

## SAFETY AND SECURITY

# Much needed boost for local watches

**O**ver R3m in support is being allocated to neighbourhood watches.

This according to a recent statement released by the City of Cape Town, which distributes the funds through the Neighbourhood Watch Support Programme. The initiative is run in conjunction with the Western Cape Department of Community Safety and has been running since 2008. Until now, two community liaison officers have coordinated the programme, but this complement will increase to six by the end of the year. The Neighbourhood Watch Support Programme helps neighbourhood watch organisations to become registered, offers training to members and also provides equipment for use during their patrols. In the previous financial year, equipment to the value of just over R2.3m was distributed to various organisations. The equipment included reflective jackets, torches, spotlights, dashboard cameras, action cameras, bicycles, first aid kits, floodlights and fire extinguishers. During the same period, hand-held radios to the value of nearly R1.5m were distributed to help neighbourhood watch members communicate with one another, but also to provide a direct line to the Metro Police call centre in the event of emergencies. "We are planning a similar spend in the current financial year. An effective neighbourhood watch requires committed members who are passionate about community safety, but equally important are the right tools to do the job. We are constantly re-evaluating how we can improve

our offering to the thousands of men and women who devote so much of their lives to this particular cause, because we value their contribution," says Mayco member for safety, security and social services, JP Smith.

Since July last year, training has also been provided to just over 500 neighbourhood watch members focusing on the principles of community-oriented crime prevention, which is aimed at reducing opportunities for crimes to occur by focusing on the immediate physical environment.

The City has also facilitated opportunities for unemployed neighbourhood watch members to be appointed as facility protection officers through the Expanded Public Works Programme. The neighbourhood watch network is also the recruiting ground for the City's Law Enforcement Auxiliary Service, launched in 2013, which now stands at nearly 500 strong, Smith says.

"We owe our neighbourhood watches an immense debt of gratitude. They are our eyes and ears on the ground and there are many success stories of safer streets as a result of the work they do. The City will continue to build partnerships with communities by supporting the amazing work being done by neighbourhood watches and we will continue to invest in them to the best of our ability to ensure that they are able to continue their crucial contribution to the efforts to root out crime, but also antisocial nuisances that plague so many communities."