be mindful of the cost associated with in-person meetings during these financially challenging times.

Attendees were invited to ask additional questions or make comments and were advised that a further invitation to ask questions or make comments would be made after Ms Brown had given the Chief Executive's address.

Item 5. Chief Executive address

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

Item 6. 2021/22 Accounts presentation by Nikki Stewart, Director of Finance and Resources

Ms Stewart presented the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 and the reports of the charity trustees and auditors. See **Appendix 3** for a summary of the presentation made by Ms Stewart.

Item 7. Voting results

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

- 3.1. Tom Hobden was re-elected for a second term of office
- 3.2. Jeremy Kean was re-elected for a third term of office
- 3.3. Keith Derrick Randolph was re-elected for a third term of office
- 3.4. Mary Cooke was elected
- 3.5. Christina Fotinaki was elected.

Item 8. Any other business

No other business was brought to the meeting.

Meeting closed

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

Mr Elliott welcomed attendees, both in-person and online, to the ISTD's 78th Annual General Meeting.

Mr Elliott thanked members for their continued support and commitment to ISTD and said that Trustees and staff placed the highest possible priority on improving the Society's dialogue with its members and had been listening intently to feedback from members.

Mr Elliott said ISTD was keen to continue to seek ways in which to build connectivity with members through investment in new digital systems and capabilities over the next two or three years, and by building more opportunities for face-to-face contact and exchange. Mr Elliott hoped ISTD would become more agile in listening, piloting, trialing, and learning in pursuit of its change and growth agendas.

Mr Elliott said the coming anniversary year would provide a particular focus for celebrating jointly the history and heritage of the Society and continuing to build a shared vision for excellence, creativity, and inclusion in its offer and for growth in membership, services, and impact on the future of dance and dance education.

Mr Elliott said that at his first AGM in 2022, he had outlined ISTD's commitment to support member's businesses as people continued to weather the impact post pandemic and cost of living challenges and said that ISTD had successfully focused on doing so whilst undertaking to consolidate the Society's own financial position.

Referring to his introduction to the Annual Report, in which he had thanked ISTD's staff and Trustees for their considerable achievements in advancing the work of the Society during the past twelve months, Mr Elliott said he wished to pay a particular tribute to Nikki Stewart, Hiranthi Fernando and the rest of ISTD's finance team, who had in the last year made vast strides in the management, control, and reporting of the Society's finances and in the process had rectified significant historic weaknesses in these regards. Mr Elliott said they had given reason for renewed confidence in navigating current and future financial challenges.

Mr Elliott said that in common with many other businesses and charities ISTD had yet to achieve pre-pandemic levels of activity and income but had made major strides towards securing the longer-term sustainability of the Society and establishing the seeds for further growth. Mr Elliott said that as promised the previous year, ISTD had sought to improve its exam offer and its competitive delivery and established two subsidiary companies – ISTD Enterprises and ISTD Academy – to extend its commercial activity and training services.

Mr Elliott said that whilst Ginny Brown and the team had been active in building essential links and dialogue with the dance education sector, ISTD had not made the progress in its advocacy for dance education that had been intended whilst the focus remained on internal Society priorities, but that ISTD was preparing to up its game in partnership with others in its forthcoming anniversary and a general election year.

Mr Elliott said that at the core of that advocacy work would be ISTD's celebration of the quality of the teaching of its members evidenced in the excellence of the dancing of their students participating in ISTD's many exams, competitions, events and awards, and the service to dance provided through the exceptional training and teacher qualifications uniquely offered by the Society.

Mr Elliott said that as Chair of the Society, he was proud of the progress being made under Ginny's exceptional leadership, but no one could afford, least of all he and his fellow trustees, to be complacent in the face of the wider global and UK challenges that would continue to impact on dance, ISTD's members, and their students in the coming years. Mr Elliott was confident, however, about the future of the Society and its role at the heart of dance education over the coming decades.

Mr Elliott pledged his commitment to continuing to support ISTD's trustees and staff in redoubling their efforts to serve and engage with members, to build the Society's services, to celebrate the 120 years of excellence and creativity, and to continue to transform ISTD's offer, impact, and operations to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

Appendix 2: Chief Executive address given by Ginny Brown.

The aftereffects of the global pandemic were felt throughout 2022/23. Dance schools lost many learners during the prolonged lockdown periods and the development of those students who continued dancing was delayed. This had a significant impact on both the business of our members and the ISTD, as examination numbers this year remained at approximately 70% of pre-pandemic levels.

Many members reported that their business was now smaller than before the pandemic and wanted to grow their business. So, we invested in a campaign – Find Your Dance Space – designed to raise awareness of the value of dancing and the importance of learning with a qualified dance teacher. This achieved great online engagement and, ultimately, received two industry awards.

Both our members' and the charity's business were put under further pressure by the global rise in fuel prices and high inflation in the UK. Consequently, we made efficiencies to the delivery of our most popular examinations to ensure that these offered best value to our members and learners whilst maintaining the integrity and standard of the assessment. We also postponed the annual increase in examination fees by seven months (from April to October 2023). These interventions appear to have had a positive impact as UK examination numbers during summer 2023 have been closer to pre-pandemic levels.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we were pleased to retain 94% of our current membership and maintain a total membership of 5658. And it was heartening to see teachers investing in their professional development: 671 teachers completed an initial teaching qualification during 2022/23, with a further 757 learners enrolling onto the Level 4 Diploma in Dance Education. Supporting the next generation of dance teachers is a key priority for the Society. So, in October, we were delighted to host our first Graduation ceremony since the pandemic at the Royal Geographic Society in South Kensington, London. Here we celebrated the achievements of 913 teachers who gained 1360 qualifications between January 2020 – August 2022 and presented ten Imperial awards.

