BRIEFING FOR WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL & THAMES VALLEY POLICE

A forensic property-marking scheme to protect South Asian families from gold burglaries

A low-cost, police-proven measure that can be funded and launched within weeks, proposed by residents following the community meeting of 2 November 2026.

Prepared: 2 November 2026 Areas: Winnersh · Woosehill · Lower Earley · Woodley

Status: proposal for decision

Purpose of this report

To ask Wokingham Borough Council and Thames Valley Police to fund and deliver a forensic property-marking scheme for South Asian households in the areas affected by the current series of gold burglaries.

Recommendations

1. Agreement in principle from WBC and the PCC to jointly fund a forensic-marking scheme for the affected areas.
2. A named council officer and a named TVP officer to lead it, with a launch date before the end of November 2026.
3. A first tranche of **1,000 household kits plus deterrent street signage**, distributed through temples, gurdwaras, mosques and community groups, prioritising recent victims and older residents.
4. TVP commitment to scan gold offered at second-hand and gold-buying outlets in Reading, Wokingham and Slough for marked property.

Financial implications

Option A (1,000 homes) is estimated at **£15,800**, shared between the PCC, the council and community organisations. Option B (2,000 homes) is estimated at £31,050. Full breakdown in section 4.

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1. The situation

Over the past two months a series of burglaries has targeted South Asian households across Winnersh, Woosehill, Lower Earley and Woodley, with family gold as the primary target. A residents' petition has passed 1,100 signatures. The council's community safety team has convened a meeting with community representatives and police, and the council

leader has written to the Chief Constable. The PCC has said Thames Valley Police is treating the offences extremely seriously.

No arrests have been reported. Measures announced so far are patrols and general home-security advice. The same pattern struck the same four areas in January 2018 (linked burglaries across Winnersh, Earley, Woodley and Wokingham) and again in October 2021 (a TVP alert on gold jewellery thefts in Wokingham). The current spate is the third wave in under a decade, and it coincides with record gold prices and Diwali.

This is a national pattern, not a local anomaly: Sussex Police are investigating four burglaries of South Asian homes between 24 and 29 October 2026, and forces from Greater Manchester to the Met describe organised groups travelling specifically to steal 22- and 24-carat family gold.

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2. What forensic marking is

A clear liquid carrying a unique code (SelectaDNA uses synthetic DNA and etched microdots; SmartWater uses a chemical signature) is dabbed onto each item of value, typically inside a bangle or behind a clasp. It dries invisible, lasts for years, and glows under a UV torch. The code is registered to the household on a secure database that police can access. Window stickers and street signs tell burglars that property in the area is marked.

It works in three ways:

- **Deterrence.** Offenders cannot tell which items are marked. Suspects in custody are routinely checked under UV, and marked goods are evidence of handling stolen property.
- **Disposal.** Gold buyers and pawnbrokers in police "safe seller" schemes scan everything offered to them. Marked gold becomes hard

to sell before it can be melted.

- **Recovery and prosecution.** A marked item links a suspect to a specific victim and address. TVP has described SmartWater evidence as having a 100% conviction rate in court.

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3. The evidence

0	0	1,000	47%
Asian-gold burglaries in Crawley in the six months after Sussex Police issued kits, following 60+ offences	Repeat burglaries of kit-holders in TVP's own Henley scheme over two years	Homes kitted out in one week by Windsor & Maidenhead council and TVP, 2021	Fall in Asian-gold burglaries in Bristol after a dedicated team made arrests

> **Crawley, Sussex (2013)**
> After more than 60 burglaries targeting Asian households, Sussex Police distributed SelectaDNA kits from March 2013. The district commander reported no burglaries specifically targeting the Asian community in the following six months.
>
> SelectaDNA / Sussex Police

> **Windsor & Maidenhead (2021)** `TVP · neighbouring Berkshire council`
> Police neighbourhood teams, the Royal Borough's community safety team and volunteers delivered SmartWater kits to 1,000 homes in a week. Officers scanned second-hand outlets for marked property and deterrent signs were placed across the borough. A direct template for Wokingham.
>
> Maidenhead Advertiser, July 2021

Henley, Oxfordshire (2008 onward) TVP

TVP gave kits to previous burglary victims across Sonning Common, Shiplake, Goring and Woodstock. Two years on, no repeat burglaries were recorded among kit-holders.

SelectaDNA / TVP Henley Crime Reduction Adviser

Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire TVP

Neighbourhood officers handed out SelectaDNA kits at Aylesbury Mosque specifically to protect family gold. TVP has run community-targeted marking before.

SelectaDNA / TVP

Thames Valley PCC (2026) live supplier relationship

The PCC is currently partnering with SelectaDNA on a programme of free tool-marking events across Thames Valley. The supplier contract, logistics and budget line already exist and could be extended to family gold.

SelectaDNA news, 2026

Fair caveat. An Anglia Ruskin / Essex Police study (2019–20) found no statistically significant effect from property marking alone, partly because burglary numbers were small and most participants also improved locks and lighting. Marking works best as one part of a package: kits, visible signage, buyer scanning and an active investigation. That package is what this proposal describes. Marking is also destroyed if gold is melted, which is why the disposal-route checks matter.

