

Meeting	Community Development Committee
Date	2 nd December 2025
Report Title	Memory Café & Companion Café
Agenda Reference	6a
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Memory Café & Community Co Ordinator's Recommendations

1. To note report.

Background

The Memory Café continues to serve as a vital community resource, offering evidence-based interventions that support cognitive function, emotional wellbeing, and social engagement for residents with dementia.

The programme demonstrates best practice in person-centred dementia care and represents excellent value for Council investment in preventative services that align with statutory responsibilities and strategic priorities whilst significantly enhancing quality of life for some of our community's most vulnerable residents.

October

8th October began with a visit from the Animal Club, from gentle strokes to curious encounters, it was wonderful watching our residents discover animals that they had never had the chance to get up close with before. This animal-assisted therapy session provided significant therapeutic benefits including sensory stimulation through tactile engagement, emotional connection that reduced anxiety and agitation, and memory activation through novel experiences. The shared experience fostered natural conversation between residents, directly combating the social isolation frequently experienced by people living with dementia.

22nd October included playing some bingo for small prizes and listening to Donna singing our residents through a musical journey through the decades. The bingo activity provided gentle cognitive exercise through number recognition and pattern matching, whilst the opportunity to win prizes reinforced positive self-worth and sense of achievement. Donna's musical performance offered access to long-term memories through familiar songs, supported emotional regulation, and provided opportunities for self-expression through singing along. Music therapy has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing behavioural symptoms commonly associated with dementia whilst simultaneously fostering community belonging through shared group participation.

November

12th November sessions began with remembrance word searches, tile painting led by Karon & Terri and a musical session from Tony M. There were also special birthday wishes for our wonderful resident Ken.

26th November welcomed some drumming from Nikki and seated exercise from Lin. The seated exercise programme, specifically designed for older adults with dementia, supported maintenance of physical function and mobility, improved circulation and cardiovascular health, and reduced fall risk through improved balance and coordination.

Drumming activities provided rhythmic synchronisation that supports brain function, emotional release, stress reduction, and enhancement of motor skills through bilateral coordination. The combination of physical movement with cognitive engagement through following instructions and maintaining rhythm provided important dual-task training that supports functional independence in daily life.

Companions Café

The Companions Cafes continue to go well and are supported by Right at Home providing care for the residents whilst the companions can receive help and advice over warm refreshments. The Alzheimer's Society continues to share exceptionally informative presentations, sharing a wealth of knowledge about current research developments and providing valuable insights that were both accessible and inclusive to all attendees.

The presentation highlighted the vital importance of the Companion Cafe as a community resource, particularly given that it represents one of only two such facilities currently operating in Swindon.

Donations

Donations continue to be received by regular attendees and residents who want to support the ongoing success of the Memory Café. During each session, donation money is collected for those who live outside of the parish, this is charged fairly at £5.00 per couple, session.

Small donations directly cover essential running costs including refreshments, activity materials, prizes for games such as bingo, and fees for specialist facilitators including musicians, exercise instructors, and animal therapy providers. Without these contributions, the quality and variety of therapeutic activities would be significantly reduced, potentially limiting the cognitive, social, and emotional benefits that participants receive.

Working Towards

- More Networking within the Dementia care resources.
- Initiating work on community noticeboards to increase local awareness of both café programs.
- Updating medical questionnaires and the data base.
- Welcoming new members and providing 1-1 signposting support/ introduction from the Co Ordinator.
- On going recruitment of volunteers for the Memory Café (back up), Sensory Garden Team and Companion Café.
- The ongoing expansion of the Companion Café, and expert speakers.
- Looking for new entertainment ideas for next year's programme.
- Working on finishing the Community plot extension of the (Sensory Garden).
- Safeguarding training to finish.
- Planning a slide show presentation for the Great Western Hospital event held by the Admiral Nurses.

Memories from the Memory Café

