



## **SafeParks report for PRABOA AGM 2019**

Prepared by: Marius Homewood  
3 November 2019

### **The SafeParks pro-active security scheme**

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

SafeParks was created by PRABOA to provide a solution that can achieve this, but this is only possible if the initiative is supported by enough residents.

### **Funding by residents**

Parkhurst is a suburb of around 2,200 households, plus also a proportionally high 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 commitment to securing the community and neighbourhood; 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 of, on average about 65%, and in some instances even up to 85%. Although there are many voices quick to complain about crime, we do not support our community as Parkhurst only has about 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 have been 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. Cortac vehicles each have two well-trained, very experienced and well-armed officers who 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.

Some residents feel it is necessary to support other service providers with the idea that, by having competition amongst the service providers, they will be 'kept on their toes'. To address this concern and ensure that Cortac continues to deliver outstanding service in Parkhurst, we at SafeParks have signed an agreement with Cortac where the services and prices are negotiated upfront, this agreement 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. 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. An example of where surplus funds may be used is the addition of extra security during the year-end period, covered later in the report.

### **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 needed 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.

Currently the PSS monthly contribution is R417 (which includes a discounted R25 PRABOA membership fee) and the AR contribution is R382, giving a total contribution of R799 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 highly discounted rate.

Please keep in mind that you are almost certainly already paying for a home 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.

We are currently negotiating the 2019/20 increases with Cortac. Clearly we would like to avoid cost increases as much 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, 7 days a week. 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!

Our view is that we will be able to keep the current PSS and AR rates the same until at least the end of our financial year, which is February 2020, should we then need to do an increase, clients will be notified. Note that we will thus 'subsidise' the cost increases as needed for a few months up to then.

### **Public Space Cameras**

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. In addition, the cost of monitoring cameras is very high. Cameras are however very good for post-event evidence gathering, picking up vehicle alerts and responding to crime events.

What have we done to date:

- We have engaged with various security experts on possible solutions and developments.
- Since September 2017, we have installed permanent CCTV and Number Plate Recognition cameras at selected high traffic areas.
- We have also installed a high tech mobile camera solution in one of the Cortac roaming vehicles, which has led to a number of arrests.
- After lengthy and robust negotiations with Vumacam , we have recently agreed to, and started the roll out of, Phase 1 of the camera solution. This will see 14 poles go live in Parkhurst at strategic points, mounted with a combination of CCTV and ANPR cameras with Cortac as the sole monitoring access point.

### **Vehicle thefts**

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. Did you know that we have approximately 400 visitors per day over the weekend visiting along 4<sup>th</sup> avenue in Parkhurst? 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 to Parkhurst, some who may not even be aware of the risks. This is unfortunate, as most of these crime events could have been avoided.

## **Current financial position**

The scheme is financially sound and we have also been able to add services as detailed in this report.

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 R165 000 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 have once again made a substantial provision to implement additional security over the 2019 year end period (Christmas season), where we always see an unfortunate spike in criminal activities.

## **The way forward**

Current contributors in Parkhurst, considered in the context of over 2 200 households and a substantial amount of businesses (200+) operating in Parkhurst, being about 40% support, 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 you can 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.org](mailto:lynn@safeparks.org) )
- Join the Cortac refreshment support group to provide support to those dedicated patrol officers. Thanks to Charles Davis for organising this group and for all the volunteers, you know how much the guys appreciate your efforts!
- Phone in all suspicious activities to the Cortac control room – whether you are a Cortac client or not
- 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>
- Many thanks to those of you who are our loyal supporters.

## **Join the Security Oversight Committee**

We urgently need resident volunteers to join our Oversight Committee. Please note that due to the confidential functioning of this Committee, volunteers will be interviewed, will have to sign our Terms of Reference, be willing to dedicate sufficient time to serve the cause and be active contributors to SafeParks and Cortac.

**Ladies and gentlemen, our rugby team has shown us: we are stronger together.**