

Devolution for Derbyshire: Council denies claims it has put deal in jeopardy

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EREWASH Borough Council has denied claims it is putting a devolution deal for the East Midlands in jeopardy despite failing to sign off its part of the agreement.

Its leader Chris Corbett said councillors wanted to know "all the facts" before committing to the creation of a combined authority for Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

This would see the area's councils receive powers, traditionally held by Whitehall, over things like major transport projects.

The combined authority deal, which could unlock up to £50 million a year for the local economy, was due to be signed off soon but Erewash has delayed its vote on whether it will join the authority.

At a meeting yesterday, the Conservative-led council agreed to continue discussions, following on from a similar decision by South Derbyshire District Council earlier this month.

This led to reports it could put the devolution deal, which councils hoped to have in place in time for George Osborne's Autumn Statement on November 25, in jeopardy.

Councillor Corbett said: "We certainly didn't say yes or no to a deal. The council has said we want to continue to take part in the discussions and negotiations.

"When the final facts are known, then we will take a vote on whether we want to be part of it.

"We have no idea whether that will be in one month or six months' time."

Mr Corbett said Erewash councillors had expressed opposing views to devolution.

The Government has insisted that combined authorities should be headed up by an elected mayor, but some of the borough's politicians have concerns about how this would work.

Although a motion to hold a referendum on the matter was turned down by the council due to potential costs, Mr Corbett added that this may be necessary in the future.

He added: "Certainly from listening to our members they don't like a elected mayor.

"But perhaps there will be a deal without a mayor. These things are subject to negotiation.

"There are certainly good things amongst devolution and things I'm not so keen on but it's too early to form a definitive view."

<http://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/Devolution-Derbyshire-Council-denies-claims-deal/story-28168949-detail/story.html>