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## Boat people could lose singles discount

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PEOPLE living on the River Cam could lose their single person discount on mooring charges.

River mooring licences were brought in by Cambridge City Council in 2006 and the charge was set at the equivalent to Council Tax band A with discounts for single occupants and those on low incomes.

Now the council wants to break the link with Council Tax and increase the charge according to inflation, as determined by the Retail Price Index, from next year.

Officers also recommended abolition of single person occupancy discount which could see the fees leap 33 per cent for 42 of the 70 licence holders.

Camboaters said there was no need to raise the fees to cover costs. The discount reflected the lower cost of services for single people and was "universally regarded as fair".

Mark Rogers, a Camboaters committee member, said: "The issue for us is moving to a completely new pricing scheme.

"We are not against it, but we want to work with the council to find a scheme that is acceptable to the boaters and the council."

It follows a row over the charges last year when the city council threatened to raise the fee from £777.68 to £958.10 after an administrative blunder over VAT but decided to keep it equivalent to Band A Council Tax.

Many councillors were in favour of breaking the link with Council Tax, thereby also removing the single occupancy discount, when the community services scrutiny committee discussed it.

Councillor Simon Kightley, Castle, said: "What we have here is a commercial proposition, moorings are a commodity. I would compare it with the way campsites and trailer parks are run and we are looking for a going rate for a pitch."

Clr Philippa Slatter, Trumpington, said that unlike Council Tax, none of the mooring fees money went to the county council for education.

"This is a problem we have made for ourselves. We are renting out part of our bank and for that you should get the same services you get from a marina, such as dealing with waste."

But others were worried about people's ability to pay.

Clr Ben Bradnack, Petersfield, said: "The other half of the argument is whether this is low cost accommodation. This is why some people are boat owners.

"For some people this will result in an increased fee of 33 per cent. A 33 per cent increase in fee is quite considerable."

Clr Rhodri James, Arbury, said: "I'm happy losing single person discount, but I'm concerned that 33 per cent in one year is a very large rise. I would have preferred to see it staged over a couple of years."

Clr Julie Smith, executive councillor for arts and recreation, agreed to break the link with Council Tax from 2009/10 and that the charge should rise in accordance with RPIX as of November 30 the previous year.

She decided not to remove the single person discount at this time, however, and said there should be a further review.

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Published: 28/01/2008 10:51:18

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