

Meeting	Community Development Committee
Date	7 th October 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.

August

August proved to be an exceptional month of community engagement, filled with nostalgic charm, sensory delights, and joyful entertainment that brought residents together in meaningful ways.

The month opened with our much-anticipated annual Summer Vintage Tea Dance, transforming Redhouse Community Centre into a scene from yesteryear. The event captured the elegant spirit of bygone eras, featuring guest vocalist Miss Em, whose melodic performances transported attendees back to simpler times.

Guests were treated to a quintessentially British experience with full cream tea service presented on authentic bone china, adding an air of sophistication to the proceedings. The atmosphere buzzed with warmth and genuine contentment as participants took to the dance floor, swaying and stepping to swing melodies from the 1940s and 1950s. The afternoon resonated with laughter, conversation, and the gentle shuffle of dancing feet.

Mid-month brought an innovative collaboration with Historic England, who helped create an immersive seaside experience that engaged multiple senses and sparked cherished memories. The beach-themed session proved to be a masterclass in interactive programming.

The highlight was a treasure hunt activity where sea creatures were cleverly hidden in sand for residents to discover—a simple yet brilliant concept that awakened tactile memories and provided genuine excitement. The sensory richness of the sand, combined with the thrill of discovery, created moments of pure joy. Participants also crafted colourful windmills, fostering creativity. This hands-on approach proved particularly effective in stimulating both memory and motor skills.

The session welcomed new entertainer Donna, whose warm vocal style had everyone participating enthusiastically. Her repertoire of familiar favourites created a sing-along atmosphere that filled the room with harmonious voices and radiant smiles.

August concluded on a high note with the Ukulele Jury's charming performance, their "little ditties" bringing smiles and toe-tapping rhythms to close out the month. The intimate scale of ukulele music created a cozy, accessible musical experience.

Lin's exercise sessions provided the perfect complement to the month's entertainment, focusing on motor skills development and coordination enhancement. These activities demonstrated how physical wellness and enjoyment can seamlessly intertwine, providing both health benefits and social engagement.

September

We went into September, with a nostalgic journey back to the 1960s, focusing on the teenage experience of growing up in Swindon during this vibrant decade. The session proved highly engaging as participants spontaneously shared personal memories.

The morning covered three key themes that resonated strongly with attendees. Fashion discussions brought animated conversations about 1960s styles and trends, while participants fondly recalled the local dance venues and music that shaped their social lives. Stories of Swindon's shops and high street created vivid pictures of the era's commercial and community life.

As September ended, the Memory Cafe was treated to a wonderfully uplifting session with Nikki, one of our regular entertainers, who delighted residents with a selection of beloved old favourites. Her performance created an atmosphere of joy and participation as residents enthusiastically joined in with both singing and dancing, demonstrating the powerful connection that familiar music creates within our community. The session reached its energetic finale with Lin's popular seated exercise program, which never fails to engage residents and lift spirits. This combination of musical nostalgia and gentle physical activity provided the perfect conclusion to September's programming, highlighting how entertainment and wellness activities work together to create moments of shared happiness and community connection.

Companions Café

Karen Owen from the Alzheimer's Society delivered an exceptionally informative presentation at the Companion Cafe, sharing a wealth of knowledge about current research developments and providing valuable insights that were both accessible and inclusive to all attendees. Her contribution 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. The cafe serves as an essential haven for companions who find themselves overwhelmed and struggling to navigate their loved ones' journey through dementia, offering crucial support as they face the varied and challenging symptoms that characterize this condition. This much-needed resource provides not only practical information but also emotional support and community connection for those who often feel isolated in their caring responsibilities.

Working Towards

- More Networking within the Dementia care resources.
- Initiating work on community noticeboards to increase local awareness of both café programs.
- On going recruitment of volunteers for the Memory Café (back up), Sensory Garden team, Companion Café.
- The ongoing expansion of the Companion Café, and expert speakers.
- Looking for new entertainment ideas
- Working on finishing the Community plot extension of the (Sensory Garden), once the GMF is finished.
- Safeguarding training to finish.
- Working on next year's Memory Café / Companion Café entertainment and speakers.
- Planning a slide show presentation for the Great Western Hospital event at Christmas held by the Admiral Nurses.

Memories from the Memory Café



Companion Café Pictures

