

Barbican Association Comms Meeting Minutes – 9 July 2026

To review the BAC's strategic direction and agree the design brief, branding, sequencing, and governance points needed for the next phase of implementation.

The chair noted the group's progress roughly three months into its work and said the meeting would use a "why / what / how" structure to move discussion from operational detail toward strategic intent ahead of implementation planning.

Strategic direction

The group reaffirmed that its guiding aim is to support membership growth while strengthening the Barbican Association's public voice and visibility across the Estate. Three linked purposes were restated: making BA activity more visible to residents, engaging both active and disengaged residents without judgement, and better supporting BA activities estate-wide. Rebranding was confirmed as the visible expression of a broader effort to align identity, content, and audience strategy, and this direction was agreed as part of the group's 2026 objectives.

Making Connections: editorial strategy, design brief, and timetable

The group suggested that design consultant input should be sought on how the BA is presented through Barbican Life, the newsletter (to be renamed Barbican News), and the associated websites, with the principal objective of supporting membership growth.

Branding and structure

The preferred umbrella identity remains Barbican Communications, covering all BA publications. It was agreed that Barbican News should carry a strong and explicit affiliation with the BA, while it was suggested that Barbican Life should sit within the Barbican Communications family without BA branding on the front page so that it can retain editorial independence and advertiser appeal.

Design brief priorities

The combined design brief should ask the selected agency to:

- Develop a recognisable identity for Barbican Communications, informed by the agreed values and tone of voice.
- Create distinct but related designs for Barbican Life, Barbican News, and the associated websites.

- Review the branding relationship between the BA and Barbican News and propose a stronger strapline or affiliation device.
- Explore a unifying visual device, including the possible use of a castle or turret motif linked to existing Barbican visual heritage.
- Improve the reader journey through stronger layout templates and clearer navigation across print and digital channels.
- Produce new front-page sample designs for both Barbican Life and Barbican News.
- Set up homepage and template structures for the Barbican Life and website so they align with the new identity.
- Devise clearer separation between editorial and advertising in Barbican Life without reducing advertiser appeal, in support of increased advertising revenue.
- Advise on performance tracking, including traffic, bounce rates, conversion paths, and broader evaluation methods.

Barbican News

There was support for renaming the BA Newsletter as Barbican News. Discussion favoured a broader set of recurring sections rather than single-theme issues, potentially colour-coded and including practical “how to” content linked to fuller material online. The brief should ask for Barbican News to be developed primarily in A5 format, while also providing an A4 comparator for review.

Barbican Life

The brief should support Barbican Life as an independent, high-quality, feature-led publication within the Barbican Communications family. It should also address the editorial and advertising split more clearly and support the wider aim of increasing advertising revenue alongside membership growth.

Websites

The BA website and Barbican Life website should be redesigned in line with the new identity, beginning with homepage and navigation/template work rather than a full structural rebuild. The BA website should continue to develop as a repository for reports, minutes, guides, and premium member content, with clearer signposting and stronger value to residents.

Audience research and engagement

Town Hall meetings were noted as an underused but high-engagement channel and should be used more often. The redesign programme should also include reader feedback and questionnaire-based evaluation so that responses to the new design can shape editorial development over the following year.

Timetable

The working timetable discussed was as follows:

- Agency meeting: 29 July 2026.
- Funding sign-off / work commencement: early August 2026.
- First draft delivery by agency: 25 September 2026.
- Decision on recommendations: 2 October 2026.
- Final design template: 14 October 2026, though this was considered especially tight for Barbican Life.
- Barbican News and BA website soft launch: around Christmas / early December 2026.
- Barbican Life relaunch: Spring / March 2027, with website work following in step.

Budget and resourcing

The group noted that the design work will need to be properly resourced, with a particular focus on the Barbican Life rebrand. Any funding route and required sign-off will be confirmed through the appropriate governance process, alongside the agreed timetable for early August commencement.

Membership, website, and data

The group discussed ongoing work with the BA membership manager, on how his remit overlaps with the group's membership-growth objectives. It was noted that there appears to be a mismatch between the group's expectations of the membership manager's role and his own understanding of it, given his existing commitments to other tasks such as data cleansing and minute-taking. He is willing to participate in the membership strategy team rather than lead it, provided a plan is presented, then approved by BAGC.

Summer party

The group agreed to reuse existing poster designs for the summer party and to make membership sign-up more visible through a staffed table with clearer signage and related materials.

Action points

Strategy and governance

- Debrief BAGC on the discussion with the membership manager and recommend a conversation to clarify expectations around membership strategy ownership.
- Seek BAGC approval for GDPR notices, the BA website minutes archive proposal, and communication of the opt-out policy.
- Defer discussion of an editorial or comms board until after the 2027 launches.

Design and branding

- Finalise the family name and BA/channel branding hierarchy.

- Issue the combined design brief covering identity, layouts, formats, website templates, and the Barbican Life advertising/editorial split.
- Chair to obtain the designer's contact details and make contact.
- Confirm whether BA sign-off is required on the redesign funding approach.

Content and sequencing

- Draft a longer topic list for Barbican News.
- Sequence delivery so that Barbican News and the BA website are relaunched first, followed by Barbican Life and then related website work.
- Expand the use of Town Hall meetings as part of the communications mix.
- Build questionnaire and evaluation activity into the rollout so that audience feedback can inform the next twelve months of editorial response.

Membership and events

- Improve the visibility and staffing of the summer party membership table.
- Keep postcard campaign ideas and conversion tracking parked until ownership is clearer, while recognising that the design brief should later include advice on performance tracking and evaluation.

Next Meeting: 29 July at 6.30 pm.