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| <b>Meeting</b>          | Community Development Committee               |
| <b>Date</b>             | 7 <sup>th</sup> April 2026                    |
| <b>Report Title</b>     | Memory Café & Companion Cafés                 |
| <b>Agenda Reference</b> | 10A                                           |
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## Memory Café & Community Co Ordinator's Recommendations.

1. To note report.

## February

### Memory Café – Valentine's Day

This month's Memory Café was given a wonderfully romantic twist in celebration of Valentine's Day, the session was filled with creativity, music, and pure joy. We were thrilled to welcome our biggest ever attendance of 52 guests, a wonderful reflection of just how much the Memory Café means to so many people.

The ever-popular Arty Farty brought along stencils and a card-making kit, inviting residents to create their very own Valentine's cards, to colour, decorate, or simply make their own in whatever way felt right. It was a relaxed and unhurried hour, and the results were impressive, the cards that emerged were a beautiful reflection of the creativity and personality that lives within each and every one of our residents.

Then, to round off the session in the most joyful way possible, Mitch arrived to work his magic. With a selection of well-loved, familiar songs filling the room, something great happened almost everyone were on their feet. Some were jiving with energy and delight, others swayed gently in a slow dance, and every face in the room wore a smile. It was one of those Memory Cafes that stays with you, a reminder that music has a unique and precious power to lift the spirit, stir a memory, and bring people together in ways that nothing else quite can.

### Over 60s Cream Tea – 18th February

On 18th February, we were delighted to welcome our over-60s and Memory Café residents to a special cream tea, and what a wonderful occasion it proved to be. So popular was the event that every place was taken, a true testament to how much our community looks forward to moments like these.

Guests were treated to a generous spread of freshly prepared sandwiches, a tempting selection of cakes, and of course the star of the afternoon, beautiful cream cakes, all presented on pretty lace and floral tablecloths and served on elegant bone china. The traditional touches created an atmosphere of warmth and charm, evoking the timeless pleasure of a proper afternoon tea, the kind that feels like a little treat for the soul.

Beyond the food, what made the day truly special was the joy of simply being together. Conversations flowed, laughter filled the room, and new connections were formed. For many

of our residents and guests, spaces like this, safe, welcoming, and full of warmth, are more valuable than words can easily capture. It was a reminder, in the loveliest possible way, of what community really means.

## **February**

February closed on a high as Tony M swooped in at the last minute to save the day after an unexpected hiccup with the alpaca visit. In true Tony fashion, he didn't just step in, he lit up the whole room. His music, quick humour, and effortless stage presence had everyone laughing, singing, and forgetting entirely that the plan had changed.

We were thrilled to welcome even more new faces this week, and with the group now edging close to full capacity, the atmosphere is buzzing more than ever. It's warm, lively, and full of that brilliant community spirit that keeps everyone coming back.

To round things off, Lin finished the session with her much-loved seated exercise, always a perfect way to wind down, stretch out, and leave feeling good.

## **March**

March brought a welcome sense of spring to the Memory Café, with an uplifting session enjoyed by all. Donna joined us to sing some well-loved favourites, everyone tapping along and joining in with the familiar melodies. The morning ended with an enjoyable game of bingo, creating plenty of smiles and a warm, relaxed atmosphere that perfectly captured the spirit of the memory café.

## **Companions Café**

The Companions Café was delighted to welcome Tim, our Admiral Nurse, and Eric, a dedicated mental health student currently working at the memory clinic. Their warmth, expertise, and genuine compassion created an enriching experience for everyone who attended. Tim's deep understanding of dementia care was evident throughout the session, as he thoughtfully addressed the many questions raised by participants. His approachable manner and clear, comprehensive explanations ensured that each individual felt heard, valued, and supported. What could have been a routine information session became a meaningful and reassuring conversation, shaped by his ability to connect with people's personal concerns.

At a time when Swindon has no other service offering this kind of dedicated, face-to-face dementia support, Tim's presence felt especially significant. Recent funding cuts across Dementia and Alzheimer's services have resulted in the loss of specialist roles, with experienced coordinators being moved into children's social care, leaving many families without the guidance and continuity they once relied on. In this challenging landscape, the Companion Café has become not just a community space but a vital source of information, reassurance, and connection for those affected by dementia.

This month's session also welcomed several new residents, who benefitted greatly from the warm, understanding atmosphere and the thoughtful conversations shared throughout the morning. The Companion Café continues to grow as a monthly space at the Haydon Wick Bowls Club, offering support, connection, and a sense of belonging. Alongside this, respite is available for loved ones in the community room at the Parish Offices, lovingly hosted by Right at Home, whose fantastic team brings joy through personal interaction, games, music, and more.

The Admiral Nurses have recognised the value of this space and have now committed to attending every monthly session, an excellent development that will further enhance the support available to all who come along. It remains a privilege to share these moments with our community, and we look forward to welcoming even more residents in the months ahead.

### Working Towards

- Planning entertainment and activities for the community cafes
- Building the Companion Café as there is only one other facility available in the Borough and that is for all carers not specifically Dementia.
- Provide feedback forms for all the community cafes for the new year ahead.
- Work on building new contacts for entertainment and talks.
- Networking with other community projects
- Training up to date for myself and Volunteers
- Planning a new event for the summer for the over 60's, Memory Café.
- Get the Sensory garden up together in the Spring.
- Finish off the extra add on to the Sensory Garden to invite the pre-school children over.
- Recruit new volunteers.
- Update volunteer files.
- Find more guest speakers.
- Planning a training session working with the Admiral nurses to provide information for the wider direct family, on changes, support, what to look out for etc

### Memories from the Memory Café





**Cream Tea pictures**

