

Decision-makers gathered today for local government's April plenary assembly, a session which brought cross-party support for a collection freeze on fees paid by restaurants offering outdoor seating and by merchants at craft or farmers' markets. Economy and finance chief Bartomeu Escandell defended the measure, saying, "This freeze has been extended every six months since Covid began, and we won't hesitate to repeat the process if the situation requires". He stressed"no one left behind"was the watchword and said the ultimate goal was to "help those who need it most as much as we can".

Backing from the Gent per Formentera-PSOE cabinet meant preliminary approval, despite abstention from Sa Unió representatives, of a motion to modify the budget. The economy and finance councillor said the €3,344,629 retooling was about"adapting [spending] to current circumstances"and described it as "a necessary amendment financed with reserve funding". "Now is the time to boost the economy, invest and help the most needy families and businesses on the island", Escandell explained. "Among the new additions on the 2021 budget are aid for freelancers, business owners and families, and financing for the launch or completion of various construction projects."

The GxF-PSOE cabinet again overcame opposition abstention to tweak the Consell's Strategic Subsidies Plan (Pla Estratègic de Subvencions), including an €18,000 line item to collaborate with S.D. Formentera on the hometown football club's 50th anniversary celebration. Councillor Escandell defended the proposal, reasoning, "This club is the oldest on the island and, in a way, their story is ours. Our support now can finance events and efforts to tell that story, and how we all remember it."

**Climate and Energy Pact**

Cross-party support materialised behind Formentera's joining of the Mayors'Climate and Energy Pact. "Climate change is here now and it's one of the greatest challenges of our time", noted environment chief Antonio J Sanz. "We need immediate action and cooperation between local, regional and national authorities the world over", he insisted. "But our efforts mustn't stop at mitigation. We need to adapt, and joining this pact will help us do just that". The covenant means cutting greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2030, reducing energy consumption by 27% and ensuring renewable energy accounts for 27% of total consumption. Sanz concluded his remarks by emphasising the importance of "making clean energy a part of local government's mandate".

**Other proposals**
Attendees agreed to officially designate Diada de Sant Jaume (25 July) and the feast day of Sant Ferran (30 May) as local holidays in 2022. They also green-lighted the yearly revision, dated 1 January 2021, of the municipal register of inhabitants ("*el padró*"), which counts 13,465 islanders. The figures will be forwarded to the National Institute of Statistics (INE).

Backing was additionally secured for the opposition's proposal, ultimately brokered by the cabinet, to continue upgrades of the island's sports facilities and to measure current and future needs against participation by sportspeople, associations, clubs, sports federations and political groups. Deputy premiere Ana Juan, who is temporarily in charge of the Formentera Department of Sport, highlighted improvements and changes this current legislative term and stressed the effort "takes listening to the demands of our various sports groups and clubs".

Lastly, attendees came together to support a call from La Mola primary school, La Mola Parents' Association (APIMA), La Mola Residents' Association, La Mola Seniors' Association and residents at large to, in the words of education chief Susana Labrador, "make sure La Mola park satisfies existing demand in those areas where it currently falls short". The Sa Unió proposal was brokered by the GxF-PSOE cabinet.

**Departmental review**
The day's session closed with a report from heritage, language policy and vocational training chief Raquel Guasch. The councillor highlighted "the work, dedication and commitment" of department staff. "One of our priorities this legislature was to expand safeguards and preservation around local heritage sites, and we're still on this path", she said. One such initiative was the listing of La Mola's legacy windmill, el molí Vell de la Mola, as a cultural interest site (BIC), another involved commissioning a plan to afford Ses Salines with similar BIC protections. Formentera's first "catalogue of country roads"was put to tender, and the Advisory Committee of Immaterial Heritage (CAPI) was formed. The call has also gone out for applicants to the Consell's research grant — a prize which, since Guasch has held office, has grown by €2,500. The councillor also trumpeted completion of archaeological work at Sa Tanca Vella Byzantine necropolis, as well as archaeological research in autumn at La Mola's Cova 127.

Guasch likewise held up the 39 technical reports and 18 authorisations for archaeological operations that her department has issued or processed since August. Pointing to a newly reinforced staff, the councillor claimed "100% progress"on efforts related to local archives. Other improvements at the municipal archive include an independent and better equipped space.

On language policies, the councillor insisted Catalan courses for adults remained “a cornerstone”. Classes took place and were well received in autumn and winter despite Covid-19 restrictions, which also brought the added challenge of locating classrooms better suited to new space requirements. Enrolment in 11 courses from October to February has totalled 225. Guasch gave special kudos to the daily efforts of the Consell’s language advisory service across the departments.

“Commitment, hard work, dedication”, mused the councillor, “these will continue to guide us day by day in the mandate that islanders gave us in 2019”.

**30 April 2021**
**Communications Department**
**Council of Formentera**