

The Consell de Formentera held its regular plenary session for the month of September today, where councillors unanimously backed a proposal to appoint Andreu Ferrer Juan as justice of the peace. The proposal describes the Formentera resident and retired civil servant as a “great connoisseur of the realities of local governance”.

President Alejandra Ferrer thanked all those who presented candidatures for the position and praised the work of Joan Yern, the previous justice of the peace, as well as his alternate, also named Joan Yern, who remains in active duty. The agreement will be communicated to the chief judge of Eivissa for submission before the high court of the Balearic Islands, which will formalise the appointment.

Property tax deductions for renewable energies

Another measure to win full consensus among assembly members was a proposed modification of the ordinance regulating property taxes. Still in the initial phase of approval, the measure would create tax breaks of up to 50% on properties with solar systems for thermal and electrical energy.

Councillor of Economy and Finance Bartomeu Escandell said 40% rebates would apply to existing and future installations that produce four kilowatts or more of power and which are accredited by a certificate from the installer, with maximum associated deductions of €600 over four years. If installations also inject energy surpluses back into the grid, the rebate will be 50% with a maximum deduction of €700 over the same period. The measure will take effect in 2022.

First steps to give landmark status to Molí d'en Botigues

With votes in favour from the cabinet and despite abstention from the opposition, the day's session also secured backing to begin designating Molí d'en Botigues windmill in La Mola a

Cultural Landmark (Bé d'Interés Cultural, BIC). Councillor of Heritage Raquel Guasch remarked that “one of this legislature's priorities is to strengthen protection and preservation of our heritage sites and advocate for recognition of that heritage; this is a path which started with the listing of Molí Vell de la Mola, and which continues today as we begin work to list Molí d'en Botigues. An important element of Formentera's ethnological heritage, Molí d'en Botigues is one of seven flour windmills that once existed on the island, and one that retains part of the mechanics which made it possible to grind grain into flour.

Lute sailing, intangible heritage

Unanimous backing also materialised behind a measure to designate the traditional technique of lute-sailing on Formentera as an Intangible Asset of Cultural Interest. Councillor Guasch underscored Formentera's support for “an extremely sensible” proposal of the Balearic Islands Advisory Council on Heritage (CAPIB). Guasch explained that following the proposal, which was directed at all four islands, “a study was commissioned on the lateen sail in Formentera which served as the basis for a related report and which was incorporated into the listing proposal”.

Honouring local police

Members of every political party with representation in government came together to support proposed distinctions for officers on Formentera's local police force. Carlos Malberti Morogán will receive a medal for fifteen-plus years of service in local law enforcement. Councillor of Interior Josep Marí described the honouree's career as “upright and just”.

Additionally, Officers Marco Aragay Torres, Marc Roig Ferrer, José Antonio Perera Escandell and Javier Torrens Trias will receive the Cross of Police Merit and Green Badge for outstanding efforts in the arrest of boat captains accused of illegal trafficking of migrants.

On behalf of the local cabinet, President Ferrer congratulated honourees and the entire Formentera Local Police Department for their work throughout two years of pandemic. Awards will be delivered at a 12-noon ceremony this Sunday at Hotel Formentera Playa.

N**ew street honouring local teacher Maria Mayans Ferrer**

With “yes” votes from the Gent per Formentera-PSOE cabinet and Sa Unió representatives opting to abstain, the plenary session secured the go-ahead for a proposed correction of errors in street names, numbering and signage, as well as for names for new roads and public spaces. Island services councillor Bartomeu Escandell highlighted one proposed name —Carrer de la Mestra Maria Mayans Ferrer— for the new arterial serving the freshly opened school in Sant Ferran. Census data confirm Mayans worked as a teacher on the island in 1871, and Artur Pérez-Cabrero refers to her in *La Guía del turista* (1909) as a teacher at the girls' school in Sant Francesc.

Ordinance on foster families

Assembly members united once again behind initial approval of the regulatory ordinance governing financial support for foster families. Councillor of Social Welfare Rafael Ramírez highlighted broad support for the proposal and remarked that the ordinance “is one of the policies we are developing to improve the conditions and quality of care that minors receive”. Construction of a centre for at-risk youth will push the island closer to that goal, asserted Ramírez, and will mean a “decisive leap forward in terms of quality in local services”.

Sant Ferran Cultural Space

The cabinet once again overcame opposition abstention to endorse initial approval of regulations governing use of the Sant Ferran Cultural Space. With teachers and students set up in the new Sant Ferran school, Councillor of Education and Culture Susana Labrador said the goal was to “ensure the old school becomes a space for cultural, educational and associative activities”; use regulations are the first step toward regulating how this is done.