Future plans

We are looking forward to celebrating the Society's 120th anniversary in 2024 and are planning a host of events designed to celebrate our heritage as an inspiration for future growth and to strengthen connections with our members and the dance industry. These include:

- The launch of a refreshed Street Dance syllabus to coincide with break dancing entering the Olympics.
- A new ISTD uniform that will be high quality, fully inclusive and made of sustainable materials.
- A return of our popular residential Summer School.
- And the launch of the keenly awaited new Advanced 1 Tap syllabus.

Our 120th anniversary is the ideal moment to strengthen connections with our membership. So, we will be establishing an Early Career Group; an EDI Advisory Group and realigning election to Faculty Committees with the AGM to ensure that the contribution of senior members is recognised and celebrated.

We are also preparing for the future by developing a robust qualification development strategy, so that all our qualifications are regularly refreshed and recruiting and training new Examiners. Council has also approved funding for a substantial digital transformation project to ensure that the Society's services are fit for the future.

Finally, we are delighted to have been awarded a Midlands4Cities Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDA) via Coventry University for a doctoral student to work with our historic collection to create an accessible archive. A student is currently being recruited to work on this project over a four-year period with the aim of making our archive accessible in time for the Society's 125th anniversary in 2029.

None of this would be possible without the dedicated hard work of our assessors, examiners, lecturers, representatives and staff. Nor the steady guidance, support and professional knowledge of our Faculty Committees and Board of Trustees - skilfully led by Michael Elliott. Sincere thanks to all for devoting their expertise and passion to build a strong future for dance education.

I would like to take this opportunity to remember some key ISTD members who we lost over the past year – Dame Beryl Grey, the Society's Life President, and Maggie Parry and Joan Langley who were both long standing Modern Theatre and Tap Examiners.

Finally, it is my pleasure to introduce Ali Melville-Cline who joined the Society as Director of Examinations in September. Ali previously worked at Cambridge Assessment International Education and brings with her vast experience of qualification development and regulation. On a sadder note, Liz Dale (Director of Dance) will be retiring next March. Liz's retirement marks the end of a remarkable career in the dance industry and with the Society. During her tenure, Liz and her team have made great strides in improving and standardising Examiner training; introducing Lead Examiner Teams; supporting the Faculty Committees; and introducing online student events which have proved particularly popular with international students. All this good work will continue, and we thank Liz wholeheartedly for her leadership and contribution to the Society.

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

The income for the year to 31st March 2023 was £4.9m – a small increase on the previous year. However, our expenditure for this period was £5.7m charitable activities, £0.5m on depreciation and amortization with another £23k in relation to restricted funds, resulting in total expenditure of £6.3m we must also consider an investment loss of £133k which resulted in a total deficit for the year of £1.5m.

The increase in expenditure was driven by the following planned activities:

1. Firstly, as our examinations returned to taking place in person – the costs of travel and accommodation increased.
2. International tours, which were suspended in the pandemic, resumed in this financial period – again, the cost of international travel and accommodation increased.
3. We invested in our Advocacy campaign and our marketing campaign - Find Your Dance Space - to increase awareness of the benefits of dance and dance education to support our members through the post pandemic economic and social challenges to their businesses.
4. We invested in setting up two subsidiary companies – ISTD Enterprises and ISTD Academy – to diversify our future income streams through commercial trading and teacher training.
5. Operationally, we incurred unforeseen costs to repair the roof of our office building.
6. In the year, we also moved to a new IT provider and incurred costs to terminate our contract with our previous IT provider Silverbug, who did not offer the level of cyber security and service to protect our organisation from cyber threats nor provide our staff with the tools to work effectively.

For the current financial year, we created a robust and prudent budget with an aim of returning to a balanced budget in 2024/25. Our forecast for the current financial year is tracking towards a much-reduced deficit of £200k.

There are a couple of important points to note in the accounts that record the decisions our Trustees made to sustain and develop the Society's operations, services, and financial security.

1. During the year, the trustees reviewed the Reserves Policy and concluded that a minimum of £1.65m be held in unrestricted reserves. This is the level that the trustees consider sufficient for the Society to respond to unforeseen events which might cause a downturn in planned income, based on 6 months of expenditure on our overheads. The balance of the reserves on 31st March 2023 was £3.2m.
2. The designated funds were reviewed by the trustees and redesignated to provide £360k for the Digital Transformation Project and £140K as seed funding for ISTD Academy Ltd. This will help establish the Academy over a 5-year period, after which it is expected to be financially independent.

3. During the year, trustees reviewed the fixed assets and depreciation policy and updated this to reflect the nature of the organisation.

Our Trustees have also taken action to improve the efficiency, viability and competitiveness of our examinations, and our teacher development and membership and commercial offers through the establishment of two subsidiary companies.