

# Delight as funding approved for long-awaited Emsworth Surgery relocation

Work is set to start this month on relocating Emsworth Surgery to a new home on the site of the former Victoria Cottage Hospital in the town centre.

NHS England has approved a £4m scheme to convert the unused hospital building into a state-of-the-art surgery for Emsworth, where for years GPs, staff and patients have struggled to cope on the cramped existing site a short walk away.

It is hoped that contractors will move on to the former hospital grounds to start work within a few weeks.

NHS England has formally approved the full business case for the scheme presented by the surgery and NHS South Eastern Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Dr Abu Chinwala, a partner at Emsworth Surgery, said: "I think that most local people know that we have wanted - and needed - new premises for a very long time, so this is truly welcome news.

"It has been heartening to receive so much support from the people of Emsworth, and to know just how much they value our service, and how they want us to be able to grow and improve. We are also grateful for the support of the CCG, and NHS England.

"Getting conditional approval for the funding means that we can now look ahead to making the positive changes we have been wanting to achieve for many years. I think this offers numerous, valuable benefits for patients - modern and accessible premises, space to expand, being able to host new services with our partners both in the NHS and in social care, and giving us the chance to improve how we support people living with frailty or long-term conditions.

"It will also allow us to try to recruit new staff to help manage rising demands for 'same day' care, and to keep routine waiting times down as well.

"We absolutely welcome this news, and now we want to move forward as quickly as possible to turn the potential into reality."

Sara Tiller, the CCG's managing director, said: "We are delighted with this news – it is a fantastic outcome for everyone who has been involved, not least the members of the local community who have been so tremendously committed to finding a new home for the practice, and so determined to find a new future for Emsworth Victoria Cottage Hospital. We would like to thank everyone for their energy, and support.

"Recognising the strength of that local support, and understanding the acute need for new premises for the practice, my team has worked tirelessly with all of our partners to help to bring about this very welcome result.

"We hope that we are now firmly on the right track to give people in Emsworth what they need - a practice which can grow, and provide them with a wider range of services."

As part of the scheme, the practice's Westbourne branch surgery will be retained.

The CCG and surgery consulted heavily with the community before GPs decided to pursue the hospital site as their new home. The practice, which had 2,000 patients when it opened, now has 13,000. The hospital was decommissioned and closed in April 2013, and the site has been unused since then.

Reg Harnett, the Chairman and Treasurer of The Friends of Emsworth Community Health, said: "To enable the project to go ahead, and to avoid any further delay, The Friends of Emsworth Community Health have agreed to the practice partners request to contribute to a maximum of £65,000 to fund the furniture and equipment in the new refurbished surgery."