

Barbican Association Comms Meeting Minutes – 5 June 2026

The meeting opened by clarifying that its purpose was to review communications across all Barbican Association channels, rather than focusing only on the magazine or on a single channel. The discussion therefore covered Barbican Life magazine and website, the BA website and newsletter, and Barbican Life WhatsApp. There was a shared view that communications should become more effective, more readable, and better aligned with what residents want.

WhatsApp communities and moderation

The discussion noted that the WhatsApp community operates independently and is not linked to the Barbican Association (BA). It was agreed that this independence should be made clear through appropriate naming and disclaimers across the groups. Participants also noted that the tone of some recent discussions had become heated, and that any moderation approach should simply encourage respectful, constructive, and non-confrontational engagement within the groups. The meeting further recognised that new groups can be created easily, making clear naming and disclaimers important to avoid confusion.

Barbican Life

The meeting discussed what Barbican Life is and is not. A key point was that Barbican Life has always been editorially independent and should not be treated as a mouthpiece for the Barbican Association. It was acknowledged that the magazine has historically had links to the Association, including some overlap in revenue and branding, but if Barbican Life is to remain independent of the BA, this should be made clearer in branding and presentation. There was support for a more distinct visual identity so that Barbican Life looks and feels separate from the BA newsletter while still sitting within the wider Barbican family of communications.

BA newsletter role

The newsletter was described as the BA's main functional communications tool, delivered both in print and online. It should carry official updates, working group reports, minutes, progress reports, campaign updates, dates, and practical information for residents. Participants noted that the newsletter is currently difficult to fill consistently and that a more regular and planned pipeline of content is needed for both formats. There was agreement that the newsletter should become more regular, more useful, and something residents look forward to receiving, whether in print or online.

Website role

Both the BA website and the Barbican Life website were discussed as more passive archives and reference resources. The BA website hosts the newsletter archive, latest news, governance documents, practical resources, membership information, and pages explaining

BA structure and resident organisations. The Barbican Life website hosts the magazine archive, lifestyle content, estate information, classified advertising, and discount scheme information. There was interest in using both sites more effectively as reference points for residents. The meeting also touched on the possibility of putting more material online, including minutes, working group updates, and practical guidance, although there was caution about what should and should not be published.

Design and branding

A major theme was the need for a design brief covering Barbican Life, the Barbican Life website, the BA newsletter, and the BA website. The group felt these should feel related yet clearly distinct, with Barbican Life taking a more lifestyle and editorial tone, and the newsletter being more functional and direct. There was agreement that typography, colours, logo treatment, and the broader visual language should be defined before engaging designers. The brief should also reflect clarity, friendliness, quality, and editorial independence.

Content planning and research

Qualitative research with residents was discussed in relation to the BA newsletter, including short interviews or focused questionnaires to understand what content residents want and how they use the available channels. In addition, anonymised quantitative analysis of WhatsApp group discussions was proposed to identify the themes residents care most about, with those themes then informing newsletter and website content. The group also saw value in creating a rolling six-month content plan so that newsletter production becomes less ad hoc.

No new qualitative research was proposed for Barbican Life, aside from the separate readers' survey that is on hold following the governance review. Instead, a content analysis of past Barbican Life issues was suggested in order to help the communications group understand typical topics, editorial patterns, and the magazine's established tone. The primary focus of the research strand was therefore the BA newsletter and website rather than Barbican Life.

Privacy and GDPR

The conversation raised the importance of having clear privacy notices and data protection language across the Association's communications channels. It was noted that the BA website already has a privacy policy, but that it would benefit from enhancement, including clearer explanations of purposes, data use, lawful bases, retention, and any relevant cookie language. It was also noted that the Barbican Life website does not currently have a privacy policy, and that it may be possible to adapt the same enhanced version for use there.

Governance and tone

There was repeated emphasis on avoiding political or personal disputes in external communications. The group wanted the communications strategy to remain calm, factual, and focused on residents' needs. The tone should be distinct from heated WhatsApp exchanges and should help reduce confusion about what the Barbican Association does and does not control. The group also noted that transparency and regular reporting could help address complaints that working groups do not communicate often enough.

Action points

Governance & Strategy

- Clarify the distinction between Association-controlled communications and independent resident publications.
- Consider a simple editorial or communications board for the newsletter, or a light-touch review group, to support planning and oversight.
- Review how working groups can report back more consistently through the newsletter and website.

Privacy & Compliance

- Recommend a short moderation note and a simple GDPR statement for all publications.
- Update the BA website privacy policy.
- Create a privacy policy for the Barbican Life website, aligned where appropriate with the BA version.
- Confirm the existing privacy wording used in membership processes.

Design & Visual Identity

- Keep Barbican Life editorially independent, while making its design clearly distinct from the BA newsletter and related BA channels.
- Develop a design brief covering Barbican Life, the Barbican Life website, the BA newsletter, and the BA website.
- Share design portfolio options or possible designer references.

Content & Editorial Planning

- Make the newsletter more regular, more practical, and more clearly the main Association communications channel.
- Consider using the BA website more actively as an archive and reference source for residents.
- Use resident topic analysis to shape newsletter and website planning.
- Carry out a content analysis of past Barbican Life issues to help the communications group understand its usual editorial range and tone.
- Build a rolling six-month content calendar for the BA newsletter.
- Prepare a short qualitative research questionnaire for residents.
- Conduct a small number of resident interviews or questionnaire responses focused on newsletter needs.
- Continue to review all residents' discussions and extract the main recurring topics relevant to newsletter and website content.
- Analyse the last 10 issues of Barbican Life to identify typical topics, tone, and editorial patterns.
- Produce a proposed six-month BA newsletter content plan

Next meeting: 17 June at 6.00pm