The Formentera Council's first plenary session of 2017 was also the occasion to christen a new plenary hall, the conference room of the Formentera Day Centre. CiF president Jaume Ferrer explained 2017's particular significance for the Council, which turns ten this year on July 10.

The meeting brought preliminary approval for a plan to reshape the island's so-called “subsidiary rules”, regulations that govern how historical areas of Sant Francesc, Sant Ferran and el Pilar de la Mola are mapped out. According to land councillor Alejandra Ferrer, the move came in response to a court ruling that there lacked sufficient justification for the original delimitation.

The councillor described how, until now, “one single document has defined which sites are included in the island's catalogue of historic sites. The present change will involve more extensive and specific documentation and include features both inside and outside the historic zones, as well as features that require protection and those that do not.”

The councillor cited the absence of changes —beyond the increasingly lengthy explanations to be included henceforth— to the regulations in Sant Francesc and la Mola. “Sant Ferran's code was amended to reapply previous building restrictions to Ca Ses Castellones,” a requirement which Councillor Ferrer noted was set out in a court ruling.

With “yes” votes from the entire house minus Popular Party (PP) abstention, the session gave the first green light needed for the rule change to take place. Today begins a one-month period during which comments about the plan can be submitted. If definitive ratification occurs, it will lift the partial reversal of the subsidiary norms' effect on historical zones. That reversal currently blocks the way of projects like the Sant Ferran school remodel and construction.

'Sun tax'

Members of the plenary also gave unanimous agreement to a proposal to exempt Formentera and Eivissa residents from a tax on personal power use devised to promote solar power in the islands. Plenary attendants voted to ask Madrid to exclude Formentera and Eivissa from a list of

territories where the renewable energy tax is applied. Instead, they appeal to the national administration to use incentives and tax breaks on such energy.

Report

Culture, education and heritage councillor Susana Labrador appeared before the house to report on the efforts of her departments. Their aim, said Labrador, “is to promote and head up projects that improve the role played by culture, heritage and education on our island.” The councillor said such projects are framed by standards set out by working groups of the Govern Balear.

Reviewing her departments' 2016 initiatives, Labrador highlighted the Sant Ferran primary and nursery schools and their priority position on the education office's agenda. She pointed to “tremendous cooperation between our land and heritage offices and the Council's legal teams” in explaining the initial approval of the updated subsidiary norms, saying the changes would provide necessary education equipment to Formentera's zero to twelve year olds.

Along those lines, Labrador made assurances that coordination between the technical crews of the Council and Ibisec would continue in 2017, and cited such cooperation as she held up the department's draft project for definitive completion of the new schools.

Councillor Labrador spoke about the administration's efforts to invest in education for zero to three year olds (“crucial if we are to support parents juggling work and raising children”) as well as upkeep at schools and various other educational initiatives.

On culture, Labrador underscored the long list of activities on which the Council oversees total or partial coordination. As for infrastructure, she assured that in 2017 Formentera would see a remodel of la Mola's lighthouse and other upgrades elsewhere on the island. Finally, the councillor reviewed the recent actions of the island's heritage office and language advisory service.Â