



The Formentera Council convened its June 2017 plenary session today. With “yes” votes from the governing team and abstention from the other parties, plenary attendees secured the go-ahead for a draft proposal to modify the municipal ordinance that regulates the use of Formentera's beaches and swimming areas.

According to environment chief Daisee Aguilera, the change, which calls for year-round application of rules that are already in place, “would mean derelict boats can be removed in winter, which is when most storms typically hit the island”. Aguilera pointed out that in the past the ordinance took effect only in summer, which limited the service's ability to respond quickly especially given the collaboration that was necessary from coastal authorities.

The retuning also does away with the waterside ban on animals like dogs and horses during non-peak hours (before 9.00am and after 8.00pm). The ordinance makes clear which points boats can use to enter and exit beaches, and, Aguilera added, prohibits stopping in or otherwise obstructing areas which are specifically marked for people to embark and disembark. As a safety measure, swimmer access to such zones is forbidden.

Regulations on kitesurfing

The overhaul also permits kitesurfing on Formentera beaches in winter provided the activity doesn't hinder other peoples' use of an area. Practice of the sport is restricted in summer due to the considerable amount of dedicated shoreline it requires and the added risk to other beachgoers' safety. During seasons of authorised swim, kitesurfers are required to operate from watercraft at least 200 metres from the coast.

Fence for children's park in Ses Bardetes

Two proposals from the PSOE that inspired unity among plenary attendees included a call for a protective fence to encircle the children's park in Ses Bardetes and another for improved street lighting near the hospital and Formentera's dependent care centre.

Lastly, two emergency measures that were passed with “yes” votes from the governing team

and PSOE. One, brought by the socialist party, pushes for the creation of a local office of consumer affairs. The other, a Gent per Formentera proposition, offered support for a draft law to create barriers to exploring for petrol and other minerals in the Mediterranean Sea. The proposed legislation, which was passed in Balearic parliament and vetoed by the government in Madrid, is awaiting review by Spain's senate.

Council edicts

Members of the plenary green-lighted two Council declarations; one promoting LGBTI rights and another on hosting refugees.

Report before plenary

Bartomeu Escandell, chief of the president's office, the tax office and the local department of rural affairs, took the floor to apprise the plenary of actions across his offices. Speaking on the economy, Escandell said it was the "sensible and responsible approach" adopted by his office that made possible the current stability of the Council's yearly €22-million budget. That figure includes latitude to invest, something Escandell called "fundamental for a tourist destination like Formentera".

Turning to Formentera's countryside, the councillor held up the farmland reserve initiative (Fons de Terres in Catalan) that recently turned two, plus collaboration with the farmers' co-operative which has meant 1.5m square metres of previously derelict fields are now being tilled. Escandell also spoke about the importance of safeguarding the island's fishing resources. Finally, he extolled the need to keep Formentera safe and congratulated local security forces on a job well done. "Getting it right with our natural surroundings and as a place where people can feel tranquil and safe," asserted Escandell, "is its own life insurance policy".