

The Formentera Council convened its April plenary session today. Members of the plenary unanimously passed a measure to share comments with the Govern Balear on a proposed change to the law regulating the tourist accommodation tax law and various measures concerning sustainable tourism. Land management councillor Alejandra Ferrer explained that the law, in its current form, “doesn't yet include all of the Council's remarks.”

Ferrer indicated that the comments adopted today in plenary reflect a desire for the local island councils to play a more important role in sustainable tourism committees. The task of the committees is to pick which projects will move ahead and receive funding. If no changes are made, she said, the law will give local councils only minimal representation. Though the law purports to give members of “regional” groups a say in the process, there is no guarantee of representation on an island-by-island basis. Ferrer says she supports the tax, but insists it must be adapted to the needs and particulars of Formentera. Nevertheless, Ferrer did point out that some improvements had been secured during parliamentary review of the measure thanks to the intervention of Formentera's representative in parliament, *Diputada* Sílvia Tur.

Tougher fines

Plenary members also gave unanimous support for an initial proposal to modify a municipal ordinance on waste collection and street cleaning. Environment councillor Daisee Aguilera reported that “infractions and antisocial behaviour by companies and private citizens” were behind a decision to assign heavier fines. As it stands, the ordinance establishes fines of €1-€750 for minor offences, €751-€1,500 for serious ones and €1,501-€3,000 for infractions considered very serious. The newly adopted text not only creates a new class of even more serious infractions, it also establishes stiffer fines for the infractions already on the books: €150-€900, €900-45,000 and €45,000-€1,750,000, respectively.

“We hope that the changes serve to discourage offenders,” said the councillor. A proposed municipal inspection team would be tasked with enforcing the ordinance. What is more, the decision has been made to hire an outreach person to raise local awareness this summer and “help keep the island clean,” added Aguilera.

Members also voted “yes” on a proposal to seek exemption from the central government's royal decree (known as the “sun tax”) regulating 0km energy. As for one trade-related measure, plenary members unanimously supported a campaign to boost business activity in the winter.

Social welfare and human resources councillor gives account of department activity

Vanessa Parellada, CiF councillor of social welfare and human resources, gave plenary attendees an account of her offices' recent work, highlighting first and foremost what she called an underlying guiding principle: “striving to provide the people of Formentera with fair access to healthcare resources”. She also emphasised the importance of a high level of quality of life for those members of island's population with disabilities and the elderly. Finally, she identified residents with mental disabilities as the latest on the list of priorities for caregiving at the Formentera Day Centre.

One of the tasks to be dealt with, proclaimed the councillor, is increasing the day centre's capacity. Eventually, Parellada's goal is for the centre to provide Formentera seniors with care that is truly comprehensive. She also homed in on protecting youth from risky behaviour as a prime concern.

The need to improve the situation of youth was an overarching theme in Parellada's presentation, though in terms of human resources she also underscored the importance of securing equality and guaranteeing the full integration of all residents. The councillor closed by thanking the employees of her department for their hard work and continued efforts.