



SafeParks report for PRABOA AGM 2018

Prepared by: Marius Homewood
23 September 2018

The SafeParks pro-active security scheme

The challenge of preventing crime in our suburb is that most of it originates on the streets. It is thus impossible to secure our homes if we cannot secure the streets and public places. To only have a home alarm monitoring service provider will therefore only help on a reactive basis, meaning after a security breach has occurred on your property. A more effective security solution is to patrol the public spaces, an initiative which requires commitment from the community and needs to be paid for by all residents.

SafeParks was created by PRABOA to achieve a solution that can achieve this, if it is supported by enough residents.

Funding by residents

Parkhurst is a suburb of around 2,200 households, plus also a substantial amount of approximately 200 Parkhurst based businesses. The vast majority of both groups already pay for some form of security solution, unfortunately, mostly for a reactive home or business alarm monitoring service. The problem is thus not money – the current total spend by the community in the suburb on security is substantial. The key problem, however, is a lack of coordination; the suburb is highly fragmented in terms of service providers and they mostly only protect your home/ business, not the community and neighbourhood.

Suburbs who have managed to get a substantial rate of support from their residents and business owners have been very effective in driving down crime. Some of our neighbouring suburbs have support percentages of up to 85%, on average about 65%. Although there are many voices quick to complain about crime, we do not support our community in Parkhurst as we do not even have a 40% support base. Given our support base, we feel that the SafeParks scheme is very effective in managing crime in our suburb; sadly we could do so much more if we could substantially increase our support base.

The SafeParks/ Parksec partnership scheme

From August 2016, PRABOA/SafeParks and Parksec had been cooperating under a partnership agreement with Cortac as the service provider for the suburb.

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 panic calls at residents' homes. Two man vehicles with well-trained and very experienced and well-armed officers are deployed to search for potentially suspicious activities on the streets. This is the critical first step to securing our public spaces. Just compare their equipment, presence and activities with other reactive security providers in our suburb to see why you should support the scheme.

We have a signed agreement with Cortac where they provide certain services at negotiated and then agreed prices, and this is reviewed every year. For example, there is an agreed price for a two man 24 hour vehicle, an agreed price for control room overheads etc. These prices include a realistic 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 security service, this is ring fenced in the PRABOA SafeParks account and builds up. It is not simply given to Cortac as an additional profit, nor used elsewhere. Decisions on the purchase of services and how to use any surplus funds are decided by the joint SafeParks / Parksec Oversight Committee, with PRABOA functioning as an additional oversight role on governance and spending of surplus funds.

How much do residents have to pay?

Monthly subscriptions are divided into two parts – a Public Space Security (PSS) contribution and a Home Alarm Monitoring fee, often called an Armed Response (AR) fee. 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 the community, through SafeParks, control of the scheme. Should we 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 thus with the community, not the security provider. We would like to confirm that we are generally happy with the security services provided by Cortac to date. Where there are problems of service delivery, we engage directly with Cortac senior management to address such.

To date, the PSS monthly contribution was R393.68 (which includes a discounted R25 PRABOA membership fee) and the AR contribution is R358.11 giving a total contribution of R751.79 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 AR provider, it is not possible to only purchase the AR portion from Cortac, as it is a negotiated discounted rate.

Please keep in mind that you 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 for the benefit of the community, with direct oversight of how it is spent.

Everything has a price and costs are increasing. We have been successful in keeping costs down, but there are certain cost increases we cannot avoid. Last year (2017/18), we were fortunate that we did not have to ask for an increase for Public Space Security. For the AR portion, the increases were only R45 per month, effective from 1 November 2017.

We are currently negotiating the 2018/19 increases with Cortac. Clearly we would like to keep increases as low as possible in the bleak economic climate, however salaries and fuel costs are a substantial part of the cost basis, especially as our Cortac vehicles patrol 24 hours of the day. Note that this is another way that the reactive security service providers save a lot of money as they mostly park and only move around a few times a day, if any!

