



Representatives of the Consell de Formentera logged on today for their December gathering, a full-house session in which councillors handed cross-party support to motions on improved patrols and signage at Ses Salines nature reserve and on a land transfer to the Balearic housing authority so rent-controlled dwellings can be built in Sant Ferran.

Patrols and signage at Ses Salines

Environment chief Antonio J. Sanz defended a measure calling on the administration of Ses Salines nature reserve of Eivissa-Formentera to urgently replace ‘no swimming’ signs in Sa Sèquia canal; to produce a timeline for replacement and maintenance of signs identifying no-parking areas and shared pedestrian and motorist roads, and to incorporate additional personnel at the park. Sanz offered that “safeguarding the reserve is as vital as the work of every government agency involved”.

Solar panels at desalination plant

Universal backing was also secured by a measure calling on the Balearic government to “support energy transition goals, including in renewable energy, by initiating the necessary steps so photovoltaic panels can be installed at the desalination plant”. Councillor Sanz trumpeted the opposition’s embrace of the measure and described “cutting demand for electricity and generating clean energy with structures where additional construction or land is unnecessary” as “an integral part” of the Consell’s environmental policy.

Supporting local business

Assembly members again struck unity on a motion to support local business owners—“a primordial part of Formentera”, according to commerce councillor Ana Juan. The motion included an appeal to the Balearic government to make the needed provisions for investments in energy transition, modernisation and dynamisation to support local trade. Expounding on local and regional pandemic-related initiatives this year, Councillor Juan asserted, “What benefits Formentera’s businesses benefits the rest of Formentera, too”.

Unity was additionally struck on a proposal brought by sport councillor Paula Ferrer to urge the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to make karate an official sport in the 2024 Paris Olympic Games and onward.

Sa Unió proposals

Two proposals brought by Sa Unió party members were approved unanimously: one concerned upgrades on the Es Cap rubbish tip road, another saw councillors agitating for the urgent return of 10.30pm Eivissa-to-Formentera ferry service.

Land transfer to Ibavi

Assembly members found common ground green-lighting the transfer of a plot of land to the Balearic housing authority (Ibavi) ahead of plans to build social housing on carrer d'Alacant in Sant Ferran.

Land councillor Rafael González said the land transfer was part of a longstanding effort that would also entail construction of a new park and green spaces: "We're hoping the build happens as soon as possible. It will be a housing supply boon for those who need it most."

Remarks by Susana Labrador

Second deputy premiere and culture and education councillor Susana Labrador stood before the assembly to relate actions across her departments. She insisted the imprint of the pandemic was impossible to ignore: "It is abundantly clear that education and culture are assets and rights, and that they're essential for society and for the holistic development of individual and collective personalities." Labrador argued that that relevance hasn't saved them, though, asserting both had suffered under the unfolding crisis. In that sense, the councillor made assurances that Formentera's government would continue enacting public educational and cultural policies.

On education, the councillor reviewed the impact of pandemic-era school closures in March and underscored work by pupils, teachers and parents to adapt to new circumstances with virtual learning during the general shutdown and protocol for a safe return to classrooms afterwards. She also gave a summary of efforts to reshape service amid exceptional circumstances during lockdown, the subsequent loosening of restrictive measures and the new normal.

Labrador said the top priorities of Formentera's office of culture were underpinned by three tenets: "First, continue creating new cultural facilities for the island and improving existing ones. Second, deliver quality cultural programming year round. Third, organise celebrations of local holidays and support groups and festival committees involved in organising patron saint and

other cultural celebrations.” The councillor said that the indelible mark of the public health conjuncture has been clear since March, when, amid the months of toughest restrictions, programming went virtual before taking on its current customised form. Labrador concluded by praising the “hard work and commitment of municipal employees and all islanders who work in education and culture”.

Parellada reports

Vanessa Parellada appeared before the assembly today as well, speaking about actions since June 2019 in support the goals and efforts of her departments. “What do youth, citizen participation, new technologies, equality and LGBTI have in common?” she asked, referring to the departments in her purview, rounding off the list with the two departments she inherited from President Ferrer. “They’re all transversal, cutting across the municipal departments and affecting Formentera as a whole.”

Underpinning youth policy is the second version of the Strategic Plan for Children and Youth, a document which councillors adopted during the previous legislative term. While accepting that lockdown constituted a “shake-up”, the councillor asserted that “youth remained at the forefront”, and offering that some young islanders discovered the local youth drop-in centre thanks to the pandemic. Identifying ongoing challenges like continuing to rethink the drop-in centre, Parellada also drew attention to the start of work on the new skate park and praised the well-working order of the Escola d’Estiu recreational programme despite the state of public health affairs.

Parellada underlined the launch of a WhatsApp chat group to complement the Formentera Citizen Participation Department’s e-mail communications with local community groups, insisting the app continued to remain relevant today. The councillor also pointed out local associations had opted to devote the allocation for this year’s “participatory spending” initiative to social spending on account of the pandemic—“something all the cabinet councillors are quite proud of”, she said.

And Parellada applauded liaisons in the new technologies department, who, with the change to remote working in March, dedicated particular energy to supporting their colleagues. She said the growing list of services accessible to islanders on the OVAC [Virtual Citizen Information Office] was behind planned upgrades aimed at making the site simpler and more intuitive.

The councillor said that plans were underway further develop equality measures included in

Formentera's Integrated Equality Plan. Currently in force, the plan supports local community groups who promote equality and sexual and gender diversity. Finally, she said LGBTI policy was "fundamentally rooted in visibility and awareness building around diversity of gender identities and sexual orientation, and not just on a few specific days (to depathologise trans identities, to fight LGBTIphobia, etc.) but all year long".

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