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News release

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Freedom honour for long serving councillor

One of the longest serving councillors in the country has been honoured by being admitted as a Freeman of the Borough of Taunton Deane.

Councillor Cliff Bishop, aged 90, joins his fellow veteran councillor, John Meikle, in being awarded the rare honour – between them they have notched up an incredible 106 years in local government.

Councillor Bishop, who represents the Bradford-on-Tone ward, was born in 1924 and educated at Oake County School and Huish's grammar school in Taunton.

He began his long service in local government 50 years ago after being elected to Oake parish council and Wellington Rural District Council. When local government was reorganised in 1973-74 he was elected to Taunton Deane Borough Council.

Councillor Bishop has always taken a keen interest in planning from his time on the Rural District Council to the present.

He chaired Taunton Deane's planning committee from 1974-91 and again from 2010-12. He was also Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and transportation for four years.

He still sits on the planning committee as well as corporate scrutiny, the Project Taunton Steering Group and Local development Framework steering group. In 1994 was elected to represent the South West on the national executive committee of the National Housing and Town Planning Council and continued to serve when the organisation merged with the Royal Town Planning Institute.

The Freedom was awarded at a special meeting of Taunton Deane Borough Council on 21 October 2014 when it was proposed by Councillor Meikle and seconded by Councillor Mark Edwards who succeeded Councillor Bishop in his Executive role.

Councillor Bishop, who attended the ceremony with his wife Bettie, said: "I am deeply honoured by being admitted as a Freeman of Taunton. I would like to thank everyone sincerely – I am overwhelmed."

Councillor Edwards, who is also Deputy Leader of the council, said: "Councillor Bishop has been more than a fellow Councillor to me - more of a mentor. His understanding of planning and planning policy has been invaluable."

“I was delighted to second this proposal and I want to congratulate him on being awarded this honour by the Council, it’s well deserved and, on a personal note, I would like to thank him for his support and advice - it has been and will continue to be invaluable.”

ENDS

Editor’s Notes: There have been 18 awards of Freedom of the Borough. Current holders are Councillor John Meikle MBS, Sir Edward du Cann (former MP for Taunton), the Light Infantry and 40 Commando Royal Marines.

The Freedom is a way for the Council to recognise exceptional contributions to the local community.

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