4. Costs

Retail price is around £60 per kit, but police and councils buy in bulk at a fraction of that. Two published public-sector purchases give a reliable unit cost:

Table 1 — What other public bodies have paid

SCHEME	WHAT WAS BOUGHT	TOTAL COST	PER KIT
Surrey PCC & Spelthorne Council, Stanwell (2020)	1,000 SelectaDNA home kits plus 36 street warning signs	**£13,032**	**£13**
Staffordshire PCC, Tunstall North Residents' Association	100 SmartWater kits, resold to residents to fund more	**£1,000**	**£10**
Buying one kit in a shop (SelectaDNA Home Kit)	One kit, marks up to 50 items, lifetime registration	**£59.50**	**£59.50**

Bulk police kits include lifetime registration on the supplier's database, so there is no annual fee for residents or the council.

Indicative budget for Wokingham

Table 2 — Option A: 1,000 homes (recommended first phase)

ITEM	BASIS	COST
Household marking kits	1,000 kits at £13 (bulk police price)	**£13,000**
Street warning signs	About 40 signs at estate entrances and main roads	**£1,200**
UV torches	20 torches for PCSOs and gold-buyer checks	**£300**
Translated leaflets and stickers	Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu	**£800**
Launch sessions	4 events at temples, gurdwaras and mosques	**£500**
Total, Option A		**£15,800**

Table 3 — Option B: 2,000 homes (full coverage of the four areas)		
ITEM	BASIS	COST
Household marking kits	2,000 kits at £13	**£26,000**
Street warning signs	About 80 signs	**£2,400**
UV torches	30 torches	**£450**
Translated leaflets and stickers	Six languages, larger print run	**£1,200**
Launch sessions	8 events	**£1,000**
Total, Option B		**£31,050**

Table 4 — Suggested funding split, Option A		
FUNDER	SHARE	AMOUNT
Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner	50%, matching the Surrey model	**£7,900**
Wokingham Borough Council (Community Safety)	35%	**£5,530**
Community organisations and residents	15%, plus volunteers for distribution	**£2,370**
Total		**£15,800**

Basis of figures. Kit prices come from the published Surrey and Staffordshire purchases above. Signage, torches, leaflets, events, the funding split and the timeline are residents' estimates, not quotes, and should be confirmed with the supplier and

the PCC. For scale, the Met recorded 6,369 items of jewellery worth nearly £9m stolen from Asian households in one year (2010s figures), and the national average loss per gold burglary was put at over £8,500 in 2011. A single prevented burglary roughly covers half of Option A.

Funding routes

- **PCC community safety fund.** Surrey's PCC paid 50% of the Stanwell scheme with the borough council matching. Thames Valley's PCC already funds SelectaDNA events in 2026.
- **WBC community safety / Community Safety Partnership budget.** The 2021 Windsor & Maidenhead rollout ran through the council's community safety team.
- **Home Office Safer Streets funding**, where a round is open, has funded property-marking schemes elsewhere.
- **Community co-funding.** Residents propose asking temples, gurdwaras and resident associations to contribute and to supply volunteers for distribution. A Staffordshire residents' association runs a self-funding resale model at £10 per kit.

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5. How it would run

1. **Week 1.** WBC and PCC agree funding split; TVP names a lead officer. Supplier quote obtained via the PCC's existing SelectaDNA arrangement.
2. **Week 2.** Kits and signage ordered. Leaflets translated. Distribution list built from petition signatories, recent victims and places of worship.
3. **Weeks 3–4.** Launch sessions at temples, gurdwaras and mosques with PCSOs demonstrating marking and registration on the spot. Door-to-door delivery to older residents by volunteers with police.

4. **Week 4.** Street signs installed at estate entrances and main roads in the four areas. TVP writes to gold buyers and pawnbrokers in Reading, Wokingham and Slough requiring UV checks.
5. **Ongoing.** Quarterly report to the Community Safety Partnership on burglaries, registrations and recoveries. Scheme repeated before Diwali and wedding season each year.

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6. Decisions needed from the council and police

- Will WBC and the PCC jointly fund tranche 1, and by what date?
- Who is the named officer in each organisation?
- Will TVP commit to scanning gold at second-hand outlets and share the results with the community?
- Will this be reported to full council alongside the burglary investigation update?

Sources

- Wokingham Today — Petition calling for protection from burglaries of Asian families (25 Oct 2026)
- Wokingham Today — Police issue warning after Asian gold thefts (Jan 2018)
- SelectaDNA — Crawley results and Met gold-theft operation
- Maidenhead Advertiser — SmartWater kits for 1,000 homes with TVP (July 2021)
- SelectaDNA — TVP Henley scheme results
- SelectaDNA — TVP Aylesbury Mosque initiative
- SelectaDNA — Thames Valley PCC tool-marking partnership (2026)
- Surrey PCC — Stanwell decision log: 1,000 kits + signs, £13,032
- Staffordshire PFCC — Tunstall North 100 SmartWater kits, £1,000
- SelectaDNA Home Kit RRP £59.50
- South Gloucestershire Council — Bristol dedicated team, 47% reduction

- SW Londoner — Met Safe Seller Scheme and gold theft figures
- Thames Valley Police — Mark your property
- Wikipedia — SelectaDNA (Anglia Ruskin / Essex evaluation)
- Sussex Express — Burglaries targeting South Asian families, Oct 2026

Residents' proposal to Wokingham Borough Council and Thames Valley Police, 2 November 2026. Figures marked as estimates are not supplier quotes.