“Our objective is to create an indoor-outdoor living cultural space in Sant Ferran”, said Councillor Labrador. “We want both the Consell and hometown associations to use it and, in so doing, help turn the town into the cultural touchstone it was years ago.” The proposed uses and regulations, which have been communicated to local cultural associations and will now be subjected to a 30-day period of public consultation, stipulate priority for activities that are cultural, educational, civic or social in nature, as well as those that relate to leisure. The idea,

said Labrador, is to encourage citizen participation in matters that impact the community and to promote values like peaceful community coexistence. Other work in parallel will focus on definitive plans for a community-oriented centre for culture and the arts in Sant Ferran, indicated the councillor.

Public transport

Backing also came for two proposals relating to mobility: the first succeeded when the GxF-PSOE cabinet overcame the opposition's abstention; the second passed with support from all parties. Councillor of Mobility Rafael González sought definitive approval for a proposed system of passenger transport on local roads, which will also underpin the contract awarded for regular public passenger transport services.

Once the above measure passed, assembly members adopted a proposal to initiate bidding for the contract for public passenger transport service by road, a preliminary step to put the contract out to tender.

“We hope the new contract delivers a boost to public transport and improves the offer, not to mention provides sustainable transport alternatives which are complementary to formentera.eco”, said the councillor. González also pointed out that the ten-year, €18-million contract would mean improvements such four more bus routes (up from five), more sustainable transport vehicles, increased frequency of passage, services coordinated with the arrival and departure of ferries, newly incorporated tech (payment by card or mobile phone) and more.

González also defended a measure adopted by the assembly to fit radar-controlled speed traps on public roads. The vote found councillors urging the Directorate General of Traffic to install fixed and mobile radar devices to improve road safety, as stated in Formentera's Sustainable Mobility Plan.

Other proposals

Cabinet and opposition councillors struck a compromise urging the Balearic government to

enforce a pledge to prepare preliminary studies and documentation so that the Plan for Use and Management of Ses Salines Natural Reserve can be revised and updated to suit current management and conservation needs.

In addition, backing also coalesced for calls from the opposition to urge the Consell, harbour master's authority, Civil Guard, coastal authority “and all other responsible administrations to ensure uninterrupted summer controls of charter boats that stop at the local shoreline”. Councillors underscored the importance of checking arriving ships' compliance with requirements and administrative and safety-related authorisations.

Report from Councillor Labrador

Deputy Vice-President and Councillor of Culture and Education Susana Labrador stood before members of the plenary today to report on work carried out in her departments. “2021 may have been marked by COVID-19 and punctuated by moments of great difficulty”, she confided, “but much of our work has centred on getting things back to normal in culture and education, obviously while still taking into account measures to stop viral spread”.

In remarks, the councillor highlighted the opening of the new Sant Ferran school and nursery, which she described as “one of the island's priority educational projects”. She traced the initiative to “demands from within the educational community and from islanders at large”, and asserted, “We all would have liked to have had these schools sooner. But now, thanks to the collaboration and concord between our island's and region's governments, they're a reality”.

Labrador also drew attention to the start of the local plan for culture: “The Formentera Offices of Culture and Heritage intend to take the temperature of local culture and define strategic lines and future proposals to make our island's cultural enrichment a participatory process”. She circled back to the Sant Ferran Cultural Space as well, which she had spoken of earlier as part of debate around initial approval of the facility's use regulations.

She closed with a review of her departments' efforts over the last 12 months and, highlighting the difficult year marked by the pandemic, praised the work and understanding of municipal employees, stakeholders on the cultural scene and in the educational community, and parents.

Unanimity around proclamations

European Day of Languages

Councillors endorsed a proclamation which was tabled by Councillor of Language Policy Raquel Guasch on the occasion of European Day of Languages, 26 September. In it, local government pledges to promote and preserve the Catalan language, a linguistic heritage that Formentera wishes to share with the rest of Europe's citizens, and promises respect for linguistic diversity.

International Celebrate Bisexuality Day 2021

The day's gathering concluded with a proclamation marking International Celebrate Bisexuality Day 2021, celebrated on 23 September. The measure was tabled by Councillor of Equality and LGTBI Affairs Vanessa Parellada, who asserted that bisexual people and people of varying plurisexualities make political stands within the LGTBI community and within society at large. “So”, the proclamation reads, “to defend bisexuality is to defend, speak to and promote the broad diversity of human relations”.

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