With protocol in place to help guarantee safety and prevent the spread of covid-19, members of the Consell de Formentera met face to face today for the first monthly full-house assembly since since emergency orders were rescinded. The June plenary session came with backing for a subsidies plan for 2020-2021 and phase-one approval for a host of others, including a scheme to regulate unlawful marketing, sale and consumption of alcohol; a measure on the names of local towns, roads and public places; changes to blue zone metred parking, and a new committee charged with studying potential risks and issues relative to neglect and custody of minors.

Noise inspections at Es Ca Marí power station

In a cross-party appeal to the Balearic ministry of environment, assembly members highlighted the need for training to enable Consell de Formentera personnel to perform noise checks and inspections in enforcement of noise immission standards at Es Ca Marí power station.

Defending the proposal, environment conseller Antonio J Sanz offered that “the goal is to use the powers afforded by Balearic legislation on noise pollution to develop a suitably equipped system of inspections”. Sanz said the effective result of the environmental commission’s adoption of observations from Spain’s public light utility, Endesa, in May, was to “weaken the very emission reductions and environmental safeguards” that the Consell pushed for in March when it backed integrated environmental authorisation for Es Ca Marí substation.

Acknowledging the Balearic government’s authority on electricity, Sanz insisted the proposal aimed to “put the Consell in a position to ensure compliance with the plant’s noise immission standards”. “We have more than a seat at the table here”, said the conseller, “we have a political responsibility to do something for residents who have endured a difficult situation for years now”.

Strategic subsidies plan 2020-2021

With “yes” votes from the GxF-PSOE cabinet and amid abstention from members of Sa Unió, the assembly passed a strategic subsidies plan for 2020-2021. Economy and tax office conseller Bartomeu Escandell described the associated measures as “crucial, because they support Formentera’s associations and build stronger communities while investing in our

countryside, sustainable mobility, the environment and more".

Targeting individuals and groups that propose work of public, social interest, and which tackle disparities linked to Formentera's double and triple insularity, subsidies will serve projects built around social change; education, culture and heritage; sport; farming, livestock, fishing and hunting; mobility and the environment.

Regulating marketing, sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages
Assembly members came together to grant initial backing to a package of measures designed to regulate the illegal marketing, sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages on Formentera. In the words of social welfare conseller Rafael Ramírez, in addition to "creating guidelines for tackling the illegal promotion and sale of alcohol", the ordinance "is about protecting Formentera youth". Ramírez pointed to recent studies putting alcohol among the three most popular and prevalent drugs on the island, and described the new bylaw as "a tool to regulate and prevent unlawful acts".

Bolstering protections for minors
The assembly struck unity on the formation and governing rules of a local government commission to examine questions related to risk, neglect and custody of minors. Highlighting recent rules changes in the Balearics, the conseller stressed the imperative of delivering "an up-to-date system to protect children and minors". According to Ramírez, the multi-member body, with power to deliver opinions on proposed resolutions, "will reinforce and increase the efficiency of our policies on the protection of minors".

Traditional place names
Support came, despite "no" votes from the opposition, for a measure on the nomenclature of towns, roads and other urban sites on the island. Patrimony and language policies consellera Raquel Guasch said the change fixed various aspects of the initial document "with an eye to cementing traditional popular toponymy, time-honoured names and other features of local culture". "Something so visible and so integral to our identity as toponymy and micro-toponymy requires certain rigour", the consellera insisted. Other changes to the 2018 text also include replacing "Maryland" with the residential area's traditional appellation, "Es Copinar", and "Polígon Industrial de Formentera" with "Polígon Industrial de Can Teuet" (Can Teuet Industrial Park).

Moratorium on hydrocarbon explorations

Approval also came for an Aliança Mar Blava measure bolstered by cross-party sponsorship and defended by Formentera's conseller of environment: "We're pushing the Govern to urgently implement an immediate moratorium on new applications to investigate, explore and extract hydrocarbons and on new hydrocarbon exploration projects in the Spanish Mediterranean". Unanimous support was additionally secured for the Consell's membership in the Xarxa d'Entitats Locals (Network of Local Entities) to develop and implement the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Sa Unió proposal on transparency

Consellers passed a proposal, brought by Sa Unió members and brokered by the local cabinet, on ongoing content upgrades of the Consell's Transparency Portal and cross-party collaboration to create a commission on ethics and good governance.

Urgent motions

Assembly members gave unanimous support for two urgent motions to revisit the tax and regulatory ordinance governing blue-zone metred parking on Formentera. Mobility conseller Rafael González said the changes would make a 9.00am-to-9.00pm time-table standard in towns across the island where *pàrquing regulat* is in place. In light of the ongoing crisis, they would also establish a 25% reduction that hotels near metred areas could pass on to their clients. The move also clears the decks for implementation of a mobile payment app, 15-minute parking in La Savina and Es Pujols, and patrols by parking attendants even in towns like Es Caló where the pay-to-park system is absent — which, as González pointed out, already occurs on market days in La Mola.

Cross-party support was likewise secured for a proposed reference to guidelines governing child and adolescent recreational services in the new normality. Described by youth consellera Vanessa Parellada as the product of collaboration between Govern balear and island councils, the amendment to existing regulations envisions covid-19 safety and preventive measures in Formentera's summer day-camp programme, youth drop-in centre and other Consell-backed recreational programming, as well as other leisure activities organised on the island in the new normality.

Departmental report

Infrastructure, agriculture and interior conseller Josep Marí offered members of the assembly an overview of his departments' efforts in the last twelve months. Speaking on farming, livestock, fishing and hunting, Marí said the local farmers' co-operative should be the "backbone and driving force of the local revival of agriculture and livestock" and, together with the Consell, "must restore, professionalise and make profitable agrarian activity".

Underlining Formentera's commitment to its agricultural sector, Marí detailed recipients of Consell subsidies in 2020 — Farmers' Co-operative (€130,000), the Fishermen's Guild (€15,000) and Association of Livestock Farmers (€37,000 plus special drought assistance topping €15,000 for animal feed).

Interior

Applauding the efforts during these unusual times of the Formentera Local Police, Marí identified the priority moving ahead as an "increasing stability on the force", which he said could be delivered by coupling "an agile and efficient chain of command" with "sufficient officers to continue making Formentera a safe, orderly place to live, and a destination where visitors' safety is assured". Marí additionally praised the work of others on the Consell payroll like lifeguards and firefighters.

Infrastructure

As Marí drew to a close, he gave a review of upgrades either under way or in the offing in distinct towns on the island, and offered that his department's objective in the past remained unchanged in the present: "To equip Formentera, and particularly our towns, with needed resources. We want to turn towns into people-friendly places, rid them of vehicle traffic and make them more socially and economically vibrant".

He concluded by saluting the consellers who preceded him, Consell personnel, and his counterparts on the cabinet.

Government proclamation

And lastly, backing was secured for a proposed proclamation on World LGBTI Pride Day. Consellera of equality and LGBTI affairs Vanessa Parellada explained, "we're adding our voice to a call that has already been cast: to forgo urgency and 'right now' for premeditation. Our efforts must reflect the importance of comprehensive legislation that supports trans people, social equality and eradicating state discrimination of LGBTI people. We need laws that defend, protect and shield these communities against intolerance and invisibility".

"Now that the Consell de Formentera has authority on LGBTI policies, we need to continue the longstanding efforts already under way toward prevention, education and support for the community", she said. Parellada also identified a challenge moving ahead: the launch of a local

service for comprehensive support.

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