



In a plenary session held today, unanimous approval was given to a joint measure brought by the Formentera Council, the local farmers' cooperative and Caixa Rural to make use of untilled farmland. The plan includes specific measures to encourage landowners who no longer care for it to rent their rural land, charging the local farmers' cooperative with the task of care and cultivation. The move stands to increase the productivity of local agriculture, launching fruit production on currently uncultivated fields and enhancing the island's natural beauty.

The measure – backed by Formentera's councillor of fish and agriculture Santi Juan – earmarks some €95,000 in Council funds for a project that was already included as part of the administration's 2015 budget. As it stands, the farmers' co-op will determine the procedures and materials necessary to assuming charge of the land and sale of harvests. Landowners in turn will see abandoned and fallow lands regain use and healthy form.

Unanimous approval was also received by a measure from the Grup Independent de Formentera (GUIF) to build a weather-proof structure outside the entrance to the Formentera day centre. In the words of Javi Serra: “On rainy days, a distinct difficulty is added to the work of transporting elderly patients to and from the centre”. Dolores Fernández Tamargo, councillor of social welfare, asked for the understanding of the local population and explained that the day centre's current ownership and operation remained responsibility of the regional government in Palma. Current agreements, she explained, stipulate that control of the buildings would soon be transferred to the Formentera Council. The councillor pledged: “If we can't get the regional department of social welfare and family to make these changes, the Council itself will be behind the move as soon as control of the day centre changes hands.”

Failing to obtain the support of either the governing coalition or the GIF was a proposition by the Partido Popular concerning a reduction of the real estate tax (known as the IBI, or Impost de Béns Inmobles in Catalan) for traditionally-constructed homes included in the catalogue of protected local heritage sites. Town planning councillor Bartomeu Escandell put forward that “these homes already benefit from a 75% reduction that can be requested at any point in the first trimester of the year. A reduction of 100%,” - Escandell explained - “would be impossible because the law that regulates the IBI expressly prohibits this level of discount”.

Among the other measures discussed at the plenary, participants voted on the compulsory purchase of several Es Pujols lots that stand in the path of a planned thoroughfare linking carrer d'Aigua Dolça and carrer de Fonoll Marí, two streets in Es Pujols. The action would also transform carrer d'Aigua Dolça into a one-way street. Despite abstention by the GIF and PP, both this measure and another one – proposed jointly by the Formentera Council and the Associació Cultural Audiovisual de Formentera (ACAF) and regarding content production – were passed with the eight necessary votes of the Gent per Formentera-PSOE coalition.

Another measure that passed thanks to yay votes from GxF and PSOE and despite PP abstention: initial approval for a plan for development of tourism. The document, produced with the consensus of the local tourism sector and with the approval of the local board of tourism, outlines the framework for tourism promotions in the 2015 season.

Account by councillor of sports, local holidays and community involvement

The morning's plenary session also contained an account of recent work by the Formentera office of sports, community involvement and local holidays, led by Councillor Sergio Jiménez. The councillor's presentation underscored the opening of the Antoni Blanc Sports Centre this legislative session. The fitness centre now has 1,437 users, of which 1,076 are members and another 361 possess vouchers granting access to up to 10 different activities. In 2014 the centre generated €114,000 in income, surpassing the €94,000 that it made the year before. Jiménez acknowledged that one of his office's grandest achievements had been “opening the sports centre and seeing to it that not one outstanding cost remained at the end”.

Councillor Jiménez also highlighted “the Council's administration of sport in schools”, something that up until three years ago was handled by the Council of Eivissa. Jiménez elaborated by saying that “the fact that the Council assumes the most basic costs in sporting activities lets the actual sports clubs funnel their resources toward making stronger teams. It also lets schools focus resources elsewhere”.

Jiménez also reminded plenary attendants of the evolution of the Formentera half marathon - la Mitja Marató - “an event that has grown dramatically since the 2010 maiden run”. He explained that “the 8-kilometre run now organised alongside the half marathon (21 kilometres in length) means that even partners, friends and family of competing athletes can come and participate”.

Turning the attention to immediate projects, Councillor Jiménez thanked the sports clubs of the island for their collaboration and initiative creating Formentera's calendar of sporting events. Jiménez indicated that the list of events over the coming three months was especially important - "key to starting the 2015 season off with a bang". Set to close out February and kick off March, Jiménez cited 11 events related to BMX biking, road biking, judo, football, footraces, walks and a triathlon.