

## Minutes of the BCA Security AGM 2019

The BCA Security AGM 2019 took place on Saturday July 27 2019, at IR Griffith Primary School.

These are the minutes and speaking notes from the AGM.

The slides can be downloaded in PDF form [here](#).

**Present from BCA Security:** Ruth Ancer, Jon Tullett

**BCA Security apologies:** Karen Barras, Lorna Somers, Anthony Goggin

**BCA Committee apologies:** Jed Kemery, Jules Belasyse-Smith, Margie Roper

Many thanks to IR Griffith Primary School and head teacher Mrs Lopes for the use of the hall.

## Introduction and overview

*Presentation by Jon Tullett, BCA Head of Security*

2018/2019 has been a successful year for the BCA Security team. There have been some isolated spikes in criminal activity, but the data continues to show an ongoing reduction in crime levels. However, the level of crime is still much higher than we would like, and there is no time for complacency. The team will remain as focused and vigilant as ever.

The security portfolio comprises five full-time volunteers. Unfortunately one of our number, Lorna Somers, is leaving the area later this year. She's contributed much to the team and will be sorely missed; we'll look to replace her as soon as we're able.

A large part of our success come from the phenomenal engagement of the community, driven through closely monitored platforms such as the security WhatsApp groups.

Because social media makes every incident visible, it's easy to for residents to form the view that the suburb is becoming more dangerous. As you'll see in this report, the truth is objectively and quantitatively the opposite; the highly engaged Blairgowrie community and the capabilities of the security team continue to improve our suburb's security, reduce crime, and keep the community safe.

As a team, our responsibilities are three-fold;

1. To provide real-time response to security incidents,
2. To provide ongoing support and awareness to the community,
3. To maintain relationships with agencies such as police and security companies

This year we asked for more volunteers from the community and had a great response. About a dozen residents came forward, and have already been contributing.

## **2018/2019 in review**

This was a busy year for the security team.

The big crime news this year was the activity of a well-organized gang conducting driveway robberies. A lengthy investigation including our own team, security companies, SAPS and an external task unit resulted in an operation to ambush and neutralize the gang.

A small number of successful town-hall meetings were held, including sessions on human trafficking, street closures, and CCTV surveillance solutions. More will be held as opportunities arise; the community is encouraged to suggest topics they'd like to see in the diary.

We are delighted to be involved in the newly reformed Sector One CPF - more details on that later.

There is continued interest in launching surveillance solutions, in particular licence-plate recognition cameras, in the area, from both residents and service providers. This is an area the security team is actively engaging with providers to evaluate solutions and costs and will keep the community informed.

We have already completed a thorough review of our street groups. The next step is an extensive database update which is already under way. The goal is to ensure that we know all our residents, and have correct details for all of them so we can coordinate emergency response as effectively as possible.

One of our goals for 2018 was to relaunch the lapsed SMS alert service to push messages to residents without smartphones, staff, and others. This was not finished by the time of the AGM, but remains a wish-list item for 2019.

## **External relationships**

The security team maintains open lines of communication to dozens of outside agencies; these relationships are instrumental in our ability to respond and secure the suburb.

Blairgowrie has several active armed response companies, creating a competitive market which benefits the residents. The security team is responsible for maintaining relationships with these providers as well as SAPS and JMPD, other residents' associations, and many more.

## **SAPS**

2018/19 was a good year for our relationship with SAPS. The strained relationship was a concern last year and in the time since then efforts from both sides have borne fruit.

Sector One has a new commander, Warrant Officer Kotze. WO Kotze was present at the AGM to introduce himself and take questions from the community. We welcome WO Kotze to the community and look forward to working with him.

An area of concern last year was the lack of a functioning sector CPF (Community Police Forum) for our area. We're happy to report that the CPF has been rebuilt, and our own Ruth Ancer is leading it as chairperson, along with other representatives from Blairgowrie. One of their first initiatives will be to establish a database of elderly and vulnerable residents.

Due to operational limitations imposed by SAPS policies we are still unable to get detailed crime stats from SAPS, but we have put in place measures to work with what data we are able to receive - some of that will be presented shortly.

Last year saw a number of successful police operations such as breaking up the driveway robbery gang. There is scope for more; key to this is encouraging the community to consistently report crimes. Without incidents being reported, SAPS is unable to allocate resources to deal with them.

Residents have raised the concern that sector vehicle phones are not always reachable. In emergencies, residents are reminded to follow our standard guidelines:

- Press your panic button
- Call 10111 / 112 on a mobile
- Call your service provider or an emergency service
- Alert your street captain so that BCA Security can assist

## **Beagle Watch (CSS)**

Beagle Watch remains the dominant armed response provider in Blairgowrie, and continues to have a positive track record in proactive response.

BCA Security would like to see Beagle doing more patrol activities in parks and green spaces as it used to - we will continue to liaise with them in this regard.

Beagle has a relationship with Vumacam for CCTV surveillance in other areas and may introduce a solution to Blairgowrie in the future.

The company also provides a periodic incident report which is helpful in compiling our own statistics.

## **Fidelity (ADT)**

Fidelity remains in the #2 position in Blairgowrie by number of subscribers.

