

Summary of substantive policy discussions
at Liberty Council meeting
October 2009

Liberty's Response to the threat from the BNP and Extreme Right

The meeting discussed how the recent higher electoral and public profile of the far right presents a number of challenges for Liberty, an organisation that was founded, at least in part, as a response to fascism. The meeting discussed past AGM policy about the necessary and proportionate limitations that may be placed on avowed racists to prevent them taking up sensitive public employments involving power over the vulnerable; as well as past AGM policy against Liberty granting fascists legal assistance.

The meeting discussed the fact that Liberty has never had a policy or rule against challenging extremists in public debate, whether in the media or other arenas, and it was the firm consensus of the meeting that this should continue. In addition to the issue of public engagement, the meeting also discussed hate crime prosecutions. A number of Council members counselled against over-reliance on pursuing prosecutions as this can play to the 'martyr' status sought by the far-right and can backfire if acquittals ensue.