PSIRA, the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority, have regulated a 7% salary increase, backdated to 1 April 2018. This and fuel costs necessitates that we have to increase both our PSS and AR rates. We will conclude both these before month-end and notify clients and this will also be presented at the AGM.

These increases will be added to your Cortac debit order (both on new AR contracts and old Parksec contracts) as well as your PRABOA SafeParks agreement from 1 November 2018. Note that we thus 'subsidised' the increases for a few months up to then.

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.

PRABOA and the SafeParks team are constantly reviewing options for the future. Keep in mind 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 they can in a fully controlled environment. In controlled areas, intelligent rule based cameras are much more effective as they search for specific incidents/movements. And the cost of monitoring cameras is very high. Cameras are however very good for post-event evidence gathering and responding to crime events.

What have we done to date:

- We have engaged with various security experts on possible solutions and developments.
- We have run two trial tests for long periods at the corner of 4h avenue/ 6th street to test different camera equipment solutions.
- Since September 2017, we have installed a permanent CCTV camera solution at this corner of 4h avenue/ 6th street.
- Since then we have installed two more Number Plate Recognition cameras in selected high traffic areas.

- We have also installed a high tech mobile camera solution in one of the Cortac roaming vehicles.

Over time, but only as we can afford, we may install 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, as costs are coming down, data cost decreases and technology improves the whole time.

Fourth Avenue informal car guards and car thefts

Much has been published on social media about incidents with the informal car guards operating around Fourth Avenue. SafeParks have for long been engaging with the businesses along Fourth Avenue about alternative solutions to address these incidents. Unfortunately the best solutions are not cheap, and the businesses have recently come to the conclusion that the proposed solutions are simply not affordable to them. They are currently considering alternative and cheaper solutions to manage the present car guards. We have also recommended to them that they supplement this by installing camera solutions that can provide evidence on any crime related events. SafeParks cannot use resident's contributions and on its own fund and provide a dedicated security solution around the business operations if business themselves don't financially contribute to such solutions.

In the interim, SafeParks have rolled out an additional strike vehicle that focuses on crime hot spots such as the Fourth Avenue strip. However, we can only continue such if we get enough business support, which to date have not been forthcoming.

By far the most crime that happens in Parkhurst is theft of or theft out of vehicles, mostly parked in streets by visitors or where residents have inadequate safe parking. SafeParks have continuously highlighted the risk of this to our clients, especially regarding certain targeted vehicles or people leaving visible items in vehicles. Most of these thefts happen to non-clients or visitors, some who may not even be aware of the risks.

Current financial position

The scheme is financially sound and we have also been able to add services as detailed in this report, such as the strike vehicle over the last few months.

As said, the surplus SafeParks contributions are ring-fenced and will only be used for security related initiatives, as well as keeping a security reserve of R165k to cover at least one month's expenditure. In addition, we signed a 24 month contract for the imported roaming number plate recognition system and have to keep a provision against this liability. We also made a substantial provision to once again implement additional security over the 2018 year end period (Christmas season), where we always see an unfortunate spike in criminal activities.

The way forward

Current membership contributors in Parkhurst are about 850. If we consider this in the context of over 2 200 households and a substantial amount of businesses (200+) operating in Parkhurst, thus less than 40% support, and 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.

What can you do as a resident:

- 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
- Encourage friends and neighbours to join or switch to the scheme
- Get on the weekly security newsletter (contact Lynn at lynn@safeparks.joburg)
- Join the Cortac refreshment support group to provide support to those dedicated patrol officers
- Phone in all suspicious activities to the Cortac control room
- Be involved in the community!
- Join and monitor our website and Facebook pages:
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ParksecSafeParks/>
Website: <https://parksecsafeparks.co.za> and <http://www.parkhurstvillage.com/join>

Lastly, many thanks to those of you who are our loyal supporters.