



SafeParks report for PRABOA AGM 2017

Prepared by: Marius Homewood
26 September 2017

Introduction

One of the Parkhurst Residents' and Business Owners' Association's (PRABOA) goals is to improve the security of residents and businesses in Parkhurst. The problem and its basic solution can be distilled into a few key points:

- The crime which affects us all originates on the streets.
- It is impossible to secure our homes if we cannot secure the streets and public places.
- Unlike our homes which are owned by individuals, public spaces are shared and a security solution to police them needs to be coordinated.
- This can only be achieved if we as residents and business owners work together

SafeParks was created by PRABOA to achieve these goals.

Scope

Parkhurst is a suburb of around 2,200 households, plus a substantial number of businesses. The vast majority of both groups already pay for security. The problem is not money – the current total spend on security in the suburb is substantial. The key problem, however, is a lack of coordination. The suburb is highly fragmented in terms of service providers and most only protect your home/ business reactively, not the neighbourhood. This is inefficient and makes the implementation of an effective pro-active solution difficult.

The scheme

When PRABOA initially put the Public Space Security out to tender, and subsequently awarded the tender to CSS, one of the features was the ability to change service providers should it become necessary. Regrettably, the expected public support of the SafeParks launch did not materialise.

SafeParks used CSS Tactical as its security provider while Parksec used Cortac. Both organisations had the same goal and believed in the same solution. Continuing to work separately did not make sense, and with this in mind SafeParks and Parksec agreed to a partnership. The original SafeParks Service Provider relationship with CSS was thus terminated. From 1 August 2016, PRABOA/SafeParks and Parksec had been cooperating under a partnership agreement. Cortac was chosen as the preferred provider for the suburb. This was a purely pragmatic choice; Cortac had roughly twice as many clients as CSS in Parkhurst.

The partnership has proven to be very successful, as membership has grown slowly but steadily and we are able to add additional security measures over time. Yes, crime is still present in our lovely suburb, but can you imagine what crime would have been without the SafeParks initiative?

The contract with Cortac is NOT limited to simply responding to alarms and calls at residents homes. Two man vehicles with well-trained armed officers are deployed on a 24/7 basis to search for potentially suspicious activities on the streets. This is the critical first step to securing our public spaces. And Cortac will respond to ANY incident ANYWHERE in Parkhurst, if called.

The pricing model chosen is a *cost plus* model. We have a signed agreement with Cortac where they provide certain services at agreed prices, and reviewed every year. For example, there is an agreed price for a two man 24 hour vehicle, and an agreed price for control room overheads etc. These prices include a reasonable profit margin for Cortac.

All monies collected are used to purchase these services from Cortac. If there is a surplus but the surplus is insufficient to purchase an additional vehicle or required service, this is ring fenced and builds up. It is not simply given to Cortac as an additional profit. Decisions on the purchase of services and how to use any surplus funds are decided by the joint SafeParks / Parksec committee. Cortac has to justify any additional services, as value for money.

How much do we pay?

Monthly contributions are divided into two parts – a Public Space Security (PSS) contribution and an Alarm Monitoring/ Response (AR) contribution. The PSS debit order goes to SafeParks and the agreed fee is then paid to Cortac. The AR debit order goes directly to Cortac. While this may seem unnecessarily complicated, having the PSS debit orders payable to SafeParks gives us, as residents, control of the scheme. Should we regrettably need to terminate Cortac's services at some point in the future, we are able to move the combined PSS contributions to a new provider. The power lies with the residents, not the security provider.

To date, the PSS contribution was R393.68 (which includes a discounted R25 PRABOA membership fee) and the AR contribution is R310.00 giving a total contribution of R703.68 per month. While it is possible to contribute to the PSS on a stand-alone basis and to purchase your home armed response from another provider, it is not possible to purchase only the AR portion, as it is at a discounted rate for PSS contributors.

But please keep in mind that people not yet part of the scheme are almost certainly already paying a security provider. By joining the SafeParks / Parksec scheme and switching to Cortac for your AR you will improve the scheme's total revenue. This will then directly translate into additional proactive security measures. Your money will be deployed on a cost plus basis whereby PRABOA has direct oversight of how it is spent. And PRABOA has an elected committee of residents.

Everything has a price and costs are increasing. We have been successful to keep costs down, but there are certain cost increases we cannot avoid. For Public Space Security, we have been fortunate that we did not had to ask for an increase this year. The next review date will be in 2018.

For the AR portion, the increases will be R45 per month, effective from 1 November 2017. This will be added to your Cortac debit order (thus both on new AR contracts and old Parksec contracts).

The total fee will thus increase from R703.68 to R748.68, being a 6.4% increase, which we still feel is still very reasonable for such a quality security solution.

Cameras

Much has been said about cameras. We are often asked what happened to the cameras that were 'promised' during the initial launch of SafeParks. It is important to note that this was not an "open promise", somebody had to pay for it. The camera roll-out modelling was purely based on the envisaged buy-in by residents, as mentioned earlier this support did not materialise, thus firstly the camera rollout could not take place and secondly, the scheme was not financially viable.

As also highlighted in the IT Report, PRABOA and the SafeParks team are still constantly reviewing options for the future. We should all just remember that cameras are only one part of a community security solution. Due to all the foot and vehicle traffic in Parkhurst, as well as all the open entry and exit points, cameras cannot give the security cover that it can in a fully controlled environment. In controlled areas, intelligent rule based cameras are much more effective as it searches for specific incidents or movements. And the cost of monitoring cameras effectively is very high.

What have we done to date:

- We have run two trial tests for long periods at the corner of 4th avenue/ 6th street to test different equipment solutions
- Since 22 September 2017, we have installed a permanent CCTV camera solution at this corner of 4th avenue/ 6th street.
- We have also ordered a high tech mobile camera solution that will be installed in one of the Cortac roaming vehicles as soon as it is delivered.

Over time, but only as we can afford, we will be installing additional camera points at other strategic entry and exit points. We will also continue to monitor industry and service provider developments. This remains exciting for the future. Costs are coming down; data cost decreases and technology improves the whole time.

Alternatively, residents can get together on a street block basis and acquire their own camera solutions from our service provider, Cortac. These can always at a later stage be incorporated into wider camera solutions.

Current financial position

Financially the scheme is fortunately now sound and we are now also able to add additional services as detailed below.

The surplus from SafeParks contributions is ring-fenced and can only be used for security related initiatives, as well as keeping a security reserve of R150k to cover at least one month's expenditure. The following initiatives are currently in the rollout or planning phase for this financial year period Sept '17 till Feb '18:

- Signposts (already ordered) R50k
- Website and social media platform (updates in progress) R30k
- Camera installation (already installed) R25k
- Additional camera system (on order) R50k

Planned/ under assessment:

- Additional security vehicles over Christmas period R100k+
- Additional signposts R50k
- Another camera installation R25k
- Accounting services R10k
- Marketing material R10k
- Car guard scheme R80k+

The way forward

Current contributors in Parkhurst are just over 800. If we consider this to the over 2 200 households and a substantial number of businesses operating in Parkhurst, thus just over 30% support: this is just not good enough!

A huge portion of the community unfortunately still only contribute to reactive security providers or not at all. If we had more financial support, there is so much more we can do and still keep contributions low..

What can you do:

- Join your street whatsapp security group (some streets also have vacancies for street captains)
- Support the SafeParks PSS solution
- Use Cortac as your AR security provider
- Get on the weekly security newsletter (contact Lynn at lynn@safeparks.joburg)
- Phone in all suspicious activities to the Cortac control room
- Be involved!