



In a first, members of the Consell de Formentera convened today for an urgent, one-off and online plenary session—a gathering rebroadcast on the Consell's YouTube page and which allowed councilmembers to stick to coronavirus safety and distancing measures. The ordinary assembly will go forward under the same parameters on 29 May.

Attendees heard about the resolutions from the president's office that have been adopted since public health emergency orders were activated in response to Covid-19, and reviewed announcements from the regional and national Socialist workers' party (PSIB-PSOE) and Gent per Formentera (GxF) promising to donate, for the duration of the state of alarm, their respective groups' compensation to the non-profit group Formenterers Solidaris. Spokespeople from each party underscored their hopes that the money be used "so the group can continue its work helping those most in need".

Economic and social support

Assembly members ratified proposed economic and fiscal measures to mitigate the economic and social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The proposal succeeded with "yes" votes from the GxF-PSOE cabinet and despite abstention from opposition consellers of Sa Unió.

Economy and tax office chief Bartomeu Escandell asserted, "This public health crisis is also a social and economic one, and spending approved in November will have to be revisited if the Consell is going to tackle it properly". The conseller affirmed the plan was to "continue supporting economic assistance that will better prepare people, families and owners of local businesses to cope with the extraordinary circumstances surrounding Covid-19".

"Our first priority in this administration has been families in need", said Escandell, who pointed out that local government is currently assisting 400 family units and 900 individuals—a task which he insisted wouldn't be changing. The Consell is setting aside 20% of its deficit, or €200,000, to this first line of support, in addition to €325,000 which local associations agreed to divert from the 2020 participatory spending package to deal with the crisis that Covid-19 promises to unleash.

Escandell also reviewed the terms of an economic roadmap prepared in concert with the island's business and productive sector to brace for economic fallout ahead. "Among a number of other measures adopted by the Consell which fall within our jurisdiction, collections ceased on 31 March in an effort to relieve fiscal pressure, and we asked the Tax Agency of the Balearic Islands [ATIB] to extend the payment period, which this year will come to term 1 December 2020".

Discontinuing collection of public space occupancy tax

The conseller also pointed out the island's government has for this year suspended collection of the public space occupancy tax paid by shopkeepers and market vendors. Temporary permits for music and entertainment will no longer be restricted to businesses open a minimum number of months of the year. The administration is also in touch with the coastal authority to reduce or eliminate the occupancy tax paid by beach bars and other public domain services.

Support for tourism sector

Cross-party backing was secured by measures to shore up the local tourism industry. Conseller Escandell described them as "agreed upon by our business community and designed with one goal in mind: to minimise the toll that the crisis stands to take on our well-being, our finances and our social fabric". The changes include pushing back to year end 2020 the deadline on payments from new tourism businesses as well as on fees for recently declared holiday rentals, plus a 12-month extension of existing permits for holiday rentals and an extension till 2022 of the 2015-2019 plan for quality dwellings.

Escandell concluded by highlighting joint efforts under way between the Consell and Govern balear to create a targetted line of support for freelancers.

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**Department of Communications
Consell de Formentera**