

## Councillor Gerri Bird – Mayor Of Cambridge (2014 – Present)



Gerri was born on 11 November 1955 in a Magdalene Home in Cork, Republic of Ireland. At the age of 10 months, she contracted polio and was admitted to hospital where she remained until she was 7 years old.

Upon leaving hospital, it wasn't possible to find her mother, as she had been deported to England. The nuns, however, managed eventually to trace her living in Cambridge, so Gerri was brought over to the City by the nuns. Unfortunately the reunion didn't work out, and Gerri was taken to the Midfield Children's Home in Oakington for fostering.

The Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs in Hills Road, Cambridge, issued a notice that a disabled child was in need of a home, and a couple came forward to foster Gerri. They formally adopted her when she was 12 years of age and, for the first time, she was able to enter main stream school – St. Bede's School, Birdwood Road, Cambridge – where she learned to read and write. Gerri left school at the age of 15, after just 3 years formal schooling.

And then her life changed. She had her two wonderful daughters who have given her eight beautiful grandchildren.

In her adult life, Gerri has been a constant campaigner for the rights of disabled people in order to bring about change and independence. She worked for Disability Cambridgeshire and is involved with a number of organisations that give support and advice to disabled people.

Fifteen years ago, Gerri found her family through the internet, but sadly her mother had died 6 months before. Gerri discovered that she has 4 brothers and a sister living in New Zealand, Australia and Canada all of whom she has since met. She has also found, and visited, family in Ireland.

Gerri unsuccessfully contested seats in the local elections for a number of years prior to being elected as a Councillor for East Chesterton Ward in 2011. She has served on the Housing and the Community Services Committees and has supported the Mayoralty in the role of Ceremonial Bailiff. Councillor Bird's partner, Mr. Alan Pooley, JP, is employed by Chambers Coaches. He also undertakes work for Silverstone Circuits and is a Magistrate. He will accompany Gerri to the majority of her Mayoral engagements.

The charities Councillor Bird has chosen actively to support during her term in office are Disability Cambridgeshire, which provides an information and advice service for disabled and/or older people and their carers, and Tom's Trust, established in 2011 to provide care for children with brain tumours.