

Meeting	Community Development Committee
Date	5 th August 2025
Report Title	Memory Café & Companion Café
Agenda Reference	6
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Memory Café Co Ordinator's Recommendations:

1. To note report.

May

May brought us a lovely treat when John from Rusland School of Cookery visited with an array of little cakes ready for decoration. Armed with icing, sprinkles, and colourful decorations, our members transformed simple cakes into personal masterpieces. One moment stood out particularly – watching one of our residents carefully pipe onto her cake - skilled hands remembered the days when she made and decorated wedding cakes.

Lin joined us to round off the session with seated exercise, and as always, her enthusiasm was infectious. What started as a few gentle movements quickly had everyone on their feet, clapping and moving along. These moments of spontaneous joy and movement are exactly what make our Memory Café so special.

June

June began with pure magic as Lane House Alpacas visited our Memory Café. The morning was filled with wonder as our members connected with these gentle and curious animals. Smiles were abundant, conversations flowed naturally, and the alpacas sensed the special atmosphere, remaining calm and approachable throughout their visit, even humming, this is something Alpacas do when they are content. The joy on everyone's faces was wonderful – there is something truly therapeutic about the presence of animals that brought out the best in our Memory Café.

Following our alpaca adventure, we turned our attention to a beloved childhood craft – making pom poms with cardboard and wool. This simple activity sparked incredible conversations as members shared stories of making similar crafts with their own children years ago.

The familiar motions of wrapping wool and the satisfying moment of cutting through the loops to reveal fluffy pom poms brought back treasured memories. Laughter filled the room as some members rediscovered techniques, they thought they'd forgotten, while others delighted in teaching fellow crafters their own special methods. These meaningful moments remind us why our Memory Café exists – to create spaces where joy, connection, and cherished memories can flourish together.

On the 25th we welcomed Gary from Historic England for an engaging seaside-themed interactive session that took us on a fascinating journey through time. Through a captivating slideshow presentation, Gary demonstrated how our coastal resorts and seaside activities have evolved over more than a century, highlighting the dramatic changes in fashion trends from Victorian bathing costumes to modern beachwear. He explored the therapeutic benefits

that drew people to the seaside generations ago, revealing how the Victorian belief in the healing properties of sea air and saltwater bathing laid the foundation for our modern understanding of coastal wellness. The session concluded with a fun seaside bingo game.

July

The Memory Cafe hosted a successful double music session that created a warm, engaging atmospheres for all participants. The morning began with Faith's gentle ukulele performance, featuring relaxing songs that set a peaceful tone. Two residents celebrated their birthdays by sharing chocolate biscuits and fresh fruit, encouraging social interaction and birthday sing-alongs.

Tony M concluded the session with an hour of uplifting songs and natural humour, creating an interactive experience that resonated with everyone. His personalised approach demonstrated how music can effectively connect with participants in therapeutic settings.

The varied musical styles and interactive format kept all participants engaged throughout. This session exemplified how thoughtfully planned entertainment enhances the Memory Cafe experience, providing enjoyment while fostering social connection, sensory engagement, and positive reminiscence among residents.

The July Memory Café session concluded on a high note with a full house of 50 residents, creating a vibrant atmosphere that showcased the growing success of this community initiative. The energy was infectious as people gathered for what would prove to be one of the most engaging sessions yet.

The morning struck the perfect balance between friendly competition and musical celebration. Two rounds of bingo brought out everyone's competitive spirit, with residents eagerly marking their cards and celebrating wins with genuine enthusiasm. The session reached its peak when the Arval Choir delivered an uplifting, interactive performance that had everyone joining in song, creating moments of pure joy that lifted spirits and reinforced the powerful sense of community that makes the Memory Café such a vital local resource.

Sensory Garden

The sensory garden has developed into a thriving community space, supported by a dedicated team of volunteers who have committed to its ongoing care and maintenance. This volunteer group, working alongside the Memory Café & Community Co-Ordinator, meets regularly to ensure the garden remains in excellent condition, taking responsibility for essential tasks including pruning, watering, and weeding. Their consistent efforts have created a sustainable system that keeps the garden flourishing throughout the growing season.

The results of this collaborative care are clearly visible across the garden. The flower beds are now in full bloom, creating vibrant displays of colour and fragrance that enhance the sensory experience for all visitors. The lavender plants have reached maturity and are proving particularly successful, attracting numerous bumblebees and other pollinators that contribute to the garden's ecological value. This natural activity not only supports local wildlife but also provides visitors with the opportunity to observe and appreciate the important relationship between plants and pollinators.

