

## **Exciting new development for Thanet**

Plans have been submitted for a £6.5million extension to Bethesda Medical Centre in Cliftonville to create a state-of-the-art health centre for Margate.

Planning permission is currently being applied for from Thanet District Council and, if approved, it is hoped the new centre will open in two years' time, in 2020.

The plans are to create a new “one stop shop” for people in Margate which can cater for up to 32,000 patients, allowing them to get all the medical and nursing services they expect in much more modern and accessible space.

If approved, it will include specialist clinics for physiotherapy, audiology, ophthalmology, ultrasound and minor surgery, for patients from Margate and beyond – services which are currently only available in hospital.

The plans are for the centre also to have a gym for physio, an outside gym area, a bigger pharmacy, allotment space, a café and a community kitchen. It would be open evenings and weekends.

The plans include space for teams of healthcare professionals to meet and to work together, including GPs, nurses, community, social care and mental health professionals and workers from voluntary organisations, where they can co-ordinate treatment for patients with complicated health needs.

The new facility would also provide education and training space for medical staff, which could be used by patient groups too.

Oena Windibank, chief officer for local care for NHS Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), said: “Over recent years, local people have repeatedly told the CCG that they want us to provide a one-stop shop where they can get the vast majority of the health and social care services they need in one place.

“They have asked for a more joined-up approach for people with more complicated health needs, and more focus on preventing ill-health so people stay well.

“I am delighted that this new development at Bethesda will deliver what local people have asked for and more.

“We are very lucky in Thanet to have a group of GPs who, in the face of the challenges of a shortage of health professionals and increasing need for services, are leading the way in developing new and innovative ways to provide the right services to people across Thanet.

“They are putting Margate at the forefront of a new type of healthcare which provides far more care and support in people’s own communities, without the need for people to go to an acute (main) hospital.

“We hope to create a similar “one-stop shop” for health and care at Westwood Cross, and to provide more services in Ramsgate too.”

Dr Tony Martin, clinical chair of NHS Thanet CCG and senior partner at Bethesda Medical Practice, said: “I am delighted that this planning application has gone in from the CCG and Bethesda and I hope it will win favour with the council.

“Bringing staff from various organisations together under one roof has huge benefits for patients, particularly people with more complicated health and care needs. It will also make Margate a real draw for medical professionals and care staff, who very much want to work together in the innovative ways we are introducing.

“One of my passions is encouraging people to take the best possible care of their health, to reduce years of life lost to illness and disability. The centre aims to give people more chances to take care of their own health, including the outdoor gym, allotment and community kitchen.

“It’s not just doctors, nurses and medicine that make you well. Exercise, diet, steering clear of things that damage health (such as smoking, drinking to excess and drugs) and less tangible things, such as friendship, helping other people, and learning new things, can add life to your days and days to your life.

“If approved, I believe our new centre will make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of people of all ages in Margate, and of future generations.”

Northdown Surgery is proposing to relocate to Bethesda so its patients can benefit from everything the new building offers.

Dr Malgorzata Wolny, from the Northdown Surgery, in Cliftonville, said: “If approved, this would mean our patients would have access to the expanded health centre being planned on the Bethesda site, with all the benefits that offers.”

## **Note to Editors**

The proposed development at Bethesda is part of NHS Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group’s (CCG) long term strategy for improving local people’s care.

The CCG is also aiming to secure a £10million health and care centre for Westwood Cross, to be the “community hub” for Broadstairs and parts of Ramsgate.

This could potentially be the base for up to six different GP practices, as well as having the sort of facilities planned for Bethesda.

Thanet CCG will ensure that people who would struggle if their practice moved base will still be able to access medical care and there are discussions about arrangements for public or community transport.