A compromised key led to a heightened level of concern for Fidelity customers last year; BCA Security took an active role in highlighting the concern, and communicating with customers in our areas.

Fidelity markets its own surveillance solutions and may introduce these to Blairgowrie in the future.

## **Other providers**

Other security companies in the area include Ghost Squad, run by a local resident, National (Chubb) which has only a small customer base now and does not maintain a dedicated vehicle in the suburb, and Special Ops 99, a new provider seeking to expand into Blairgowrie, but which at the time of the AGM had not responded to the security team's attempts to establish contact.

## **Crime stats**

Audited SAPS data for the 2018/2019 financial year was not available at the time of the AGM. What is presented is our own tracking data, based on a variety of sources including some shared with us under NDA. As a result, only trend can be shown, with the underlying detail withheld.

Overall the crime trends for Sector One show continued reductions in criminal activity. Spikes of activity such as driveway robberies and wall-hopper housebreaking show clearly as isolated peaks, after which the downward trend resumes.

This is a clear demonstration of the success of the security team, which is only possible due to the engaged and aware residents of Blairgowrie. We need to do more to squash those spikes, but the positive trend is encouraging.

The level of crime in Sector One (Blairgowrie and surrounds) is higher than Sector Two (Linden and surrounds), on par with Sector Three (Randpark and surrounds), with Sector Four (Windsor) much higher. When considering the much larger size of Blairgowrie, the comparable crime rates in our area are even more favourable.

The most common type of crime by far is theft, with burglary and robbery next. The rates of robbery in particular are a concern, as a potentially violent contact crime.

Vehicle-related theft (theft of cars, and theft of items from cars) completely dominates the theft stats. Many of these crimes are avoidable by taking greater care when operating and parking vehicles; BCA Security will continue its efforts to raise awareness of the risk of these crimes.

The incidents which caused most concern in 2018/2019 were hijackings/driveway robbery, and wall-hopper housebreaking.

## **Hijacking/driveway robbery**

Blairgowrie was targeted by a highly professional organized syndicate stealing vehicles during morning rush hours periods, targeting residents leaving their homes. Months of investigation and the work of many separate agencies including Blairgowrie's own security team resulted in the gang being cornered, and a shootout which left two of the criminals dead and others in custody.

## **Wall-hoppers and gate motor theft**

A small number of prolific criminals is responsible for spates of crime such as wall-hopping to steal valuables at night, and stealing gate motors. We continue to share warning signs that such a criminal may be active in your street, and encourage vigilance at all times.

## **Robbery in traffic**

Late afternoon continues to be a high-risk time, with criminals taking advantage of slow traffic to engage in smash-and-grab and similar robbery. Busy routes such as Jan Smuts Avenue and Bram Fischer are common targets. SAPS and JMPD are actively working to reduce this threat, but it is widespread and the only active measure available to residents who must commute on these routes is constant awareness of their surroundings. The Security WhatsApp groups have been instrumental in warning residents of criminal activity and we will continue to monitor them during these times.

## **Reduce your risk**

Many of the crimes we experience in Blairgowrie are avoidable. The Security team and its volunteers will continue to remind residents of ways they can improve their security, such as fitting anti-lift brackets to gates, employing street guards for parties, testing alarms and beams, and so on.

We know there are many residents who have supported us by taking an active role in promoting that security awareness; we intend to make greater use of these contributors, encouraging and helping our neighbours to remain alert and secure.

## **WhatsApp street groups**

Our WhatsApp street groups are absolutely central to our security operations, and we are taking a number of measures to improve them still further. We have had numerous successes, including life-saving interventions, and for this we are very grateful to the community for their involvement.

Our goal is to provide real-time coverage of all residents in the suburb, or as close as we can get in both speed and reach.

Scale is a challenge, since some of the groups are very active. Some time back we created load-shedding groups to help separate some of the non-security conversations away from the security groups.

We are also working with streets to set up social groups to further ensure that there are platforms for social interaction, but also groups for security where urgent issues can be raised, and the background noise low enough that no one feels compelled to leave.

As part of that process we're also mid-way through a major database refresh, in which regard our new volunteers are proving very helpful.

The street groups operate under a set of rules, put in place to ensure consistent operation given that they are managed by just five people. Sometimes those rules can feel restrictive, and our intention is to work with the street communities to find a balance for their interactions. We hope the community will continue to see how successful its security engagement has been, and must be if we are to remain safe.

## **Objectives for 2019/2020**

Our priorities for the next year are:

- Support the new Sector One CPF for our mutual benefit
- Pursue options for LPR CCTV surveillance, and work with the community to identify opportunities and appetite for solutions
- Host more of the popular town-hall style meetings, and source speakers and materials for topics which gain interest
- Continue the work refreshing the street groups and database
- Increase the contribution from volunteers to improve the capabilities of the Security team
- Strengthen our community engagement and provide more detailed reports when we are able
- Launch the SMS alert service

Please direct any questions or suggestions to [security@myblairgowrie.co.za](mailto:security@myblairgowrie.co.za)

## **Conclusion**

The AGM concluded at 16:00.