The vegetable section of the garden is also showing promising development, with the green beans beginning to establish themselves and show early signs of growth. The rhubarb has proven particularly successful, providing both visual interest with its large, striking leaves and the promise of future harvests. Most exciting of all, the garden has celebrated its first

crop of conference pears, marking a significant milestone in the garden's development and demonstrating the success of the fruit-growing element of the project.

This edible element adds another dimension to the sensory experience, offering visitors the opportunity to observe food production while contributing to the garden's educational value. The combination of ornamental flowers, aromatic herbs, productive vegetables, and now fruit trees create a well-rounded environment that engages multiple senses and demonstrates the diverse possibilities of community gardening initiatives.

Restoration of Table & Chairs

A particularly touching addition to the garden comes from the legacy of John, a cherished Parish resident who made many items for the Memory Café using his exceptional carpentry skills. When John sadly passed away, his daughter generously donated his handcrafted table and chairs to the sensory garden, though the furniture needed restoration to withstand outdoor conditions. When volunteer Paul reached out on social media requesting help with sandblasting, the community response was truly heartwarming. Booth and Son Ltd immediately stepped forward, offering to collect the furniture set, sandblast it completely, and apply a fresh coat of paint entirely free of charge. Their paint supplier also contributed by donating all the materials needed for the project, demonstrating the generous spirit that defines our Parish community.

A special milestone was marked as the beautifully restored table and chairs were placed in the sensory garden. This generous collaboration exemplifies the caring spirit of our Parish community and ensures that John's craftsmanship will continue to serve and bring joy to visitors for years to come. The furniture now provides a perfect spot for visitors to sit, relax, and fully immerse themselves in the sensory experience while surrounded by the thriving flowers, herbs, and vegetables that make this garden so special.

A thank you card has been sent to those who have contributed materials, time and effort to this project.

Companion Café

The Companion Cafe has successfully established itself as a vital community resource, creating a welcoming and safe environment for companions. This initiative has evolved into a comprehensive support network that addresses the diverse needs of companions navigating Dementia related challenges.

The Companion Cafe has developed a strong foundation with consistent attendance from community members, fostering familiarity and trust among participants. This regular once a month engagement has enabled the development of meaningful relationships and peer support networks.

The Memory Cafe and Community Coordinator has taken a proactive approach to service improvement by systematically collecting and analysing feedback from attendees. This valuable input has been transformed into practical, informative resources specifically designed to support companions throughout their journey. The feedback-driven approach ensures that resources remain relevant and address the real-world challenges faced by families.

The **Admiral Nurses** have demonstrated exceptional commitment to the cafe by maintaining regular availability to attend sessions. Their specialised knowledge in dementia care brings invaluable expertise to the community, offering both practical guidance and emotional support to companions. Their presence provides reassurance and access to professional insights that enhance the overall support experience.

Representatives from **Swindon Carers** have participated in the cafe sessions, sharing information about local support services and resources available to family caregivers. Their involvement helps connect companions with broader support networks.

Right at Home Care Support provides dedicated support for people living with dementia during the sessions, offering separate interactive games and one-to-one support. This brilliant service gives companions peace of mind, knowing their loved ones are engaged in meaningful activities while receiving specialised attention. This parallel support allows companions to fully participate in their own support sessions without worry about their loved one's wellbeing and engagement.

The collaborative approach involving multiple support organisations has created a comprehensive resource environment where companions can access information, professional guidance, and peer support in one accessible location, while ensuring that people living with dementia receive appropriate, engaging care simultaneously. This multi-faceted support system addresses various aspects of the companion journey, from practical daily challenges to emotional wellbeing, while maintaining the dignity and engagement of those living with dementia.

The Companion Cafe represents an effective model of community-centered support that brings together formal services, professional expertise, and peer networks to create a comprehensive support system for families navigating memory-related challenges, while ensuring that both companions and people living with dementia receive appropriate, dignified support tailored to their specific

Working Towards

- Tea Dance at Redhouse Community Centre August the 8th.
- Recruiting additional volunteers for the Haven, and the Sensory Garden.
- Working with the Haven / Memory Café on a community project or fund raiser (knitting, sewing etc.
- Spending some hours at the Sensory Garden, planting and keeping maintained.
- Networking with other community groups / childminders
- Planning Christmas meal etc.
- Building the Companion Café further and social media reach.
- Trial at the Library 4th August the Haven
- Community plot planning
- Working together on a Partnership with the Haydon Wick Bowls Club
- Looking for more grant funding / waiting to hear back.
- Opportunity to present at the Hospital for the Admiral nurses convention with other care facilities.
- Collating feedback from the Memory Café, Haven & Companion Café feedback forms.

Memories from the Memory Café



Sensory Garden Pics



Companion Café Picture

