

Members of the Formentera Council plenary assembly gathered today, a Friday, for the administration's first plenary session of 2018. At the centre of debate was a proposed bonus to level the playing field for public servants living in the islands.

The first such initiative, proposed by the People's Party (PP), called on the Council to create a dedicated fund for the bonuses using its own resources. The measure failed after it was rejected by majority party Gent per Formentera (GxF). The PSOE brought their own version of a similar proposal, which was scrapped as well.

Vanessa Parellada, secretary of social welfare, youth services and human resources affirmed both proposals were voted down because they would have put the Council on the hook for the financing the extra pay. “The isolation of Formentera from mainland Spain” [commonly referred to as the island's “triple insularity”] “affects the entire island”. “Any measure which improves the lot of one segment of the population by worsening another's” —referring to those who would pay for the fund— “would be illogical”. She said it would be like “forcing Formentera to foot the bill for the downsides of working on Formentera”.

GxF presented a measure supporting the so-called “insular bonus” on the condition the central government in Madrid supplied the funds to make it a reality. Parellada drew a parallel with residents' discounts on ferry tickets, reduced rubbish transport costs and all the other compensation that exists to remedy Formentera's insularity. “Victims of this insularity mustn't be obliged to also foot the bill”, she argued. The measure passed thanks to backing from GxF, though members of the other parties, PP, PSOE and Compromís, abstained.

Other measures

One measure that got cross-party support was a GxF proposal to join a pact with a Mallorca-based transport consortium for an integrated system of tariffs. Likewise, the assembly was united in giving the go-ahead to an expansion of low-voltage power lines serving Recó de la Llenya, sa Miranda and Can Simonet. “Yes” votes from GxF party members guaranteed the success of a move to block the findings of an impact study, piloted by a group called Plaça de Sant Ferran, of a plot in Sant Ferran. Thanks to backing from GxF and PP, and despite abstaining votes from PSOE and Compromís, definitive approval came for a detailed study of

work on avinguda Joan Castelló Guasch. A proposal to standardise and regulate business hours and live entertainment was backed by GxF and Compromís members of the plenary, while other party representatives abstained. The fate of a PP proposal concerning standardising tourist holiday rentals at multi-family homes in urban areas was sealed by “no” votes from GxF and PSOE party members. Meanwhile unanimous backing was secured by a measure from socialists in the assembly to create signage at all pedestrian crossings in school zones across Sant Francesc.

Progress report

Councillor Susana Labrador, who took the floor to give a report on action in her departments, started by reminding plenary members that her function is to “promote and lead projects related to culture, heritage and education on the island within the standards of the administration's team of senior councillors”.

Labrador gave an overview of her offices' work in 2017. She focused on four efforts in particular:

Disinterment at the Sant Ferran cemetery last November, aimed at locating the remains of five individuals gunned down by pro-Franco forces during the Spanish Civil War. The victims were murdered on March 1, 1937 behind the cemetery walls.

The efforts were headed up by Fòrum per la Memòria d'Eivissa i Formentera and paid for by the Govern and Formentera Council.

Start of la Mola lighthouse remodel, an effort linked to a museographic project in the same space. Crews will equip the monument with an interpretive centre about local lighthouses, a museographic collection focussed on the island's maritime heritage and a multipurpose room for cultural events.

Building permit for Sant Ferran's primary and nursery schools. Thanks to painstaking efforts of the local departments of patrimony and land, the administration's flagship project appears closer than ever. Additional progress is due to the hard work of the Council's legal experts and Ibisec advisors, which made next month's tweaking of municipal regulations possible.

Lastly, **the recently-opened reading space in Sant Ferran**. Part of an effort to revitalise culture and leisure activities in town, the library outlet has three separate spaces: a section for adults, a kids' area and a computer lab with Internet access.