

A Creditors Guide to Administrators Fees in Scotland

1 Introduction

- 1.1 When a company goes into administration the costs of the proceedings are paid out of the company's assets in priority to creditors' claims. The creditors, who hope eventually to recover some of their debts out of the assets, therefore have a direct interest in the level of costs, and in particular the remuneration of the insolvency practitioner appointed to act as administrator. The insolvency legislation recognises this interest by providing mechanisms for creditors to determine the basis of the administrator's fees. This guide is intended to help creditors be aware of their rights under the legislation to approve and monitor fees and explain the basis on which fees are fixed.

2 The nature of Administration

- 2.1 Administration is a procedure which places a company under the control of an insolvency practitioner and the protection of the court in order to achieve one or more of the following statutory purposes:

- the survival of the company or its business in whole or in part;
- the approval of a company voluntary arrangement;
- the sanctioning of a scheme under section 425 of the Companies Act 1985;
- a better realisation of assets than would be possible in a liquidation.

Administration may be followed by a company voluntary arrangement or liquidation.

3 The Creditors' Committee

- 3.1 The creditors have the right to appoint a committee with a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 members. One of the functions of the committee is to determine the basis of the administrator's remuneration. The committee is established at the meeting of creditors which the administrator is required to hold within 3 months of the administration order to consider his proposals. The administrator must call the first meeting of the committee within 3 months of its establishment, and subsequent meetings must be held either at specified dates agreed by the committee, or when a member of the committee asks for one, or when the administrator decides he needs to hold one. The committee has power to summon the administrator to attend before it and provide such information as it may require.

4 Fixing the Administrator's fees

- 4.1 The basis for the fixing the administrator's remuneration is set out in Rule 2.16 of the Insolvency (Scotland) Rules 1986 which states that it may be a commission calculated by reference to the value of the company's property with which he has to deal.

It is for the creditors' committee (if there is one) to fix the remuneration and Rule 2.16 says that in arriving at its decision the committee shall take into account:

- the work which, having regard to the value of the company's property, was reasonably undertaken by the administrator; and
- the extent of his responsibilities in administering the company's assets.

Although not specifically stated in the rules, the normal basis for determining the remuneration will be that of the time costs properly incurred by the administrator and his staff.

- 4.2 If there is no creditors' committee, or the committee does not make the requisite determination, the administrator's remuneration will be fixed by the court on application by the administrator.

5 What information should be provided by the Administrator?

5.1 Claims by the administrator for the outlays reasonably incurred by him and for his remuneration shall be made in accordance with section 53 of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 as applied by rule 4.68 which provides that within two weeks after the end of an accounting period, the administrator shall submit to the creditors' committee or if there is no creditors' committee, to the court:

- his accounts of intromissions for audit;
- a claim for the outlays reasonably incurred by him and for his remuneration; and

where the documents are submitted to the creditors' committee, he shall send a copy of them to the court.

5.2 The administrator may at any time before the end of an accounting period submit to the creditors' committee (if any) an interim claim for the outlays reasonably incurred by him and for his remuneration.

5.3 When seeking agreement to his fees the administrator should provide sufficient supporting information to enable the committee to form a judgement as to whether the proposed fee is reasonable having regard to all circumstances of the case. The administrator should always make available an up to date receipts and payments account. The administrator should be prepared to disclose the amount of time spent, together with such additional information as may reasonably be required having regard to the size and complexity of the case. Where the fee is charged as a commission based on the value of the company's property with which the administrator has had to deal, the administrator should provide details of any work which has been or is intended to be contracted out which would normally be undertaken directly by the administrator or his staff.

5.4 Where an administrator makes, or proposes to make, a separate charge by way of expenses and disbursements to recover the cost of facilities provided by his own firm, he should disclose those charges to the committee or the court when seeking approval of his fees, together with an explanation of how those charges are made up and the basis on which they are arrived at.

6 What If a Creditor is dissatisfied?

6.1 If a creditor believes the administrator's remuneration is too high, he may appeal against the determination by virtue of Section 53(6) of the Bankruptcy Act, applied by Rule 4.32 of the Insolvency Rules, which is in turn applied by Rule 2.16. Creditors have a right of appeal against the determination of an administrator's remuneration by virtue of the application of Section 53(6) of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act.

6.2 The right of appeal is either to the court (if the determination is by the creditors committee) or to a higher court (if the determination is by a court). Notwithstanding the fact that the statutory time limit for appealing expires eight weeks from the end of the accounting period concerned, it is normal practice to advise the creditors that they may appeal within 14 days of being notified of the determination in cases where this extends beyond the statutory appeal period.

7 What if the Administrator is dissatisfied?

7.1 If the administrator considers that the remuneration fixed by the creditors' committee is insufficient he may request that it be increased by resolution of the creditors. If he considers that the remuneration fixed by the committee or the creditors is insufficient, he may apply to the court for an order increasing its amount or rate. If he decides to apply to the court he must give at least 14 days' notice to the members of the creditors' committee and the committee may nominate one or more of its members to appear or be represented on the application. If there is no committee, the administrator's notice of his application must be sent to such of the company's creditors as the court may direct, and they may nominate one or more of their number to appear or be represented. The court may order the costs to be paid as an expense of the administration.

8 Other matters relating to fees

8.1 Where there are joint administrators it is for them to agree between themselves how remuneration payable should be apportioned. Any dispute arising between them may be referred to the court, the creditors' committee or a meeting of creditors.