This morning saw the island's councillors gather to celebrate the October plenary session of the Formentera Council. Of particular significance on the agenda was a proposal to grant initial approval to the Council's general 2016 budgets, which, at 22,275,000 euros, are 1.43 percentage points higher than the accounts in 2015. Bartomeu Escandell, tax office councillor, was on hand to speak to any questions on the subject. He pointed out – underscoring the focus on «quality public services» – the patent continuity between the budgets of years past and the coming year.

Environment and transport

Escandell enumerated some of the different projects envisioned for 2016, paying special attention to the green ones: rezoning and additional environmental protections at l'Estany des Peix, an initiative to regulate anchorage across the island's coastline. Investment in sustainable transport was a recurring theme, as the councillor made clear

Sustainable transport, the councillor made clear, is an important part of 2016 investments, as evidenced by the forthcoming draft of a directive on transport and plans to rehabilitate and repurpose local heritage sites.

Local participation

The councillor spoke of the move to give the Consell d'Entitats authority to decide which projects will receive 10% of the CiF investment budget (250,000€). The tax office councillor reminded plenary participants of the drop (from 0.85% to 0.80%) in the local real estate tax on urban buildings. He noted, however, that overall collections are expected to increase, thanks to improved inspection techniques.

Rejection by opposition

For a variety of reasons, the new budget did not receive support from the different opposition parties. Partido Popular spokesman José Manuel Alcaraz declared his party's intent to submit objections in an attempt to lower tax rates. Socialist councillor Rafael Ramírez explained his party's objection as «a question of principle», indicating the PSOE's desire to be included in the consensus process. Compromís amb Formentera spokeswoman Cristina Costa, while declaring «agreement on the general terms of the budget», assured her party would have given priority to

different projects. In the end, the budget was passed thanks to “yes” votes from the ruling party and despite the “no” of the opposition.

Seeking funds to purchase Espalmador

Attendants of the plenary voted unanimously to support a joint motion – first launched by the PP – to seek out funding in conjunction with the Palma and Madrid governments to buy the island of s’Espalmador and guarantee its environmental upkeep. Labelling it a subject of general interest, Councillor Escandell stressed the importance of winning the support of all the island’s political parties. He also said he would petition to see that «more controls are put in place to ensure a real, effective protection of the island take place». The three other groups gave their support to this idea.

Unanimity

There were three final measures that saw councillors join together for unanimous approval. First among these was a motion to post the agendas of the CiF president and councillors on the Formentera Council website. The second dealt with the drafting of a collaborative accord to improve the island’s firefighting service. In the third case, the go-ahead was given to commissioning an undersea archeological map of Formentera and surrounding areas. In patrimony councillor Susana Labrador’s words, «locating and describing our underwater archeological heritage sites is the first step toward effectively protecting them».