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Emails released by a Scottish Parliamentary Committee have raised further questions over the intervention of the justice secretary in the management of the Scottish Police Authority.

Michael Matheson stated to the Scottish Parliament that he intervened in the reinstatement of the Chief Constable because “there did not appear to be a robust plan in place to protect the wellbeing of officers and staff who had raised complaints or who had been asked to play a role in the investigation”.

But now emails released by Holyrood’s Public Audit Committee show the agreed press release actually stated: “The Authority has also taken the necessary steps with Police Scotland to ensure suitable arrangements are put in place to support the welfare of all involved parties until the alleged conduct issues are concluded.”

Mr Matheson was responding to criticism that he blocked the return of Chief Constable Phil Gormley despite the unanimous vote of the Scottish Police Authority.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said;

“Once again Michael Matheson’s version of events has raised more questions than it answers.

“As soon as we appear to be close to a conclusion on this episode, further detail emerges that casts doubt over the role of the justice secretary.

“We now have evidence that undermines the account the justice secretary gave to the Scottish Parliament in his statement last week.

“These questions arise entirely from the account of the justice secretary and the longer the ambiguity and inaccuracies continue, the more people will ask questions around his performance.

“We would all like to see an end to this affair so that our diligent police officers have confidence in their leadership.”